

CHANGING WAYS



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Introduction: Of Spirit and Flesh

Werewolves are not simply humans that can change shape and perform some other neat tricks. They are dualistic creatures, both spirit and flesh. Both man and beast. Both Rage-filled killing machine and spiritualistic shaman. They are Gaia's warriors and defenders, but also responsible for some of Her deepest wounds. They are as different from both humans and wolves as they are from each other. Indeed, some of them have never been human or wolf.

Being a Garou is more than shapeshifting, gifts, breed, and tribe. It goes deeper, into the very core of being. A Garou can smell and hear the world the way a wolf does, but think about it as a human. They can construct and build items and social structures like humans while applying the singular, predatory focus of a wolf. They can lose themselves in the ferocious battle fury of the Crinos shape or walk between the worlds into the Umbra to speak to the spirits. They can reshape themselves, heal from almost anything so fast it's visible to the naked eye — and can be felt by the Garou experiencing it — they can feel the righteous fury as they channel their Rage and the spiritual clarity that comes with tapping into their Gnosis.

All this and a hundred other little things set the Garou apart from humans. Their lives, from their First Change

(or earlier, in the case of metis), is profoundly *different*, both in the way they live it and the way they think, feel, and act. This book aims to explore that difference, as well as the difference inherent in being born a metis or lupus. We all know what it is like to grow up and live as humans. This book helps both players and Storytellers get below the surface of werewolves and into their hearts, minds, and souls. Forget tribes, forget auspices, forget sept traditions; this book gets personal and goes to the core of what it means to be a werewolf, as well as what it means to have been born *not* human, either as a metis or a lupus.

How to Use this Book

Chapter One: Soul of a Hunter examines the Garou in body, mind, and soul. How does it feel to be a werewolf, to shapeshift, to regenerate, to have a human's intelligence with a wolf's senses? What do the four legs of the Hispo and Lupus shape mean, as opposed to the two legs of the other shapes? How does a Garou react differently to stimuli than humans? How does being a werewolf influence her thinking? And how does it feel to quit the material world and move into the spirit realm of the Umbra? This chapter is all about

understanding the Garou, what makes them different on the inside, and how that can be expressed during play.

Chapter Two: Born a Warrior takes a look at that most unfortunate result of breaking the first law of the Litany: The metis. What does it mean to grow up knowing from your first breath that you are a werewolf? This chapter goes into what that means, not just physically, but also mentally. It also looks at the various attitudes towards metis, both among tribes and septs.

Chapter Three: Among Wolves goes into what it means to be a lupus Garou. Wolves are even more different from humans than metis are, and being a wolf is more than just four legs, fur, and different senses. This chapter goes into how growing up as a wolf results in a Garou with a vastly different mindset than both homid and metis, as well as giving a lot of information on wolves in general; perfect for Storytellers looking to use wolf Kinfolk.

Chapter Four: Closer Than Family is all about that unique Garou social construct, the pack. A werewolf pack is not a wolf pack, no more than it is a human circle of friends. This chapter examines pack structure, different types of packs, and what roles different Auspices play in them. It also looks at different types of packs and gives inspiration to both players and Storytellers when it comes to creating internal dynamics and drama within a pack.

Chapter Five: Spirit Magic delves into the spirit magic of the Garou: gifts and rites. What are gifts, how do you learn them and how do they work, on a narrative level? Where do rites come from and what do they mean for Garou society in general and individual werewolves in particular? This chapter has advice on how to make learning gifts from spirits something more interesting than just “spending XP,” and on how to make the learning, creation, and discovery of rites part of the story, either as player or storyteller.

So You Want to be Garou

Characters are always more than mere dots on a character sheet, and some of the best games go to the core of what that character is. This book will look into those aspects of a werewolf that are fundamentally different from a human. Shapeshifting, regenerating, using gifts, entering the Umbra, being born something other than human, and more. We aim not only to tell you how it works but also how it feels. How it shapes a Garou and her way of acting and interacting. Since werewolves are not humans, portraying them as simple shapeshifting warriors does them a disservice. Instead of just rolling the dice, imagine what it is like for your character’s body to warp and shift from a familiar shape into something different. Think about what it is like

to know that most wounds will heal in seconds. Be prepared to describe your interactions with other characters based on a different set of senses, a different societal structure, or the fact that you grew up as a wolf. You might even want to try to get out of your comfort zone and act (and react) completely differently or even counter to what would be expected from a sane human. After all, you *are* playing a monster, even if it’s a monster who fights for Gaia.

The Players' Perspective

For you, this book is all about how to flesh out your character, to make them seem more real. Not necessarily *realistic*—we are talking about werewolves here—but adding a layer of realism to a fantastic idea. See this book as a way to enhance not only your own roleplaying experience but that of the entire group. Maybe you want to play a lupus; Chapter Three will give you all the information you need to play a character who has never been a human and has grown up with vastly different experiences than one.

Use this book for ideas on how to portray characters in such a way as to create drama. The chapter on metis isn’t just for those who want to play a metis, it can also be good reading for players of other breeds who want ideas for how their character reacts to and thinks about them. Read the chapter on packs to see how you want your character to react to her packmates. In the end, the idea is to make werewolves more interesting, more compelling, more rounded, and cooler in play.

The Storyteller's Perspective

This book contains a wealth of material and ideas for making your games feel more alive, more immersive, and more dramatic. Look at Chapter Five and use it to make a story about a young pack out to learn their first gifts, or a more experienced pack trying to put together all that they need for a new and powerful Rite. Draw on Chapter One to describe what a character’s senses tell him in different forms, how his body reacts to certain stimuli, how the Umbra feels and smells and even tastes.

In fact, go crazy when it comes to senses. You’re responsible for telling the players what their characters feel, and this is a great part of what can immerse a player in her character.

Sight

Note the character’s form when describing to her player what she sees. Humans have great eyesight, with lots of attention to detail. As noted in Chapter Three, wolves see things very differently. In the Crinos shape, everything tends to be just a little red-tinted, and any rapid movement looks like danger. Various gifts also change the way a character sees her surroundings. Add little embellishments to important Storyteller Characters and locations to make them stand

CHEAT

While cheating with the rules is bad – whether player or a Storyteller – the Storyteller can borrow from fiction, and use the characters’ senses as unreliable narrators. Tell the players something that is false. If a character has been using a lot of Rage, tell the player that the bored mall security guard who just wants to check that the pack isn’t a bunch of hooligans is being abrasive and insulting. If a character has been spending Gnosis, tell them that a perfectly ordinary glade in the forest is more alive, more vibrant. Tell the player of a character in Lupus shape that the suspected fomor who just went into the abandoned chemical factory was wearing a suit in a different color than it was. Tell a player whose character grew up as a metis that he can hear the gaggle of teenagers whispering behind his back, drawing attention to his deformity, when in reality, they’re whispering about his very attractive packmate. By passing notes to players on how their characters perceive something different from the others, you can create entertaining scenes where the characters – and players – wonder why the others react the way they do.

For players, sound effects can be a great mood setter. Many of us are unfamiliar with the sounds of a pristine forest. Again, the internet is your friend, with not only nature and urban sounds (loud machinery for a fight in a factory), but also such simple sounds as heavy breathing, footsteps, and screams. A playlist and maybe a remote control can really help set the mood.

Music is another good way to use hearing, as long as it is not overdone. Try to stay away from music that your players know too well or that has lyrics they can understand since it might be more distracting than helpful. Still, you can set the tone of a moot with some tribal music or some Irish folk music for a Fianna moot – or some Dropkick Murphys for a Fianna moot in the US. Get the blood pumping with some power metal. Set the tone of the game with modern folk or neopagan music (such as Omnia’s “Earth Warrior”). Use electronic music to represent Weaver locations, punk for urban wastelands and a selection of movie soundtracks for fight scenes.

Smell

Think long and hard about how to describe smells to a Garou in Lupus, Hispo and even Crinos shape. Contrasts are good – the fresh smell of damp earth, pine needles and dozens of small animals fade into wet concrete, asphalt, rotting garbage, and a thousand humans as you enter the city. A factory smells of hot metal, a brewery smells of grain and hops, a pharmaceutical facility has a hundred strange, unidentifiable chemical smells.

As cheesy as it may sound, you can engage the players’ sense of smell with scented candles and incense. Just don’t overdo it. Various air fresheners might also work, though you might think twice about spraying “fresh pine” scent to evoke a forest.

Touch and Taste

These two are very hard to simulate for the players, so they become extra important when describing to the characters.

Touch can be used to convey the feeling of being something other than human; the wind in a character’s fur, the feel of concrete under her naked paws, the sensation of her claws cracking the carapace of a Bane and biting into the ichor beneath.

Taste shows up surprisingly frequently – a character gets a taste of her foe every time she bites someone, be it an enemy in battle or a friend in a playful fight or ritual challenge. A player whose character is in Lupus shape and decides to eat a freshly-killed deer deserves a description of the taste of hide, raw meat, and warm blood. Likewise, the player of a lupus who eats her first O’Tolleys burger, full of processed recovered meat-like product, deserves to know what her character’s senses pick up.

out, both when introduced and in the players’ memory.

When you want to engage the players’ sight, you might want to go all-out with the preparation, lighting the gaming room with candles to suggest a bonfire in a forest, or adding several lamps to brighten up the room for a noonday scene or a confrontation set in a brightly-lit laboratory. Using pictures for Storyteller characters is good, but you can also use them for locations. Search the internet for beautiful nature vistas to remind the players what their characters are fighting for or to show them how their caern might look. Use pictures of urban decay, abandoned factories, open pit mining, or forestry clearings to show them the enemy, or simply to give them a better sense of how a battleground looks and what tactical options are present.

Hearing

Humans have good hearing, wolves have phenomenal hearing, and the intermediate forms lie somewhere in between. Pay special attention to how you describe sounds to players whose characters are in Lupus shape. Remember that loud or sudden noises are likely to make a Crinos shape Garou think “attack first, check source later.”



RON SPENCER 17

Chapter One: Soul of a Hunter

The Garou are Gaia's warriors, Her greatest children and the only ones who can prevent the total corruption of the world. Every werewolf knows this in their soul. While some may give in to doubt, a deep-seated fire tempers it. Every werewolf knows that they are morally right; for why would Gaia and Luna bless them if it were not the case? This moral certainty brings with it a sense of superiority. While some werewolves reach out to their shapeshifting cousins, far more remain assured of their superiority. After all, ever since the War of Rage the Garou alone have protected Gaia. A werewolf may doubt herself on occasion, but Harano beckons those who lose their absolute moral certainty.

Werewolves are like us. The Garou — the homids, at least — are born the same as any other person. They grow up, ignorant of the spiritual and physical potential lurking in their flesh and blood, and they experience the same things every young creature does. They strain their senses when danger looms, even if only in their imagination. They run until they collapse from exhaustion, body greedy for air, muscles burning. When hurt, they limp along until the hurt goes away. They strain, and struggle, and triumph, and fail.

Werewolves are not like us. The First Change awaits them. Next to that, the greatest mental and bodily changes most humans will ever experience: puberty, menopause, the

LUPUS AND METIS

This chapter primarily concerns itself with homid Garou, those werewolves most easily relatable to the reader. Many of the experiences described in this chapter also apply in some form to lupus and metis werewolves, but others don't. Metis, for example, never know the frailty of a body that cannot shrug off destructive trauma, while for lupus, each transformation is a matter of accepting muffled senses in exchange for power or utility. The particulars of the metis and lupus experience are discussed in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three.

creeping onset of old age, they are gentle breezes set against a raging hurricane. Most people rarely have reason to consider the basic experience of living in their own flesh and blood, but a sharp line runs through each werewolf's life, a moment when they were less... and then something more.



The Body

The First Change inflicts massive, traumatic transformations upon a young werewolf's flesh, leaving her with a body that is still recognizably her own, and yet at the same time, so much more.

Resilience

All werewolves are hardy creatures. This is one of the least overt changes to a werewolf's body, but easily the most ubiquitous, and it impacts every part of a werewolf's life.

Enhanced Physique

Some werewolves believe that their bodies are as Gaia intended all living things to be, and perhaps as they once were in a long-ago age when every breath of air didn't carry the taint of poisons and toxins. The First Change isn't, in and of itself, a super-serum; it won't give a 98-pound weakling six-pack abs and the ability bench-press the back end of a truck (at least not without shapeshifting first). A

Garou's appetite changes along with her body. After the First Change, a werewolf craves meat in substantial amounts. Those Garou brought up with a vegan diet are disgusted by their new appetites — but the wolf must feed. A werewolf's body prioritizes muscle storage over fat except in times of severe deprivation, and burns calories effectively even in the face of extreme stress and poor sleep, two chronic conditions of the werewolf lifestyle. While it's possible for a werewolf to become obese, it's uncommon, and it usually takes a dedicated regimen of idleness and self-indulgence to stay that way. Such a lifestyle is vanishingly rare outside of the cities, and being overweight is thus one of the stereotypical signs of the Bone Gnawers and Glass Walkers.

Moreover, werewolves are *tough*. A werewolf not only possesses the ability to heal quickly, they're also difficult to hurt in the first place, even in breed form. In game terms, all werewolves can soak lethal damage with their Stamina, so werewolves in the World of Darkness simply don't register a lot of incidental wear and tear to their bodies. Their hide is too tough for papercuts. It takes a surprising amount of

work to get a syringe into a Garou's arm. Often, a werewolf who raps his knuckles against the edge of a table or stubs his toe won't even react; their bodies shrug off such incidental damage and repair it before her senses register pain. Even severe trauma struggles to damage a werewolf's body. Bullets groove along the edge of strong, resilient bones rather than shattering them. Blades struggle to part thick, powerful muscle tissue. Serious injuries still hurt just as badly as before the First Change, but werewolves just don't accumulate those as easily as other people. A speeding truck striking a Garou might hurt him badly enough to leave him dazed and sprawling with a few fractures rather than dead. Jumping off a third-story roof to escape pursuers is a calculation of suffering vs efficacy, rather than a potentially fatal act of desperation.

Longevity

Gaia designed her warriors for the long haul. After the First Change, a werewolf's body continues to develop 'normally' until they reach full physical adulthood, normally somewhere in the early 20s for homids. Garou still age after that, but nowhere near as fast. A werewolf attending his 10-year, 20-year, and 30-year high school reunions will look nearly identical at each gathering. While other 40-year-olds are dealing with spreading around the middle and joints that take indignant notice of stairs and low cabinets, a werewolf can still vault through heavy underbrush with the same stamina, limberness, and strength he enjoyed two decades ago. The first minor aches and complaints of an aging body tend to show up in a werewolf's late 50s or early 60s, rather than his 30s. A casual observer probably wouldn't describe a werewolf as "old" at first glance until well into their 70s.

The maximum Garou lifespan is a matter of some conjecture, primarily because so very few werewolves ever expire from old age. Even those who manage to survive a lifetime of front-line battle against the Wyrm's offspring will most often cite the Litany when they feel their senses and reflexes diminish, and seek out a glorious death fighting a great minion of the Destroyer.

The Uktena and Wendigo tell of legendary medicine men and wise women who lived fully double the length of a normal human lifespan, but these were individuals of incredible spiritual potency who spent a great deal of time in the Umbra. Less renowned individuals whose septs believe their wisdom outweighs the burden of their care can expect to celebrate at least their hundredth birthday, and may live up to 120 years.

Wolf Women

The great resilience and longevity of the Garou body has a few ramifications for female werewolves. Female Garou experience the same monthly menstrual cycle as any human woman (which may come as an alarming surprise to female

lupus), but rarely experience debilitating cramps, bloating, or other forms of discomfort, and even these mild symptoms vanish when taking any of the intermediary battle forms: Glabro, Crinos, or Hispo.

Additionally, a werewolf's extended longevity brings with it a longer fertility period for Garou women, who generally don't experience menopause until their early 60s. Although the Black Furies cite this as yet another of Gaia's blessings upon Her favored fighters, they – like most tribes and septs – don't consider it a license for a werewolf to put off their reproductive duties to the Garou Nation. Few enough werewolves survive sixty years, after all.

A pregnant Garou almost always carries her fetus to term. Her body rejects chemical means of terminating the pregnancy and, while homids can undergo physical abortion due to their lack of regeneration in breed form, not shapeshifting in the face of such stress and pain is very difficult. The Garou Nation also holds a strong stance against abortion; every potential life lost costs Gaia's warriors a potential werewolf. Metis pregnancy carries with it even greater risks, (as noted in Chapter Two).

Werewolf pregnancies follow the normal gestation period for the werewolf's breed. Garou mothers are tough; they suffer no movement penalties until the third trimester, at which point they must contend with a mere -1 to strenuous physical activities. A werewolf's womb is as durable as the rest of her body, providing excellent protection to her unborn child, and the placental barrier eradicates most of the toxins and adverse chemicals that might find their way into a Garou's body long before they're passed on to the fetus. Miscarriages are rare, and nothing much shy of a powerful direct attack to the torso can threaten a child carried by a werewolf. Gaia designed Her warriors to be fully battle-capable right up until the birthing bed, where the werewolf becomes locked into her breed form for the duration of her labor.

While anatomical studies on werewolf pregnancy and shapeshifting are understandably limited, the abridged version is that pregnancy doesn't meaningfully restrict a werewolf's ability to don any of her five forms. She remains visibly pregnant in all forms save Crinos, where the womb draws deeper and higher into the form's enormous torso, protected behind thick layers of muscle, such that only late in the third trimester is her pregnancy visible at a glance. The fetus remains present and unchanged by any transformations, with the result that pregnant lupus and those carrying metis children quickly learn to avoid ultrasounds and other human medical examinations administered by anyone other than in-the-know Kinfolk.

Regeneration

A werewolf's body is more than a mere collection of

meat, bones, and animating electrical current. It's more, even, than a chariot driven by the soul. The lines between flesh and spirit blur during the First Change, and the Garou's body becomes a conduit into the Umbra, a living bridge between the worlds of matter and spirit. This connection to the living heart of Creation imbues Gaia's warriors with boundless vitality, an imperative to live burned into every cell of their being. The practical manifestation of this blessing is a werewolf's power to quickly regenerate damage.

Regeneration

Modern homids, raised on superhero comic and films, sometimes refer to their regenerative powers as a healing factor. This is broadly inaccurate. A Garou's healing capabilities go beyond a mere acceleration of the natural healing process. A Garou's wounds don't usually scab over or form scar tissue. Slashes pull themselves shut and smooth over. Mangled flesh straightens itself, re-aligns severed blood vessels, and re-knits torn muscle. It's true regeneration of damaged or destroyed tissue, restoring the body to its undamaged state.

Regeneration *hurts*, and many Garou describe the process as feeling like being wounded in reverse. A regenerating injury feels like the wound is full of angry, red-hot hornets—the sensation is too intense for the word “itching” to do it justice. Nor is the heat-sensation imaginary, as the temperature of a regenerating injury spikes enough to throw off steam outdoors in the winter. Most Garou learn to trust that crawling, hot-needles feeling—it lets them know exactly what's damaged, and the intensity of the sensation provides a good indication of how close the wound is to healed. Some septs even train young Garou in recognizing and understanding their regenerative powers through rites of injury, until they can immediately tell the difference between a simple laceration, a bruise, a torn muscle, and a broken bone by the way their body feels while repairing the damage. This is also important preparation for working rites, as many rites feature bloodletting and self-mutilation as a means of achieving a trance state or showing the practitioner's dedication to Luna.

Most wounds leave no visible trace in the wake of regeneration. A close-range shotgun blast rips apart the back of a tanned Caucasian werewolf's arm, down to the bone. An observer sees dangling tatters of flesh still attached to his arm quickly drawn back into the wound and incorporate into the new muscle-structure that weaves itself around the exposed bones. Within a few moments, new skin creeps out across the completed musculature, and the healing is complete; but there's nothing “new” about that skin. Rather than being shiny and pink, its tan matches the rest of the werewolf's arm. Indeed, a moment after the skin finishes spreading into place, it sprouts hair.

A Garou's flesh is mystically “awake” in a manner somewhat comparable to a fetish. It knows what state it's “supposed” to be in, and mystically returns itself to that form.

ACTING OUT

Some groups may want to portray the physical nature of the Garou, either to help become immersed in their characters or as part of live-action roleplaying.

Regeneration: Remember that regeneration hurts like hell. It's the same pain as originally inflicted by the injury, only in reverse and at the same time. For lethal damage, make the pain clear: hold the wound, grit your teeth, and spit words rather than speaking normally. Ignore everything but the immediate reaction to bashing damage; even seven levels takes less than thirty seconds to regenerate

Shapeshifting: No matter how skilled the werewolf, shapeshifting is still painful. Tense and then relax your muscles, hunch right in and then stretch out into the form you are changing into. More details on how to portray the forms is on p. 23.

Rage: When your character's Rage is high, act angry all the time. Speak in short, curt sentences. React to every statement in the worst viable way. The world is out to offend you, it is out to attack your deepest-held beliefs. Argue all the time, and treat any further slight as an invitation to violence.

Senses: In a non-human form, play to the best available senses. Extend your head and move it around to figure out exactly where a sound is coming from. Sniff the air in different directions to determine where someone is or which way they're going.

Gnosis: The opposite of Rage. Gnosis is the energy of wisdom. With high Gnosis, act reserved. Take a breath before reacting; but when you *do*, do it with precision and terrible violence. Don't sit back and take it, figure out the best way to destroy whatever is against you.

This regeneration is part of the werewolf's living nature, and discriminates between cosmetic grooming and actual damage. A ripped-off nail will quickly regrow, but werewolves have no problem trimming their nails with clippers. Singed-off hair restores itself in moments, but there's no danger of rending the Veil if a werewolf visits a barber.

More invasive body modification is a bit trickier, but entirely possible, and indeed often a mainstay of Garou culture. Warriors pierce themselves or take deliberate scars as marks of glorious acts, or to mark important milestones in their lives. It takes a deliberate act of will to voluntarily

suppress the body's regenerative powers during painful cosmetic alterations such as accepting new piercings, scarification, or tattooing (in game terms, a werewolf who gets a piercing or tattoo without silver implements must roll Willpower at variable difficulty: 5 for a pierced ear, 8 for a large tattoo), although some werewolves use silver implements to remove any uncertainty from the equation. Afterwards, the werewolf's body recognizes any alterations as part of the body's proper pattern, and will restore tattoos, scars, and other modifications during regeneration.

Incorruptible Flesh

Aside from repairing gross physical damage to the werewolf's body, regeneration also grants the Garou an incredible resistance to poisons and disease. This extends to human pharmaceuticals. While some urban Garou consider human medicines worth the risk, the clear majority see all modern medicines as marked by the Wyrm or Weaver. Hard-line septs even forbid their Kinfolk from receiving vaccinations. To these werewolves, it's worth the possibility of an outbreak to ensure that a Garou child is born without taint.

It takes a lot to get a werewolf sick, and even then, they tend to bounce back within eight to twenty-four hours. Only the fiercest of non-supernatural illnesses, such as Ebola, can seriously hamper a werewolf, and even then, their regenerative gifts will eventually dispose of the illness. The greatest problem werewolves face from disease is the possibility of being an asymptomatic carrier during the period when their bodies are suppressing symptoms but have not yet eliminated the sickness. In the past, smallpox was the greatest threat the Garou faced in this respect. The Galliards still tell cautionary tales of mighty warriors who rose victorious from the field of battle, their pelts dripping with the foul ichor and viscera of the Wyrm's plague-raddled minions, only to decimate their own Kinfolk by returning home before their body could fully purge the sickness. In the modern day, HIV is the carrier-disease that most worries the Garou. It can take a werewolf's body up to a month to uproot and purge that tenacious ailment, during which time she's fully capable of passing it on.

Poisons are another matter. Taken on their own, a werewolf's regenerative power will eliminate even the deadliest poisons within a matter of minutes. This doesn't mean werewolves have nothing to fear from poison, though; the Wyrm's minions have long used poison in conjunction with more traditional attacks to distract and overwhelm Garou regenerative powers.

Narcotics deserve special mention. Natural entheogens, such as psilocybin, ayahuasca, and peyote – can be spiritually awakened to affect werewolves outside their breed forms. These form important parts of many rites, mirroring their use in human spirituality. Indeed, some Garou historians believe that humans began using hallucinogens in their rituals because of Kinfolk trying to work rites of their own. Outside of her breed form, her body shrugs off alcohol and other recreational drugs

before she even feels them. A werewolf in Glabro can slam back enough moonshine to leave any human being blind or dead without ever feeling more than the slightest buzz.

Moreover, werewolves are physically immune to addiction. A junkie who undergoes the First Change awakens to find that her physical cravings are simply gone, with no agonizing withdrawal symptoms or detox period. Psychological addiction is another matter; regeneration does nothing to alleviate stress, misery, or the hardships of life from which a werewolf might seek respite in chemical oblivion. Most often, the victims are packless werewolves trying to dull their need to belong, though other Garou turn to drugs in the misguided hopes of staving off Harano.

This tends to grant homids to best of all worlds: they can go out on the town to celebrate, or drown their sorrows in drink or drugs, but sober up in moments by switching to another form should trouble arise. Lupus tend to have greater difficulties, since few bars will serve a wolf, and metis have no non-regenerating form at all. Since many rites involve the ingestion of mood or mind-altering substances such as peyote, tobacco, or alcohol, many Theurges know minor rites to awaken the spiritual nature of certain substances, allowing the one who deliberately imbibes the awakened drugs to feel their full effects.

Most Kinfolk and others in-the-know understand that homids and lupus don't regenerate when in their birth-skin. This isn't strictly true, they do regenerate, just much slower than in other forms. A human injured to death's doorstep may take months of intensive care in a hospital before they can walk again, and may very well never be as hale as they were before suffering such catastrophic damage. By contrast, a Garou doused in gasoline and set alight, should she survive, will be back to the peak of health after a week of bed-rest. Even without ever leaving her breed form, she'll recover from gunshot wounds over a long weekend. As with other forms of regeneration, itching and burning sensations are her constant companion through this convalescent period. This is also the way a werewolf's body repairs aggravated damage, slowly working through the bane of silver; or piecing back together a body seared by flames or shocked by massive, full-body trauma.

Severed Limbs and Battle Scars

A werewolf's body can handle any number of lacerations, impacts, or bullet holes with very little difficulty. Sadly, the war for Gaia often subjects Her warriors to truly fantastic abuse and injury: acid burns, severed limbs, white phosphorous, blood-guzzling vampires, depleted uranium rounds, Balefire, and chainsaws among them. While none doubt Gaia's foresight, the Garou were designed to be unbeatable fighters in an age of fire-hardened spears, flint-tipped arrows, and monstrous bane-claws. Perhaps, at the outer limits of

SHENANIGANS

Should a Storyteller require game mechanics to represent werewolf healing limitations, she should apply a cost of one Gnosis point following “abuse” of a werewolf’s regeneration: cutting off strips of her own flesh to feed to starving Kinfolk trapped in a snowy pass, or bottling excessive amounts of blood for distribution or transfusion. Werewolves who can’t pay that cost instead suffer a full day of healing dysfunction (p. 18). It’s not that a werewolf *can’t* abuse her body in creative ways, it’s just that she *can’t* do it sustainably.



physical devastation, an enchanter or angry spirit might call down a lightning bolt.

Healing after getting thrown in front of a train? That’s a significantly taller order.

The process of regeneration is more mystical than biological; it requires a lot more energy than the werewolf’s body can supply with sheer caloric burn, drawing upon the spiritual power of her Gnosis to make up the difference. As a result, shapeshifting permits incredible feats such as restoring or re-growing severed limbs, or allowing the werewolf to quickly bounce back from massive blood loss without a transfusion, which *should* be impossible.

Regeneration has limits, though. Consider blood loss, the simplest of the complications Garou face in battle. Can a compassionate Child of Gaia save the local vampire population from their curse of predation by bottling and then regenerating her blood in mass quantities?

In short, no. Although the rules of *Werewolf* don’t concern themselves with the minutiae of exhaustion or sub-point trickles of energy diverted from the Gnosis pool, a werewolf *can* exhaust their regenerative capabilities. Gnosis isn’t infinite, and the werewolf’s body will eventually tire and give out, especially under sustained, repeated abuse. Generating entirely new tissue, limbs, and blood are all particularly taxing.

Severed Limbs

While losing a limb is probably the most extreme form of trauma a werewolf’s body can experience without being killed outright, Gaia’s regenerative blessing can repair even this devastation.

In a best-case scenario, the amputation is relatively clean, or at least leaves most of the tissue in place. When this occurs, retrieving the limb becomes a werewolf’s top priority, because with sufficient speed, a severed arm, leg, hand, or

finger *can* re-attach by simply holding it against the stump. There’s an eye-watering, red-hot jolt as the bone re-joins in a surge of regenerative effort, followed by the hard-fast searing blasts of nerves reconnecting. Last comes the maddening buzz of torn muscles and ligaments weaving themselves back together. When a werewolf’s regeneration is working in top form, this can all occur in a matter of seconds. It takes perhaps three to five seconds for a severed limb to regain some of its mobility, and it can be back to peak performance by the time an opponent counts to twenty.

Often werewolves are not so lucky. The limb may land a great distance away, end up torn to gory ruin at the point of severance, or swallowed by one of the Wyrm’s monstrosities. In these cases, regeneration occurs more slowly. A severed finger or torn-off ear take only a moment to re-grow, but entire limbs usually require several minutes of dedicated regeneration, and are generally the last of the werewolf’s injuries to finish healing.

Making an entire new arm from the werewolf’s Gnosis reserves is an extremely taxing and complicated endeavor to boot. First the stump seals itself to avoid ongoing blood loss, and then the Garou’s body simultaneously begins generating new bone, musculature, fat, and nerves, pushing the injured body part outward as it re-grows. The skin stretches, splits, and re-seals itself immediately as the limb grows into place.

The process is not only incredibly painful, but also one of the most error-prone feats of regeneration. In contrast to her normal regeneration, regrown limbs sometimes arrive looking raw and “new,” with distortions or complete loss of cosmetic designs such as tattoos or patterned scarification. The point of severance sometimes shows permanent traces of discoloration or toughened skin; it’s not a full-blown debilitating battle scar, but still something worth showing off and telling stories about as a moot winds down.

And what of the severed limb itself? Lost body parts revert to breed form after being severed for about a minute (which can pose a serious threat to the Veil in the case of metis werewolves). Most seasoned packs take pains to retrieve severed limbs, if possible. Not only is it unseemly for Gaia’s warriors to leave chunks of themselves strewn about the landscape, but a severed limb in the twenty-first century is nothing but trouble. At the very least, a severed foot found in the bushes of a park will provoke an inconvenient police investigation. A severed hand carries the same complications, with the added issue of fingerprints that may bring official scrutiny to bear on a sept, or which agents of the Wyrm may use to frame a werewolf for heinous crimes. At worst, an unscrupulous warlock might come into possession of a werewolf’s body parts, opening the Garou to curses and occult manipulation beyond reckoning.

Faced with those possibilities, having a small burial pit somewhere within the bawn of a caern full of skeletal arms

doesn't seem like much of a risk. Indeed, some septs offer up limbs lost in battle to spirits of war as a form of chimirage.

Aggravated Damage and Battle Scars

Some injuries are too much for even a werewolf's body to process. Silver-inflicted injuries literally burn on contact, cleaving through a Garou's flesh as though she were merely human or wolf. But fire and phenomenal mundane trauma are nearly as bad. Fire utterly ruins the tissue it burns without removing it, forcing the werewolf's body to painstakingly restore itself to working order, one scorched or exploded cell at a time. Massive trauma is nearly as bad, throwing a werewolf's system into shock and confusion. Gaia simply did not design her defenders for a world capable of doing the sort of things that a chainsaw does to flesh and bone, and getting tossed in front of the 7:35 express from Sacramento leaves the body so thoroughly pulverized that it bogs down trying to fix everything at once.

Undoubtedly the most common and troubling sort of healing-resistant damage that werewolves must deal with are the claws and fangs of their own kind, or of other supernatural creatures. The most common explanation given by Theurges is that the supernatural character of such attacks inflicts injury to both the werewolf's body and the underlying flows of Gnosis, meaning that the spirit must

replenish itself before the body can follow suit. The result, either way, is that werewolf battles are incredibly deadly, and a skirmish with a group of Black Spiral Dancers can put a pack out of commission for a week easily. Vampires pose a similar threat, as do some particularly dangerous spirits.

Beyond even that, such injuries can leave debilitating battle scars. Werewolves possess an incredible capacity to stay up and fighting in the face of damage that would leave a human unconscious or dead. Where flesh and Gnosis falter, Rage can push a werewolf forward, dragging broken bones, swinging shattered limbs, and killing, killing, killing, even as her eyes see nothing but her own blood. She must pay the price, though — pushing things that far means her body takes emergency measures to keep itself up and running.

A werewolf's body is designed more to kill Gaia's enemies than to preserve itself. If she *has* to stay up and moving to bring down that last First Team fomor, a werewolf's regeneration may opt to simply fuse the bones and ligaments of her ruined leg (smashed to a pulp by a thrown girder at the start of the fight) rather than carefully straightening and repairing the bones, then re-weaving muscle back to a pristine state. The priority is that she must be upright to swing her claws, and be able to move to engage her foes, even though the leg holding her up should by all rights be a floppy column of gory meat. Or perhaps the werewolf



is moments from falling down dead and it's a question of repairing the gruesome axe-wound that split her face in half or pulling together a heart torn to shreds by a bullet—but both must happen *right now*. The heart is non-negotiable, so the face is simply pulled together with enough expediency that the werewolf's brain isn't going to fall out, too bad about that eye. Maybe the sword that severed her arm was forged in actual, genuine Hell-fire by a dark magician, and fed by a hundred sin-blackened souls, and its blasphemous power festers in the wound, preventing the werewolf from doing more than sealing up the stump; nothing new can grow from such mystical desolation.

It takes a lot to produce a battle scar, and unfortunately, they're usually permanent; as far as the werewolf's body understands, the scar is part of the template it's supposed to return to upon regenerating. It takes healing magic as potent as the trauma that produced the scar to entice the Garou's flesh to return to a more functional form — a tall order, indeed.

While battle scars are a mark of distinction among the Garou, those who suffer them often feel betrayed by their body, which years of war against the Wyrm have taught them to regard as a sacred dynamo, an ever-reliable engine that returns them to the fight battle after battle no matter what sort of abuse it suffers. The first-hand discovery that even a werewolf's regeneration has limits is always sobering.

Healing Dysfunction

Werewolves heal best when they can focus on it, having at least a few moments in which they're doing nothing but gritting their teeth through the maddening itch of mending flesh. Strenuous activity can exacerbate healing times; the werewolf's body hesitates to re-weave leg muscles that the Garou currently needs to brace herself against a door, or to mend broken bones being held out of place as the werewolf grapples with a fomor, for example. Moreover, a sufficient combination of activity and sudden trauma can throw a werewolf's entire system into shock, producing a state known as "healing dysfunction" to those of scholarly inclination, and "battle shock" to others. Mechanically, this occurs when a player botches a Stamina roll to heal, or when she takes more aggravated damage than she has dots of Stamina in Homid form.

When healing dysfunction occurs, the werewolf's body becomes overwhelmed, confused, and slows down the act of repairing itself drastically, to no more than the level of breed form healing. This poses a terrible, terrible danger in battle, and is a moment that wise mentors prepare younger Garou for—until a werewolf has experienced battle shock during a firefight — it's very easy to take her body for granted. Afterwards, she may feel a crippling blow to her self-confidence, as she comes to question whether she can rely on Gaia's battle-gifts. Luckily, healing dysfunction tends to resolve

OPTIONAL RULE: COMBAT HEALING

By the rules in W20, it takes a bit of concentration for a werewolf to fully harness their healing prowess. In the fury of combat, this is represented by a reflexive difficulty 8 Stamina roll each round. If you feel this extra rolling slows things down too much, consider this optional rule:

Each round, a Garou automatically heals one level of bashing or lethal damage, no roll required. Note that this makes werewolves a bit tougher, and removes the risk of healing dysfunction brought on by a botch. If you use this option, the following rules replace the normal effects of the Gift Combat Healing (see W20, p. 171):

The player spends one point of Rage and rolls Stamina + Primal-Urge against difficulty 8. The werewolf regenerates two health levels per turn for a number of turns equal to the successes rolled, or may trade in two successes and one turn of normal healing to heal one level of aggravated damage instead, so long as silver did not inflict that damage.

itself within ten minutes to an hour, but that is an eternity on the battlefield.

The risk of healing dysfunction shapes the battle-tactics of many packs. While the youngest Garou almost entirely favor headlong charges in the mighty Crinos form, more experienced packs tend to learn the utility of harrying, in-and-out fighting in Hispo, which is capable of both doing damage second only to Crinos *and* quickly retreating to the periphery of a battle to heal undisturbed. It may not be quite as glorious, but it does satisfy the wolf-nature within, and for many battles, it's a much safer option for the entire pack.

Shapeshifting

There is no greater or more defining power of the were-wolf than the gift of changing skins, and it can be difficult for Kinfolk or other allies to imagine what this means to the Garou. After all, how can a person born in one body even begin to imagine what it is like to live in five?

A life of shapeshifting represents the greatest adjustment werewolves must make in the wake of the First Change, but it is also usually the one they take to most quickly and easily. The ritualized bitterness of certain Red Talons aside, all a werewolf's forms feel instinctively *natural* and *right*; a werewolf rarely feels any sense of alienation within her own skin, and when that

WEREWOLVES AND GENDER

There's one very notable exception to the aforementioned general comfort werewolves have in their bodies. Transgender werewolves exist; they're a rarity among an already-rare people, but they are found among all breeds. While homids predominate, that's likely for the simple reason that homids are by far the most numerous breed.

A werewolf assigned the wrong sex at birth faces the same struggles as any other transgendered individual, and then some. All five of their bodies have the same problem – the “freedom” of changing skins provides no escape. Worse, even among the People, many are not only deaf to their woes but actively castigate them for questioning the body Gaia gave them. To top things off, hormonal and surgical gender re-assignment are hopeless endeavors for a werewolf. His body rejects and repairs any alterations before they can have any real effect. While a handful of progressive Black Furies accept trans women, stories abound of others cutting themselves with silver knives in search of acceptance. Some septs accept them on the same terms as metis. Others slaughter the transgender individual as a mockery to Gaia.

Not all among the Garou are so arrogant as to assume that reality perfectly reflects Gaia's desires, and many spirits entirely lack any prejudices based in flesh or anatomy. Powerful Jagglings and greater spirits can mend the rift between a werewolf's body and her nature, although the most common spirits demand great services in exchange for such a boon, while those willing to grant such a miracle for the asking invariably dwell in deep, inaccessible Umbral realms. Only the most impressive spirits can allow the changed werewolf to still procreate; those who change gender without such assistance are often shunned for being unable to produce offspring.

minutes as the breed form tears inside out in a riot of flesh, sinew, and bone. As the werewolf masters her shapeshifting ability, her transformations become faster and faster. With true mastery of the change, shapeshifting happens *quickly*, rather than as a gruesome Hollywood special effects show. No mystical shimmer, no obscuring haze, no bad TV-budget distortion – a human becomes a werewolf, or a wolf, or vice-versa, bones sliding, flesh stretching, hair growing or vanishing – it just occurs in the blink of an eye, with enough speed and force to tear clothing apart. Someone not watching for it might describe it as “One moment she was a person, and the next, a monster.” It is as though the werewolf possesses some muscle reflex belonging to no other creature on Earth. Some Garou never reach that level of ability, making shapeshifting painful and terrifying every time.

To those undergoing the transformation, it brings a sensation of sickening pain, of stretching and contraction, and then of relaxation and cooling. Though most werewolves learn to take the pain of changing forms, it never really goes away.

Homid

Despite being the “weakest” of the five forms, most werewolves spend the clear majority of their lives in Homid. Those born in the skin are, of course, simply comfortable with it from long habit, and it forms their “default” experience of the world. But even metis and lupus Garou tend to disproportionately favor Homid form.

The great advantage of Homid form is, of course, social. Garou live in a world overrun by humans, and being able to communicate with them and walk among them unnoticed is not only useful, it's essential to survival. But beyond that, Homid form's most prized aspect is the utility of language. While wolves can communicate all that they need to to hunt, play, rest, and otherwise thrive, these scents, yips, howls, and body language fall somewhat short of the demands of complex spiritual philosophy, never mind advanced military battle-plans. Homid form is the form to go for complex speech, and however much werewolves may deride humans as “chattering monkeys,” werewolves love to talk as much as anyone.

Second only to the utility of language are the joys of opposable thumbs. While many lupus Garou initially find the vertical orientation of Homid quite strange, the re-purposing of forelimbs as dedicated manipulators is simply too useful to pass up. It's common to see young lupus wandering about a sept in Homid form simply picking things up or manipulating them; a newly-changed lupus can often be enraptured simply by shifting the blocks on a Rubik's Cube without even trying to solve the puzzle.

Finally, some lupus find the senses of the Homid form intriguing. While wolf-born Garou find human hearing to be muffled – Homid is deaf to the highest ranges that wolves can hear – and are universally alarmed by the near-total loss

does occur, it is generally among metis, or homids raised in a culture of body-hatred. Even then, those dissatisfied with their own skins often find the First Change to be a liberating transformation that lets them disappear into other forms they carry no standing prejudices against – forms of utility, forms of wonder, forms of power and righteous fury.

To those who watch, shapeshifting is difficult to pin down. The First Change is a slow and painful process taking several

of their sense of smell, many find Homid's expanded color palette quite beautiful, revealing an unsuspected world of red-orange-yellow-green nuance.

For all its advantages, however, the disadvantages of Homid are also quite real and very pressing. It tends to feel fragile, especially to those born in the skin who lack their standard powers of regeneration while wearing it. Within a year of the First Change, hitting a door and watching it fail to come off its hinges becomes *infuriating*, never mind something as serious as being unable to chase down a fleeing target in a crowded environment where shapeshifting isn't an option. Worse than its weakness and vulnerability, Homid is *slow*, a source of great frustration for those accustomed to being able to run at thirty miles per hour or bound between rocks without consciously thinking about it. This can lead to anxiety for those who must remain in Homid over an extended period, especially lupus-born werewolves. As much safety as the form provides for blending in with the herd, it also offers no real fallbacks if things go wrong.

Glabro

Heavy, sturdy, ugly, and strong. Weight is the first impression in shifting up from Homid to Glabro form — and “shifting up” is definitely the term — because the werewolf gains several inches in height. Next is a distinct awkwardness, not of the limbs, which are as agile and coordinated as in Homid, but rather a loss of fine manipulation. If a werewolf closes her mouth carefully, then it bulges oddly; if closed carelessly, then her fangs protrude past her lips, and her basic reflex is to let her mouth hang slightly open. Glabro’s jaws feel thick and crowded, its facial features buried under creeping hair. The fingers are as nimble as ever, but tipped with claws, not sharpened nails, but genuine claws coming to a distinct point and with a slight but visible killing curve. Color vision remains excellent, while low-light vision is slightly improved above the Homid baseline. The sense of smell is still effectively useless for any scent less intense than blood or heavy cologne. A Garou can still speak in Glabro, but the words come out sounding chewed and labored. Glabro is not a form for communication or manipulation, though it’s crudely capable of both. Glabro is made to fight.

Glabro is described as the “near-human” form, but it’s not all that easy to mistake for human. It would perhaps be more accurate to describe Glabro as the “plausible deniability” form. A werewolf in Glabro, viewed under anything but poor lighting or at great distance, is *clearly* inhuman: her silhouette is hunched and powerful, her hands tipped with claws, her mouth distended by sharp fangs, her face distorted and her entire body swollen with hair, and her eyes reflecting light like an animal. In short, it’s not that Glabro can easily *pass for* human so much as that most humans will assume, after the fact, that a Glabro werewolf *must* have been human... what else could it have been, however deformed and strange?

Even the weakest Glabro is as powerful as an amateur athlete; the strongest can rip a steel fire door off its hinges. The finger-claws can disembowel with some effort, although many use Glabro as a less-lethal alternative to Crinos, throwing powerful punches rather than cutting loose with more lethal attacks. Of course, “less lethal” is still subjective; someone with an athletic build in Homid can shatter bones easily in Glabro.

Many Garou find Glabro stressful but exhilarating, a compromise-form that grants much greater power than Homid, but stops well-short of the death-machine that is Crinos. It’s useful for sneaking about in restricted areas that may contain both security cameras and security guards, or for calling upon boosted strength in a pinch. It’s easier to shift into than Crinos without calling upon a werewolf’s dangerous and precious reserves of inner fury. It is, in short, a blunt tool used to hammer down weak opposition or get a werewolf out of a nasty jam.

Few werewolves like to spend time idling in Glabro, even within the boundaries of a caern. The awkwardness of the claws and the difficulty of speech quickly become irritating, but moreover, the form is generally taken as an invitation to violence; most werewolves assume that addressing someone while in Glabro is an attempt to intimidate. That’s not always the case, of course, the Silver Fangs make addresses in Glabro, believing the form to possess an inherent regal nobility, and exert themselves to learn to speak clearly in the form, but most werewolves consider Glabro a form best called upon only when needed.

Glabro calls a werewolf to fight. Unlike Crinos, she does not want to slaughter, rend, and kill in the way of an animal. Instead, she wants to dominate her opponent and see the light of hope die in his eyes. It is the form of human physicality, of pushing her two-legged body to its limits and beyond as she runs and leaps and grabs and tears in a way that her Homid form cannot.

Lupus

Swift, nimble, *light*, and low to the ground, Lupus is the hunting-body, the tracking-body. To wolf-born Garou it is, of course, the most natural of the five forms, but for all others it takes a bit of adjusting. Not the basic movements of the form — all werewolves find themselves instinctively adept at moving on all fours, often to their surprise — but rather it is the significant difference in how the Lupus form perceives the world that throws many homids and even metis off.

The difference in height is the first major adjustment: Lupus is low-built. It has to stand up on its hind legs to investigate the objects on a table, but by the same standard, it has all sorts of options that would be awkward or difficult in a bipedal form, such as easily running *under* that same table to approach or evade an enemy.

Lupus has a wolf’s senses. A werewolf in this form can see in the dark much better than Homid can, and his vision is acutely attuned to movement, but his color range is

muddy and indistinct; the Lupus form perceives a world of smeary yellow-greens and blues, which entirely absorb red and orange. His other senses, though, are remarkable, not only can he hear into higher ranges than Homid, but his ears will swivel to more accurately triangulate sounds. And then there's his sense of smell...

Homid-born Garou have struggled since time immemorial to articulate the scents that pervade the world when in Lupus form. Lupus-born werewolves are the only ones who truly understand the resulting clumsy analogies, usually involving entire palettes of color that exist beyond normal vision, something the wolf-born have personal experience with. Lupus can distinguish individuals by scent from a significant distance, and moves through a world in which every inch of ground, every tree, every person, and every fallen leaf is broadcasting a mélange of information — assuming the wind cooperates. That's the part that homids and metis find most difficult to adjust to, when discovering their powerful new wolf-senses. With hearing and vision, a thing is either within line of sight or not, and is making noise or it isn't; but with scent, a werewolf can be nigh-omniscient or completely "blind" depending on the vagaries of scent-drift and air currents. If she's upwind of a target, then she may be able to see it plain as day but detect nothing about it with her nose, which many young homids find disconcerting.

Being covered in fur is also a new experience for those born to the human shape. It's not only surprisingly effective at keeping the werewolf warm, but it gives her a very fine sense of air-currents, movements around her, and the exact dimensions of tight-fitting passages and other close quarters, effectively adding texture and nuance to her sense of touch and coordination.

Aside from its powerful senses, Lupus is *fast*, and these two features make it valuable to most Garou. Certainly, the form is strong, and rugged, but werewolves have stronger and tougher forms for battle; any Garou fighting in Lupus is generally doing so because they don't think they need to bother shifting up to a more formidable form. No, Lupus can track a scent across fantastic distances, and pick up all sorts of sensory information that simply doesn't exist for the other forms; and Lupus can *move*. A wolf can effortlessly run down a human cyclist or catch up to a car driving in a residential area, and Lupus form is often far better-suited to cross-country travel than even a four-wheeled off-road vehicle. Lupus is also an excellent survival-form, in that it is well-suited both to hunting small game and staying warm through exposure to the elements.

Garou don't use Lupus form more often largely because it causes a stir around humans, it's ill-suited to complex communication of ideas, and for the simple lack of hands. Lupus tend to like spending time in their birth-form when it's possible and convenient to do so, but most of the time, other werewolves primarily draw on the wolf-skin for in-

formation-gathering. Wilderness excursions for normally city-bound werewolves are a notable exception; donning the wolf-form and going bounding and howling through the wilderness has a certain exhilarating sense of freedom, which appeals to even the most thoroughly urban homid. It feels, strangely, like coming home.

The instincts of the Lupus form are those of a wolf. It has a range of senses not available to other forms. As a result (and contrary to expectations), that makes it more willing to gather information before acting. Those instincts then drive towards quick and agile physical responses to problems: run, hide, fight, or kill. It evaluates situations around what a wolf can do — and of all forms has the fastest fight-or-flight response — even though a Garou's 'fight' instinct often involves taking a new form.

Hispo

The "near-wolf" form is to Lupus as Glabro is to Homid: a murderous approximation of the natural grace of the wolf, modified and expanded for the needs of bloody violence. The basic structure of Hispo echoes a wolf, but it is enormous, corded with muscle, and its anatomy emphasizes endurance over speed. The fur is thicker and heavier, granting it excellent protection from stray splinters, broken glass, and other incidental debris should the werewolf simply barrel through any obstacles in her path. Moving about in Hispo feels heavy and thudding in comparison to Lupus, though still far nimbler than Homid or Glabro. More than anything, it feels *powerful*. What it lacks in slim grace, Hispo makes up for in sheer driving muscle power.

The true focus of Hispo lies in its jaws; the form's head, shoulders, and chest are distorted into muscular dynamos powering the mouth and neck, giving it a more formidable bite pressure than a crocodile and the sheer power to rip meat and bone apart with a simple shake of its head. Even Crinos cannot match the raw devastation of Hispo's bite, though no sane Garou would want the tainted flesh of many Wyrmspawn splashed into their mouth and throat.

Though outwardly wolflike, no one could possibly mistake a hispo for a normal wolf; it stands as tall as a human being at the shoulder, and weighs more than a wolf and a human combined. In dim light, a werewolf in Hispo form could almost be mistaken for a small bear — at least, until it moves — displaying a powerful canine speed and striking force. Hispo dredges up primal memories of ancient terror. Anything that sees it cannot set aside the certain, marrow-deep knowledge that they are facing down an apex predator. As a result, Hispo is perhaps the form in which Garou tend to spend the least time; it's a symbol of intimidation and power, a mighty killer, a competent hunter, and little more. When hunting a spirit through the Umbra, Hispo is often deployed as a compromise between the tracking prowess of Lupus and the fighting power of Crinos.



Hispo's senses are much changed from Lupus'. A werewolf's color vision expands, with vestigial oranges appearing, though orange-red differentiation remains weak. The sense of smell drops off dramatically; the ability to pick up scents is far more powerful than Homid, but discerning subtle meaning and variation in them becomes impossible. Night vision and hearing remain as acute as in Lupus form.

Lupus-born Garou tend to be more comfortable fighting in Hispo than their homid counterparts. The quadrupedal stance is more familiar, as is the act of killing with a bite. Younger homids often find themselves a bit at a loss due to the lack of hands — and the first time their instincts drive their face into a fomor's vitals leave them feeling ill or traumatized. In time, though, almost all werewolves become accustomed to moving on two legs or four, fighting with every part of their manifold anatomy, and adopting shapes to suit their momentary needs rather than inherent preferences.

Crinos

Imagine a force of pure, spiritual nurturing — a mother, the Mother, wellspring of life, embodiment of the biosphere,

giver of breath, cradling the sea in her arms and inviting all living things to dwell upon her body. Imagine what it would take to provoke that Mother to anger — and then to hatred, and then to killing rage. Imagine the architect of tectonic forces, of growth and accomplishment, of fecundity, forests, beasts, and humanity, her brow contorted into a murderous glare. What shape would her fury take?

Those who have beheld a werewolf in Crinos form know the answer.

Werewolves are Gaia's warriors, designed to kill those things that threaten Her, and this is the form that embodies them in their purest function. A werewolf donning the Crinos form has chosen to turn her body into a weapon, and a deadly weapon at that. Crinos is not a form of compromise or restraint. It exists to fight, and to kill what it fights. More than anything else, the Garou believe that Crinos is their truest shape, the very embodiment of what it means to be a werewolf.

Crinos is not a shape donned by calm Garou. Indeed, it takes practice and high Gnosis for a werewolf to assume the shape outside of a combat situation. Those without

that degree of control argue with or even fight one another, kindling the Rage that calls to the war-form.

As a result, Crinos is a form of profound spiritual meaning to most tribes, and those werewolves who can often adopt it outside of battle. Many sacred rites are conducted in Crinos, challenging the Garou participating in them to draw focus, precision, and contemplation from a skin constructed for rage and destruction. If Crinos is at the heart of the Garou condition, then is it not important to thoroughly understand that form? Cliath often don't realize that they can take Crinos without a real risk of frenzy, that they too can learn to ride the wave of Rage and the need to kill.

Some tribes—particularly the Shadow Lords and the Get of Fenris—look on Crinos as a form of inspiration and leadership in rituals and in battle, while others treat Crinos as a form of dominance and intimidation, and prefer to use it solely to spill blood. Ultimately, it's a matter that varies from tribe to tribe and sept to sept, and which makes relations between Garou strained and difficult. Every time a Silent Strider arrives at the bawn of a strange caern carrying a message, she must decide whether being greeted in Crinos is a gesture of respect, a threat, an attempt to impress, or some mixture of the all of those, as well as decide how shifting in response would be taken.

Crinos is *power*. The werewolf's perspective towers above the Homid and Glabro forms, as an upright Crinos can easily reach nine or even ten feet in height; she looks down on what she intends to kill. Her muscles are like mighty hawser-cables, her bones like concrete, her flesh tough enough to turn a knife with little difficulty. Her hands can snap shut with enough force to pulverize bone, and are tipped with wicked, curving claws capable not merely of disemboweling, but of shearing a human being in half, and her bite is similarly deadly, capable of parting muscle and crushing bone with casual ease. Her nerves sing in concert with the pulse of her Rage, granting her faster reflexes than Homid or Glabro, and her powerful legs make her swift and difficult to evade. Despite that, Crinos form is top-heavy with muscle, so a fully developed tail helps to balance her fast-moving, hard-fighting body. Humans and wolves seem like very fragile things next to her.

To shift from Lupus or Homid to Crinos is to gain what feels like boundless, outrageous power. The weakest Crinos form among the People is still the equal of any Olympic weight-lifter, and far deadlier, while a fit werewolf in this form can easily tear apart a grizzly bear. The youngest generation of Garou sometimes refer to the act of entering Crinos form as “hulking out,” or “taking the safety off,” at least until an older Theurge overhears such irreverence and beats some discipline into them.

Rage feels more acute, closer to the surface, clearer and purer while in the Crinos form, and in the wake of the First Change, most young Garou are cautioned to treat this skin as though it were a loaded gun: “Do not assume

PORTRAYING THE FORMS

Some groups will want to portray the various forms in a more direct and physical manner than just naming their characters' forms. Whether as a means of character immersion or as part of live-action play, acting out the different forms can help players get into the right mindset. The following guidelines may help portray the non-Homid forms.

Glabro: Lean forwards when sitting, and hunch over when standing. Keep your arms bent, and your hands wider apart than your shoulders. Spread your fingers slightly. Frown slightly all the time and keep your jaw clenched. Take longer strides when walking, keeping your knees bent.

Lupus: Lean forwards, but keep your arms close in. If you're sitting at a table, keep your hands on the table and put some weight on them, if standing instead keep your feet at most shoulder-width apart. Keep your neck extended and your chin up, turning your head frequently to look and listen for threats.

Hispo: Marry the wide, hunched stance of Glabro with the more mobile head movements of Lupus. Bare your teeth in response to danger or threats, and jerk forwards whenever you feel the desire to flinch. When walking, keep on the balls of your feet.

Crinos: Straighten up, with your shoulders back and chest out, and lean forwards. Keep your arms wide and fingers spread. When standing, spread your feet at least shoulder-width apart. Walk on the balls of your feet. Bare your teeth frequently. When facing a potential threat, straighten up further to assume a big and powerful stance.

Crinos form unless in the presence of something you mean to destroy.” Indeed, spending any time in Crinos without drawing blood often leads to a loss of Honor. Crinos brings with it an impulse to take the shape in response to simple provocations, the werewolf equivalent of puffing up and advancing chest-to-chest among humans — but this is a terribly dangerous impulse — as the electric Rage of Crinos makes it very difficult for a werewolf to back down from such a display. Those with a high Gnosis and a great deal of self-control become much more comfortable riding the line between murderous rage and calculated control, but such lessons only come with time and scars.

Partial Transformation

In addition to the ability to shift between their five different skins, werewolves may provoke their bodies into partial transformations by shifting only certain body parts, or bringing forth specific attributes of one form into another. It's a difficult art, sometimes painful, and always requires intense concentration. While shapeshifting is like triggering a muscle reflex, partial transformation is more akin to assuming difficult Yogic postures — coaxing the body into doing something of which it is capable — but not designed or necessarily prepared for.

Common partial transformations include taking on the Lupus muzzle when in Homid for the enhanced sense of smell, adding deadlier fangs or larger claws to Glabro form, and modifying the forepaws of Hispo into clawed hands. The most popular partial transformations, though, tend to fall into two categories. The first involves the stealthy addition of deadly weapons to Homid form — growing claws or fangs the werewolf keeps concealed until she gets within striking range of a well-protected target. Likely the most common, though, is the adoption of sensory modifications into forms that don't have them: giving the Lupus form human eyes with which to discern a full color range, for example; or granting Homid form the night-vision (and reflective eyes) of a wolf, or a modified semi-snout capable of picking up scents.

Because partial transformations are draining, feel awkward, and require significant concentration, many Garou simply choose not to use them; some werewolves never learn the trick at all, preferring to simply shift forms. *Why add hands to Hispo*, they argue, *when one can simply shift up to Crinos?* Those who practice partial shapeshifting tend to do so either because they prefer the subtlety and nuance the art provides, or because they are wearing un-dedicated clothing and shifting to the form with the needed feature would leave them naked. Partial transformation is a necessity of Kailindo, using fast partial transformation to enhance her fighting prowess. The art requires a werewolf master shapeshifting to a high level, often requiring a great deal of self-control and Gnosis to perform at the speed of combat.

The Language of the Wild

Outside of Homid, none of a werewolf's forms are well-suited to using human language. Glabro can manage speech, but it is guttural and shaped by the different jaw alignment, making speaking for extended times very painful. Those who can ride the wave of Rage when in Crinos form can at best manage a few human words — “Kill,” “Fight,” or the like — but they come out as twisted barks from a creature clearly unsuited for language.

The Garou have their own language, the language of the Wild. This tongue allows a werewolf to communicate in Glabro, Crinos, and Hispo forms. It uses a combination of growls, howls, body language, and snarls to convey meaning.

PARTIAL TRANSFORMATION

Q: Can a werewolf use partial transformation to employ full regeneration in her breed form?

A: No. Regeneration is a whole-body adaptation, and can't be evoked by simply transforming a single body part.

Q: Can a werewolf enhance the natural weapons of one form into a deadlier version? For example, inflicting aggravated damage with Glabro's claws, or gaining the Hispo bite bonus in Crinos?

A: Yes, but the transformation is always obvious, and usually rather grotesque. Glabro's hands become massive, outsized rending claws, while Crinos' entire posture twists forward as the jaws, neck, and chest adopt Hispo's dedicated anatomy for biting.

Q: Can sensory transformations be done without anyone noticing?

A: It's very difficult to transform the ear enough to pick up the extended sound range of a wolf without radically transforming its outward anatomy, or to reshape an eye for night-vision without making it immediately, visibly inhuman to a casual observer. At the Storyteller's discretion, a player might be able to manage “invisible” sensory transformations if they roll five or more successes on their Dexterity + Primal Urge roll to evoke the feature.

While the Glass Walkers developed a written representation in the late-nineteenth century, no human can speak it. It has taken a long time for septs to accept even this written form, with traditionalists insisting that the language of the Wild cannot be captured by mere writing.

Most septs teach their cubs the traditional form of the language, which lacks words for many human inventions. Some Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers have tried to expand the vocabulary, but such variations remain strictly local, and at best, form a kind of dialect. Particularly modernized or radical septs of urban Garou dismiss the need for the Garou tongue entirely, speaking in human languages in Homid and Glabro, and communicating in Hispo and Lupus as they would with wolves.

The Mind

To think of a werewolf as a human or wolf endowed with supernatural powers is to deeply misunderstand what

a werewolf is; a mistake often made by ill-informed First Teams and even by well-meaning Kinfolk. While this is the baseline from which most Garou begin, the First Change leads to the werewolf's mind blossoming, a change at least as profound as those that occur in the body. The fragmentary instincts and odd, truncated impulses that have been present throughout a werewolf's life suddenly *make sense*. As her body changes, so does the way she thinks about herself and approaches the world around her.

Senses

Each of a werewolf's five forms possess markedly different sensory capabilities, from the expanded color palette of Homid to the vast and nuanced world of scent available to Lupus. Once a werewolf becomes accustomed to these expanded senses, it becomes difficult to make do without them; she's constantly aware that there are sounds all around her that her Homid ears aren't picking up, and a world of scent-cues going wholly unnoticed. The urge to find some private place to shapeshift, at least for a few moments, can be very strong.

Ultimately, though, a werewolf's senses are generally a source of confidence rather than tension. So what if a drug pusher goes to ground in a network of abandoned tenements? A wolf's hearing is keen enough to pick up the sound of shifting fabric or a shoe sliding across concrete from outside of the building it's happening in. So what if a Pentex officer runs while a werewolf is busy dispatching his bodyguards? Every drop of sweat he sheds, every contact between his oily hands and any surface he passes during his flight, leaves a scent trail as clear and bright as neon that the werewolf can follow at her leisure. When the lights go out just before a First Team launches a coordinated ambush, the gut instinct of most werewolves is to shift to Hispo, whose reflective eye-membranes give the form excellent nightvision.

Expanded senses form an invisible but significant element of Garou identity, one that sets them apart from Kinfolk but forms a base foundation of common experience with other werewolves. If a Ragabash scout warns of a gang of hidden fomori stalking the inner city, each outwardly normal, save for a hot blue odor coiling just under the skin, his description will be useless to anyone save another werewolf, who understands her description of scent perfectly.

Ultimately, the Garou do most of their planning and communication in human languages, and human languages are ill-designed to describe scents, so a fair bit of shorthand and adaptation creeps in. Homid-born werewolves tend to describe scents in terms of colors and textures: "It was a rough red odor, so powerful I could pick it up wafting from the far bank where it crossed a stream." Lupus-born Garou instead tend toward tastes and temperatures: "The thing had a cold, sour reek. Even worse after we opened it up." These are often paired with common comparisons to create a more detailed impression:

QUICK REFERENCE: FORMS AND SENSES

A quick and dirty cheat-sheet to which unique senses belong to each form:

Homid: Full color vision.

Glabro: Full color vision, slightly enhanced hearing.

Crinos: Full color vision, low-light vision, slightly enhanced hearing, slightly enhanced scent.

Hispo: Low-light/low-color vision, enhanced hearing, enhanced scent.

Lupus: Low-light/low-color vision, greatly enhanced hearing, vastly enhanced scent, slightly enhanced direction sense.

pine sap, sour meat, evaporating rain, blood both fresh and old, musk, concrete, dry, wet, or turned soil, grass, or deer. Warning another werewolf of a scent to watch for can be an inexact science, but most Garou are able to get their point across well enough to be recognized: "*You'll know you're drawing near to the Black Rushes Sept when you find the scent-marks of their wolfkin. The Rushes have that unmistakable scent of wolf-mark with a high yellow tone to it, very distinct.*"

Urges and Instincts

Each werewolf possesses a bundle of primal instincts woven into the fiber of their being by Gaia and passed down essentially unchanged since the dawn of time. For lupus werewolves, this is essentially their natural state of being; it is the flowering of reason and the logical mind that provides the great shock to Garou born of wolves. For homids, however, these powerful natural instincts lay largely dormant until after the First Change, and it takes some work to bring them into focus.

Many Garou describe this instinct, this primal urge, as *the understanding of how to be a wild thing*. A human may learn to track – to mark spoor, to follow prey, to recognize game trails – and a werewolf may do so as well, but they can also tap into a primordial hunter's instinct. Werewolves easily recognize fear, desire, and inattention. They know how close a running man is to collapse, or how long a wounded beast can continue to flee before blood loss brings it down. This takes no study; the knowledge offers itself up from the depths of nose and eye and sinew.

Some say that a werewolf's instincts are at their sharpest in Lupus and Hispo, but it's more accurate to say that these forms are

PRIMAL-URGE SYSTEMS

The Primal-Urges Talent measures a shapeshifter's rapport with the basic instincts Gaia granted her to help her in her mission, and how comfortable she is when drawing a balance between human and beast. In the case of the Garou, this is a hunter-nature, a killer-nature, a predator-nature. A werewolf is a wild and untamed thing, and this can be both intensely attractive, and intensely frightening for the humans around her.

In general, Primal-Urges may sometimes be a poor man's substitute for several other Abilities: most often Animal-Ken, Survival, Intimidation, Empathy, and Expression (assuming the expression is a very blunt display of emotion, not relying on eloquent speech). Such substitution raises the difficulty of the roll by 3.

While the rules for animal attraction are on pages 276-277 of W20, the same basic principle can extend to a few other uses:

- **Killing Aura:** By rolling (Charisma or Appearance) + Primal-Urges, difficulty 8, the werewolf may heighten the Curse that afflicts all werewolves so that she radiates a palpable, murderous aura. If successful, *all* humans who encounter her for the rest of the scene are subject to the Curse, regardless of their Willpower score.
- **Reading and Projecting Intent:** Language barriers aren't as much impediment to a werewolf as to humans. A difficulty 8 Perception + Primal-Urges roll will allow a werewolf to pick up the very general gist of most emotion-rooted attempts to communicate ("you need to leave," "get away from my daughter," "come, eat," "I am grateful," and so forth), while a difficulty 9 Manipulation + Primal-Urges roll allows her to project a range of very basic attitudes through sheer body language, without resorting to any sort of pantomime: hunger, irritation, anger, peace, and pleasure are the most common.
- **Cowing:** The werewolf may direct a focused flash of murderous intent toward another individual to force them to back down. Roll Charisma + Primal-Urges against a difficulty of the target's Willpower rating, requiring a number of successes equal to their current Willpower points. This only works on one individual at a time; if successful, the target will abandon any posture of confrontation toward the werewolf, though they won't necessarily obey the werewolf's demands. Cowing doesn't work on spirits, other shapeshifters, or any sort of supernatural being capable of inhuman anger or aggression, such as vampires.

best equipped to execute the bone-deep actions of seeking, hunting, tracking, and long navigating. Lupus, for example, can sense the Earth's magnetic field – it's a vestigial sense, to be sure, even less refined than Homid's sense of smell – but it's there. Rather than acting as a blunt mechanical compass, it helps the werewolf instinctively stay on-course during long cross-country travel.

While a werewolf's predatory nature is most easily expressed in wolf-skin, the knowledge and instincts carry themselves into all her forms. A werewolf in homid is uniquely suited to sending a look across a boardroom conference table that conveys, subtly but unmistakably, *I am sizing you up as something to eat*, just as easily as they can focus their personal magnetism into a wordless but overwhelming statement of *I want you*.

Modern Garou call this primal concentration-of-self "animal attraction," but it has many older names, mostly informal: donning the wolf, showing teeth, staring down, lighting up, or primal magnetism. Animal attraction's primary use has always been acquiring mates – useful, given the often isolated or rootless existence many werewolves are forced to adopt – but it's much

more versatile than that. Most werewolves have tremendous facility for both reading and employing body language, especially that which expresses their predatory nature or which reacts to that nature with either challenge or submission.

The Wild Spirit

A werewolf's primal instincts help her and inform her behavior in hundreds of subtle ways that make her off-putting to humans, and occasionally recognizable to observant Kinfolk. A werewolf's instincts are not merely those of a wolf, but rather an inborn aptitude for the role Gaia designed her for: a warrior, a killer, a destroyer of all things that despoil the good Earth. A werewolf in touch with her primal self instinctively puts her back to the sun when danger looms. She slows as she approaches windows, to glance out before she herself can be seen. She avoids letting her shadow stretch around blind corners. These behaviors are all unconscious.

Her instincts also incorporate a spiritual dimension. Werewolves often feel their hackles rise (literally or otherwise) when

in the presence of powerful spiritual energy or activity, or when the Umbra presses close against the Earth; these nascent senses form the basis for refined Gifts such as Sense Wyrm or Sense Wyld. Indeed, it's difficult for a werewolf to disentangle her physical and spiritual senses, and often pointless — her nature encompasses flesh and ephemera equally—and to her, the sensory and the numinous are generally interchangeable. As a result, werewolves are often puzzled when they chance upon (or, more often, seize) the writings of magi and other human explorers of the Umbra, who speak of colors beyond comprehension, inexpressible sensations, and concepts-made-real. Werewolves experience both physical and spiritual reality through a baseline of raw sensation, using their keen instincts to draw meaning and certainty from the alien forms and landscapes of the Umbra and its inhabitants. It's for this reason that the Garou so often speak of "the stench of the Wyrm," for example. The Sense Wyrm Gift doesn't operate through any one physical organ — battle-scarred werewolves with no functional sense of smell at all use the Gift with no difficulty whatsoever—but the corrosive spiritual effluvia that is the essence of the Corruptor presents itself to the Garou as a powerfully offensive *sensation*, most often expressed as a horrendous reek. A werewolf asked to sit and carefully explain the sensation will likely acknowledge that it's not a physical scent, but scent is how she's most likely to interpret it, and few Garou see much point to splitting hairs between a physical stench and the *spiritual impression* of a stench. Either way, it cuts down on the cerebral and intellectual process of deciphering spiritual reality, which gives werewolves a significant advantage when exploring the Umbra.

In addition to sharpening her battle instincts and her spiritual awareness, the werewolf's primal nature governs her facility with shapeshifting. The more in touch a Garou is with her primordial instincts, the faster she can trigger the changing-reflex without tapping into her Rage. This skill is far easier to learn shortly after the First Change with Garou teachers; no matter how natural it is, those raised outside the Garou Nation must take time to learn to control their forms.

For an awkward and alienated young homid, shapeshifting can be an awkward process of forcing herself through interstitial form after form, even perhaps accompanied by momentary slips and stops as she attempts to trigger a shift and instead falls back into her original form. Those close to their wolven nature, by contrast, have an easier time learning to slide through several skins in a single smooth transition. This, the elders warn, can be the difference between life and death when the Wyrm's children come calling.

The World Through Five Sets of Eyes

Taken all together, a werewolf is a creature capable of relating to humans, but who no longer thinks like a human.

Above all, werewolves carry an inherent sense of superiority: a trait that has, throughout history, enabled great accomplishments, but also brought great sorrow when allowed to run wild. Still, it's a part of nearly every werewolf's psychology. Werewolves are tougher, faster, stronger, more perceptive, better-informed, and possess a clearer spiritual identity than those around them, and they know it.

The exact manifestation of this trait varies by Auspice.

Ragabash are hyper-aware of the foibles of those around them, always alert to hypocrisy, lies, and self-deception. They rely on reading people with their bestial instincts, and on the keen senses of their lupine forms to listen in from afar, to lurk quietly in small spaces, to determine when someone's scent doesn't match their words. A Ragabash knows that others aren't watching the world around them as intently as she does, and that even if they were, they don't have nearly so many ways to determine the truth. A Ragabash will look past the basic facts of whatever situation she is in, instead spotting the potential lesson, which she must then reveal to those around her.

Theurges, concerned as they are with matters spiritual, always have a spiritual awareness at the periphery of their thoughts. Their first instinct in any situation is to consider the deeper meaning of the matters before them; a person is not merely a cop, a teacher, or a lawyer, but rather a force whose attitudes and actions ripple into the world of spirits and alter the health of the cosmos. It can be difficult, puzzling, frightening, and even dangerous for a stranger to come face-to-face with a Theurge when his very first evaluation is "*This is a person apt to draw Banes to revel in her misery.*"

Philodox are similarly concerned with evaluating the world around them, both to judge its conduct and evaluate its tensions. Reading moods and attitudes becomes second nature to most judges, but so does pushing people into line. Other Garou expect a Philodox not only to pass judgment but to keep those around her in good order. Faced with a situation edging out of control, whether a moot growing too rowdy, a pup becoming insolent, or a bar full of humans edging toward violence, her first instinct is to step in to cow the instigators, either through simple presence or physical force. It seems right and natural for these Garou to insert themselves into the lives of even complete strangers as stabilizing or at least neutralizing forces. It is, after all, why Gaia saw fit to bid them walk upon her.

Galliards are creatures of great relentless energy and curiosity, and of all Garou, the most bedeviled by the sensory limitations of the five forms. What record of glorious battle is complete without a profile of scents, colors, sounds, shifting winds? What is best expressed in song or poetry? What is best expressed through body language? What can only be captured in the pure emotion of a howl? Because he is called upon to master so many sorts of communication and expression, a Galliard

is often the most outwardly “visible” of all werewolves, as his mannerisms and practices of the various forms bleed together. In Homid form he will talk as much with body language as with voice, leaning in close to pick up scents, and emphasizing points in casual conversation by showing his teeth. When challenged or irritated, he will loom as though he were wearing the Glabro form, even when he remains in Homid.

Ahrouns swagger, even the humble ones. They are always aware of the killing power lurking in their bevy of warrior-skins, always confident they can bring absolute crushing power to bear to solve problems. The best Ahrouns foster a kind of delicate care, she knows very well that she can break the people and things around her, and therefore feels no need to prove it. The worst become bullies, eager to embrace the power Gaia gave them, whether the circumstances are right or wrong.

A Fragile World

Though Ahrouns concern themselves most intimately with the sheer power lurking in a werewolf’s body, all Garou have an acute awareness of their strength, and it greatly changes the way they interact with the world around them.

Whether caught in a burning second-floor apartment, with fire between her and the door, facing someone who is pointing a gun at her, or having the police arrive in the wake of a confrontation at a bar and deciding to arrest her, werewolves exist in a different world from humans.

The first two situations illustrate the power and confidence that most werewolves enjoy in the face of all but the direst supernatural challenges. A human in a burning apartment is in desperate trouble, especially if the fire escape fell away half a decade ago and has never been replaced. The only options left are to hope for rescue, or attempt to bundle up in wet blankets and rush out anyway, surely suffering terrible burns in the process. Though fire is one of the few things capable of easily killing a werewolf, a Garou in the same situation has countless options. She can simply throw herself out of the window in a regenerating form and any broken bones will heal in less than a minute, assuming that her resilient body doesn’t weather the impact with nothing more than a few bruises in the first place. Or she can shift up to Crinos and simply power through a plaster and sheetrock wall to escape into the hallway.

The world, for a werewolf, is breakable. Barriers that enclose other people are simply obstacles that require a bit of force to knock down. The same is true for most other impediments. Most werewolves are strong enough to bend steel security bars or rip them out of their housings. Hispo can power through nearly any wooden wall and still maintain enough momentum to attack whoever’s on the other side. Locked doors, even reinforced security doors, look to werewolves like “kick me” signs.

Guns are symbols of death, power, fear, and authority to humans, but aiming a gun at a werewolf is likely to provoke



little save anger and contempt. Luples and Hispo forms are fast enough to extend the 21-foot rule to almost any battlefield, and nothing shy of serious military hardware can do close-range damage comparable to a werewolf in Crinos—certainly, no werewolf much worries about one or two bullet wounds. Garou only feel physically threatened by humans when well-armed and in significant numbers. This can be a problem for some Garou faced with that exact situation, such as an armed search party or a SWAT team. Years of being able to contemptuously dismiss danger from mere people with guns makes them loathe to back down from an armed posse capable of genuinely threatening even their own very resilient life.

This attitude of power and resilience makes many werewolves impatient and destructive. Shapeshifting and regeneration mean that it's often fastest and easiest to simply smash through a problem, ignoring collateral damage to innocent bystanders, and continue her path.

The third hypothetical scenario — the police arrest — illustrates the downsides of this mentality, and it's a common teaching-exercise used when helping young werewolves adjust to their new lives. So the cops have appeared, and are attempting to arrest a werewolf: What does she do? Certainly, she can fight. It's the most obvious option, and indeed her instincts are probably telling her to do exactly that. If she does, she'll almost certainly win — even armed with shotguns, two cops are no match for the killing blur that is Crinos — but it's a victory she and her entire sept are likely to regret. If captured on dash-cam, the werewolf has rent the Veil and violated the Litany. If not, then she's "merely" put an entire county's worth of police on the warpath, or perhaps filled the woods with ignorant humans carrying shotguns and looking for the mad beast that tore two officers to pieces.

What else, then? The werewolf can run; nobody's going to catch a fleeing wolf, especially not once they're out of their police car, and (unless Luples is her breed form) she can shrug off any stray shots that manage to hit her and let the Delirium pick up the pieces. A better option, but still messy.

There are still other options, though, as any Ragabash will attest, usually with a grin and a tap to the forehead. It's often easiest for a werewolf to put out her hands and be arrested and loaded into the back of a police car. As long as she can shapeshift, she can become strong enough to ditch out of the car at any time she pleases. She'll certainly never be booked or fingerprinted. Handcuffs pose very little problem for a shapeshifter; the choice of whether to snap them off in a form of power or simply let them slip off the slender forepaws of Luples is up to the werewolf after she escapes.

These are simply the basic capabilities *all* werewolves possess. Other Garou develop favorite approaches or attitudes based on Gifts they've received from the spirit world. Rather than running, fighting, or escaping, many homids

like to use Persuasion to talk their way out of problems, or flee through an urban landscape with City Running. Luples Garou often use Hare's Leap to stalk their prey along rooftops. In any situation, a werewolf generally feels that she has a plethora of fallbacks, options, and ways to simply bypass problems that would daunt or destroy any mere human. It takes work, though, to remember the subtler options; a werewolf's first instinct is usually to reach her goals through violence and brute force.

The Beast Within

Power, superiority, and Rage form the foundation of Garou psychology, but they are also the great bane of the People. It's not that the Garou are unthinking brutes or even raving psychotics; it's simply that they are what Gaia made them to be: fighters, killers, protectors of their Mother. Werewolves are a living embodiment of the credo: "The best defense is a good offense," and their mentality and instincts revolve around their warrior-purpose.

In most situations where a werewolf is threatened, belittled, dismissed, or otherwise made to feel small—deliberately or otherwise — their first instinct is not only to push back, but to escalate the situation. The Black Furies and Get of Fenris are especially notorious for not only giving into this urge, but in glorifying it, while the Children of Gaia caution against it. A werewolf must, of course, preserve his honor and pride, but it can be difficult to temper such instincts with wisdom, such as by discriminating between a formal challenge of station at a moot and simply dealing with a mouthy human at a pub. The basic instinct is the same in either case: push back, and push back hard.

Some werewolves, especially Ahroun, wonder why they should bother to ever turn the other cheek. What difference does it make if they answer a drunken lout's crude threats with a bottle to the jaw? Violent responses can easily become habitual, and challenges are a constant fact when werewolves interact with humans. That may simply be disruptive and occasionally inconvenient where strangers are concerned, but the Garou are not an isolated group, able to perpetuate itself apart from the world. To turn the same escalation-instinct toward Kinfolk is a vile and self-defeating action, but also, sadly, one that has been justified countless times down through the ages.

This simple fact governs all interaction between Garou and the world: Rage lives in every werewolf. Every Garou has seen, firsthand, the true and glorious beauty of the cosmos, of life itself, laid bare before their many wondrous senses. They've felt the currents of the invisible world and the pulse of their Mother beating throughout Creation and within their souls. They have seen Gaia's malady made real, the towering edifices of humanity spewing toxic fumes into the skies and burying the wild beneath a prison of concrete.

They have witnessed pure and unquestionable good being poisoned, torn, befooled, rent, raped, and mutilated. The answer, wholly measured and proportionate to the crime, lives in their nature: absolute, unreasoning, murderous hatred and Rage. The cleverest, collected, laughing, and upbeat Ragabash carries within him the capacity to commit murder at a moment's notice and then to retire to the sleep of the just and righteous mere minutes later.

Anger Management

Not only does that sizzling core of molten fury never completely go away, it's integral for a werewolf's well-being. Without Rage, her various advantages—her speed, her forms, many of her supernatural blessings — become difficult or impossible to access. She feels alienated from herself, and cannot draw on the power of her war-form. And yet, Rage can erupt out of control, driving a werewolf into an uncontrolled, murderous frenzy, a possibility that every Garou is not only aware of, but which they almost inevitably experience during the First Change, and then again at various points throughout the rest of their lives.

Most werewolves—though the Stargazers form a notable exception—have a dim view of standard human anger-management techniques such as taking slow breaths, counting to ten, or reciting mantras. In all honesty, it's difficult for a werewolf to accept the idea that her Rage is *wrong*; it always feels true and justified in the heat of the moment, and when facing down a Black Spiral Dancer, a slavering fomor, or the incarnate corruption of a Bane, Rage is a valuable tool. But that same inner flame leaps up when a werewolf feels slighted at a moot, when her husband slams a door in frustration, when the neighbor's dog keeps her up barking into the night, when some asshole cuts her off in traffic, or when her pack's Ragabash laughs in response to a serious plan.

The werewolf who doesn't control her Rage will surely ruin herself and those around her. Yoking that fury and keeping it contained is the difference between becoming a storied hero or a cautionary tale about a fool who murdered her friends and family in a fit of anger.

The answer, for many werewolves, is Lupus form; the longer a werewolf remains exposed to whatever is triggering her Rage, the harder it is to resist, so the best option is to leave. For those who live with a werewolf, the sight of a spouse or parent storming out and vanishing for several hours is a common one. When anger scrapes against a werewolf's spine, heats her eyes, and puts the taste of blood in her mouth, the best solution is frequently to go away for a while, and no form of travel is as swift or direct as Lupus. The werewolf can also try to lose herself in the glory of her expanded senses until her heart finds its center, or pick up a scent and hunt. Blood can act as a balm to Rage, and if some hare, pheasant, or squirrel pays the price, it's much preferable to throating a friend or hurling beloved Kinfolk into a wall.

Other werewolves, either bounded in by an urban landscape or preferring a more spiritual approach to balancing their inner fire, prefer to channel their Rage into rites of expiation or tranquility. Self-flagellation was once a widespread practice for letting out "hot blood," but its popularity has waned over the last century, and now it mostly survives only among certain sects of Shadow Lords, Get of Fenris, and Fianna. Today, most rites intended to control a werewolf's Rage focus on the Garou opening herself to the glory of Gaia, communing with some fetish designed for a purpose other than war, or beseeching her pack totem to calm her spirit. In any case, many werewolves find the demands of concentration and exacting ritual to be an excellent means of drawing their thoughts away from destruction.

Social Instincts

For all their power, anger, and self-sufficiency, werewolves are inherently social creatures. So-called "lone wolves" tend to be nervous, angry, unbalanced, and unhappy creatures. A deep part of every werewolf craves structure and a bond with others of her kind; having a pack is a fundamental requirement of Garou psychology.

A proper Garou pack is more than simply a gathering of like-minded friends. The pack-bond is both social and spiritual, and it forms an important "finishing" component in a werewolf's self-conception. It's easy to conceive of a werewolf as fitting into a few "boxes," so to speak: Joanne Sees-Far, homid-born Ragabash of the Uktena. But a werewolf's sense of self is almost always tied up in her pack just as much as her other spiritual affiliations. She is not only her role under Gaia and her tribal heritage, she is a vital part of a larger organism in the form of her pack. Indeed, it's common for a Garou to be judged and evaluated by the reputation of his pack before being considered on his own merit.

A werewolf without a pack tends to melancholy, formless stress, and eventual paranoia. A fundamental part of her world is missing, leaving a shapeless hole in her life that she cannot truly fill by accomplishment or love. She needs not only the company of other werewolves, but the hierarchy and spiritual unity that comes of being bound into a pack.

Pack living helps smooth a lot of the rough edges off werewolf psychology, as well. Being cut short by an Ahroun during battle simply doesn't raise the hackles nearly as much as it would were it coming from anyone else at any other time—if it does, then it's likely that a dominance-challenge is soon in the offing. Werewolves find it easier to pace themselves, to keep their Rage in check, and to bring it back under control when they *do* unleash it while operating with their pack. Some describe it as a kind of collective will, a group map of expectations that lets them know what they must do without having to struggle with Rage or wrangle errant instincts.

Soul

As creatures of both flesh and spirit, the Garou call upon two distinct reserves of energy to aid them in their fight against the Wyrm and its minions. A werewolf's Rage is both a seemingly boundless source of anger and a constant source of tragic bloodshed, while her Gnosis brings wisdom, restraint, and connection to the Umbra. These two energies are both complimentary to one another, and diametrically opposed. Rage is the furious, white-hot anger of a dying goddess, and Gnosis is the tranquil, natural energy of the spirit world.

Werewolves channel both in different measure according to their talents, and with no small influence from their birth and Auspice. Still, when a werewolf calls upon her reserves of either of these two energies, she evokes vastly different feelings.

Rage

The Garou Nation is somewhat at odds on where exactly their Rage comes from. The predominant theory is that a werewolf's Rage is truly Gaia's, pushed through Her children to take the fight to the Wyrm. It's certainly an easy explanation; after all, certainly Gaia is angry about the depredations taken on Her terrestrial body, and extends that anger to Her warriors, through Rage.

The tribes differ on the greatest threat. Whether that is the Bone Gnawer's drive towards class war, the Red Talons' antipathy for humanity, or the Wendigo's burning hatred of colonialism, each tribe sees one manifestation of the Wyrm as the greatest threat. That drives conflict among the Garou, as their anger spills over towards anyone who prioritizes a different threat. These arguments and fights keep the werewolves' Rage burning, but all too often it goes too far, leading to fights and challenges – and even Frenzy. The all-too-common result of this infighting is injured or dead packmates, divided septs, and the Wyrm's forces going unopposed.

Nevertheless, that's not the only theory. Some werewolves hold that Luna, not Gaia, provides Rage, through the auspices. Proponents of this theory point out the fact that even right after the First Change, an Ahroun holds and channels more Rage than a Ragabash. Even those werewolves who disagree with the notion admit that it has merit on that fact alone.

Other Garou believe that Rage is a direct product of the Wyrm's perversion of the world. It is a supernatural fury that springs from seeing the way that humans do the Wyrm's work in the name of spreading 'civilization.' In this interpretation, Rage is not a natural thing but an instinctive response to seeing the corruption of the world that comes naturally to every werewolf when they understand Gaia's likely fate.

ALTERNATIVE ARRANGEMENTS

What of oddities such as the kganmadi and sentai (mixed-Fera 'packs') of Africa and Asia? Those few werewolves who have been members of both traditional packs and one of these more unusual arrangements report that a mixed-Fera environment doesn't provide quite the benison to Rage that they experience in the company of other werewolves. On the other hand, the spirit-bond of a shared totem and communal camaraderie does a fair job of satisfying a werewolf's need for community and socializing, even if the particulars of getting along with talkative ravens and bitter hyenas from day to day may prove aggravating.

A quiet few, found mostly among members of the Star-gazers and Children of Gaia, contend that Rage is the dark spark of the Wyrm held deep within their breasts. Most such werewolves put a great deal of effort into fighting smarter, not harder, using their Rage sparingly lest they feed the taint within them. Others instead use it – if nothing else they're fighting fire with fire. Still others take a more philosophical bent and suggest that while yes, Rage is the taint of the Wyrm, it's from the time before the Wyrm went mad. They see no problem with using the spark of the original, primal Wyrm of destruction against the debased and sorry corruptor it has become.

Regardless of its source, no werewolf denies that Rage is a useful tool in the war against the Wyrm. A werewolf calls upon her inner Rage to both slaughter her enemies more quickly and to give herself a second wind when those enemies prove too much for her. In this way, Rage acts as a double-edged sword, both taking and giving life.

What does it feel like, though, this Rage?

The werewolf feels a slight pressure in her temples. Her muscles feel partially tense constantly, especially in the nape of her neck, her shoulders, and her chest. Neither sensation is enough to cause a distraction, or even cross into actual pain, but it's enough that the werewolf is aware of it. The more Rage she holds on to, the more pressure and tension the werewolf feels. In this way, she has a vague sense of how much Rage she has at any given time. While she doesn't think of things in terms of "how many points of Rage do I have left?" she still has a notion that her anger is something she channels to specific ends. The better she can gauge how much energy she has in reserve, the more efficiently and accurately she can stretch herself in battle.

In addition to these physical sensations, while holding Rage, a werewolf is on edge. She's quicker to lash out, and more violent when she does, and is harder and harder to live with. These attitudes increase the more Rage the werewolf holds at any given time. Conversely, a smaller reserve of Rage belies a more cautious werewolf, a Garou more willing to engage in diplomacy or similar, non-violent activities.

Fury Runneth Over

Rage, by its nature, is a double-edged sword. Even older, more experienced werewolves find themselves slipping the leash on occasion. For all the good Rage can do, its dangers never leave the Garou, even for a moment, as invoking it always risks Frenzy.

When a werewolf's Rage gets the better of him, he falls into frenzy. His vision goes both blurry and more precise at the same moment, while the target of his ire comes into sharp detail, other objects in his field of vision become slightly blurred. A fire rips through his body as every nerve ending fires on all cylinders. His heart pounds, threatening to push straight through his ribcage. And through it all, a dull roar in the ears—whether it's an internal scream, or his ears blocking out the external noise of his Rage—the werewolf can never say.

Most Garou see frenzy as a pragmatic thing: a survival tool or necessary evil. While few werewolves seek it out or use it as a typical battle tactic, Gaia's warriors don't care for collateral casualties among humans. Others worry about those who are willing to trade control of their actions for ferocity and terror. Still, many Garou believe that frenzy is useful as the end justifies the means. This attitude is endemic, especially within the Black Furies and the Get of Fenris, although the Fianna, the Shadow Lords, and the Silver Fangs all hold many who think frenzy a viable tactic. The Bone Gnawers, Children of Gaia, and Stargazers are the only tribes where the practice is uncommon, the former because they're too busy surviving on a night-to-night basis, and the others due to their more peaceful or introspective natures.

Werewolves are familiar with two types of frenzy. They call them berserk frenzy and fox frenzy, although if a Garou simply uses the term "frenzy," he's talking about the former. While they share a similar root cause, the two states feel slightly different.

When a werewolf is in berserk frenzy, his goal is to destroy whatever has drawn his anger. Every sinew strains to the limit, threatening to pull his limbs from his body in an effort to kill. He experiences labored breathing, not from exertion, but from the sheer force of his Rage seemingly trying to escape from his body. His focus becomes laser-sharp, to the point that he cannot see anyone but his next victim. Only once he has slaughtered his victim can he move on to the next hapless soul.

By contrast, fox frenzy causes the werewolf's mind to turn in on itself in fear. It becomes a gibbering thing with no thought other than to *get away*. While a werewolf in fox

frenzy will attack anyone blocking his escape, his method of attack is different. This attack serves only to move the obstruction, not necessarily to kill—although the werewolf's sheer strength ensures that happens often enough.

A panicky feeling suffuses the werewolf's muscles. His every movement is twitchy and sudden. Experienced onlookers can tell whether a given werewolf is suffering from fox frenzy even if it isn't otherwise obvious, due to the way he moves. It's a departure from the typical easy grace of a loping wolf, and more akin to the staggering, disjointed stumble of a junkie chasing after his drug of choice.

Both states and the feelings they engender pale before the horror of Rage truly unleashed. The Garou Nation calls it the Thrall of the Wyrm and no werewolf goes through the state untouched. While in the Thrall, the werewolf effectively blacks out. He no longer has control of his actions, as a facet of the Wyrm has taken him over.

The horror only starts once the Wyrm lets go, for the werewolf, anyway. His victims' horror is now over, probably permanently. He slowly regains awareness of his surroundings, typically slick with gore or other bodily fluids, or with a distinctively strange taste in his mouth. Over the new few hours or days, his memory takes hold in brief flashes, giving him a disjointed, nightmarish accounting of events. Even before the memories come, a deep, dull hollowness nestles in the pit of his stomach.

Even worse is the small, very quiet part in the back of his brain, suggesting that at least some of him actually *liked* it.

Gaining and Releasing Rage

A werewolf must carefully husband the Rage within, using it only when necessary, and gaining it when she can. Fortunately for her, the Garou are creatures of unbridled passion, and harvesting Rage is not usually a demanding thing.

One of the easiest ways to regain Rage is to look up. Luna shines in the sky and, according to some legends She is the impetus being the werewolf's anger. Simply seeing the moon for the first time in the evening causes a surge in the werewolf's heart, as her inner beast howls in communion with the moon. Regaining Rage in this way is both defiant and triumphant, reminding the werewolf that she still draws breath, and that while she does so, she still fights against the Wyrm and its minions.

More commonly, a werewolf might increase Rage due to humiliation. For her to draw anger from the situation, she must be well and truly embarrassed. Pranks and other practical jokes that cause some brief humiliation aren't enough to kindle a werewolf's Rage. To catch her in a damning lie or to prove her wrong on a subject in which she's an expert... well, that's a different story. The sting of humiliation transforms into a slow-burning anger to unleash later. The constant arguments about ideology and priorities between packmates of different tribes keeps Rage burning;

young werewolves especially tear into one another to psych themselves up for battle.

Conversely, while spending Rage, the werewolf's anger reaches a fever pitch. It is explosive, bursting out of her and directed toward whatever ends she desires.

When she spends Rage to speed her in combat, her muscles expand and contract far more quickly than is natural. They tear, not enough to cause damage, but enough that the werewolf can feel them reknit in moments as her natural regeneration takes care of the injury.

If she calls upon her Rage to keep her aware, whether because she's been stunned, or because she's on the brink of death, it feels more like a burst of adrenaline. At least for a moment, she feels energetic and sees the world around her with a piercing clarity.

Paradoxically, Rage can sometimes feel soothing. When she spends Rage to change forms, it overrides the normal feelings of changing shape. Instead her bones and muscles moving, expanding or contracting or bending in unnatural ways, the Rage suffuses her, rippling through her body in a comfortable warmth.

Regardless of the reason she spends her Rage, the werewolf *must* do so. If she doesn't, the Rage festers inside her, emotionally tearing at her until she becomes a nervous wreck. She becomes even more short-tempered than before, snapping at even close friends and packmates. She forgets to eat, preferring instead to find ways to mitigate the growing anger tearing at her gut (even if spending Rage would be the most efficient solution). Even the Children of Gaia must release their Rage, lest they suffer this fate. Several of the tribe have fallen to Harano after refusing to use Rage, faced with the results of holding it in and the resultant frenzy — or Thrall.

When a werewolf has exhausted her supply of Rage, she's said to have "lost the wolf." She feels somewhat listless, without drive. The tension vanishes from her muscles as she fully relaxes. She is far calmer, not on edge, and otherwise feels and acts like a normal human being. She can still get angry, of course, but it's a mundane anger; the anger most people deal with on a daily basis. Someone cuts the werewolf off in traffic. The cable company charges her for services she never requested. She has to deal with difficult, shortsighted people all day. The anger neither lingers nor festers, and it certainly doesn't build upon itself like Rage.

Happily for the forces of the Garou Nation, it is only a matter of time before something provides a spark to re-ignite the fires of her Rage that the werewolf may fight once more alongside her brethren.

Gnosis

Werewolves, being creatures of duality, carry not just Rage within their hearts. They also hold and use Gnosis,

spiritual energy drawn from Gaia Herself. It is a power of wisdom and control and connection to the spirit world, a balancing force to Rage. It connects them not only to the spirit world, but also to their Sacred Mother. Werewolves use Gnosis for varied purposes, but all cases somehow reflect Gnosis' origin as the Umbra's spiritual energy.

The more Gnosis a werewolf possesses, the more in tune he is with the Umbra and its denizens. Spirits can feel a werewolf's Gnosis — sensing, perhaps, her closeness to the spirit world. The Umbra itself seems to do so as well. Certainly, a werewolf with more Gnosis has an easier time connecting to the spirit world. She seems to think and act on a similar level to the spirits, empathizing with them on a level beyond conscious thought. Her energies are on the same frequency and therefore she is treated as a valuable ally, or in some cases (if her Gnosis is high enough), as another spirit.

Aligning with the spirit world, werewolves can regain Gnosis through the spirit hunt. They invite Gafflings to possess prey animals. The Garou then hunt the animals and eat them, consuming the spirit's Gnosis as well as the flesh. The spirit hunt is a manifestation of the traditional nature of Gaia as she should be, the cycle of hunting and eating without disrupting the cycle. As such, it is a reflection of the original form of the Wyrm before it went insane, the natural balance of the world.

Conversely, when a werewolf has low Gnosis, she is no longer in tune with the spirit world. In fact, she finds it difficult to step sideways or otherwise interact with the Umbra at all. She is firmly rooted in the physical world, with all that entails. Spirits avoid her; similar to how magnets of the same polarity repel one another.

Touching the Spirit World

Den mothers and fathers must teach cubs how to call upon their spiritual Gifts, arming them in the war against the Wyrm. Frequently, they teach cubs to lose themselves: dancing themselves into trances, consuming Gaian or Wyld-spirits, enduring pain or self-harming, taking natural entheogens, or pushing themselves to their physical limits. All of these methods allow a werewolf to regain Gnosis once spent. Each tribe has its own ways of teaching its cubs to connect with the spirit world.

Black Furies: Tied as they are to the mysticism of the Wyld, the Furies take their cubs to the wildest places within their reach. Sometimes, they take them into their tribal homeland within the Legendary Realm to allow them to meditate and align themselves with the spirit world's strange energies.

Bone Gnawers: Practicality is the Gnawers' watchword. As a tribe, they simply don't often have time to devote to esoteric pursuits, or anything other than survival or the War. As such, Bone Gnawer mentors typically teach "on the job," giving their charges practical advice mixed in with their other duties.

MECHANICS OF SPIRITUAL ENERGY

The descriptions of what “high” and “low” Gnosis means is intentionally left vague. Each troupe may decide for themselves what mechanical effects it may have, if any, based on their own chronicle’s circumstances. The following rules are one example of how to portray these descriptions in play.

A “high” Gnosis is a total equaling 8 or higher, while a “low” Gnosis is 3 or lower. When a Garou has high Gnosis, decrease difficulties on all spirit-related rolls (including stepping sideways or activating a fetish) by one for each point of Gnosis over seven. If the character has low Gnosis, increase those same difficulties for each point lower than four. Difficulties modified in this way cannot exceed 9, or be reduced below 3.

Children of Gaia: As befits a tribe devoted to peace, the Children focus on many forms of meditation. As an inherently internal activity, meditation helps the Children temper their Rage and focus entirely on Gnosis.

Fianna: Fianna mentors loosen their students’ minds by inflaming their passions through song and dance. While many traditionally add strong drink to the mix, some find that it dulls their senses and stops them from focusing. By getting the cubs to relax, the teacher shows them how to enter the mental state necessary to draw on their Gnosis.

Get of Fenris: So many things in this tribe come back to battle, and even Gnosis is no exception. The tribe exhausts their cubs through training exercises and mock battles, demonstrating how to make a connection to the spirit through the flow of conflict.

Glass Walkers: Befitting their own stereotype, Cockroach’s children have no set method for teaching their cubs about Gnosis. Some use human means of distraction, whether white noise or loud music. Some use spiritually-awakened drugs, to induce the appropriate mental state.

Red Talons: Other tribes expect the Talons to be brutal when teaching their cubs. Not so. The Red Talons treat new members of the tribe as the rare blessings they are. They teach Gnosis as they teach everything else: by drawing the cubs out into the wilderness in Lupus form and letting instinct take over. The Talons trust their wolf side more than anything else, and this shows through in their teaching.

Shadow Lords: While Shadow Lord cubs can have a hard time finding the proper instructor, once they do, they

will master the skill. The tribe will stand for nothing less. Unlike many other tribes, Shadow Lord instructors don’t teach cubs to accept Gnosis flowing through them. Instead, they teach cubs how to control their emotions and mind with an iron will.

Silent Striders: The openness of the road and the places between civilization call to the Striders. It is also how they teach. While away from caern and sept, a cub’s mind must focus on potential dangers. By removing distractions and focusing on their surroundings, Silent Strider teachers show their students how to achieve a mental state conducive to channeling Gnosis.

Silver Fangs: Steeped in tradition, the tribe gives over almost all of their spiritual teaching to members of the Lodge of the Moon. According to the tribe, the Lodge has some of the finest instructors in the entirety of the Garou Nation. While perhaps not entirely true, the tribe’s teachers do excel at tailoring their curriculum to their student’s strengths.

Stargazers: Chimera’s children favor meditation, as might be expected. However, they also use elaborate katas and menial labor. By setting their cubs to basic tasks like cleaning, the tribe teaches respect and discipline, two things they consider necessary not only for accepting and channeling Gnosis, but for life.

Uktena: By praising curiosity as a tribe, the Uktena find no shortage of new ways to open their cubs’ minds to the Umbra and its strange energies, especially Gnosis. Some prefer to use the methods of the cultures they were raised in, while others build a syncretic set of meditations that help them understand the flow of Gnosis.

Wendigo: While less spiritual than their older brother, the Wendigo have no shortage of interaction with the Umbra. Still, the tribe’s practices are typically bloody and brutal affairs, and their instruction is no exception. Students may spend long hours naked in blizzards, or enduring painful purification processes to learn the rudiments of harnessing Gnosis.

Once the cub learns how to manipulate the flow of Gnosis, the methods she uses will stick with her for the rest of her life.

The Feel of Gnosis

For all that Gnosis is, and how the tribes teach their cubs how to connect to it, how do they know they’ve succeeded? Freshly Changed werewolves aren’t used to the unnatural sensations Gnosis brings with it. So how does it feel?

That mostly depends on the source of that Gnosis. As detailed in W20, p.146, the Garou have several ways to collect this energy and bring it into themselves. Apart from meditation, the two predominant methods are by either hunting or bargaining with a spirit.

Gnosis gained through meditation is the most difficult to notice, as it is the subtlest. By the end of the meditation process, the werewolf feels refreshed — not physically, as if

she had just awoken from a satisfying sleep — but spiritually. Her soul feels lighter and less burdened. She has a sense of freshness about her.

When collecting Gnosis from a spirit, the spirit's nature colors the Gnosis it provides. If a werewolf hunts down a fire elemental for Gnosis, when the energy transfers to the werewolf it feels hot, like a conflagration. Other elementals and similar spirits convey similar sensations through the gift of Gnosis: storm-spirits' Gnosis is electric and charged, that of water elementals feels like cold ice water, and the Gnosis of earth elementals feels both soft and gritty, like loamy soil pebbled with small rocks.

Animal spirits aren't so straightforward, however. When a werewolf garners Gnosis from an animal spirit, the spirit's predominant emotion colors those sensations. Gnosis from any kind of prey-spirit, including rabbits, mice, or deer, tends to feel flighty and nervous. Predator-spirits such as wolves, cats, or birds of prey carry with them intensity and quiet purpose.

Using Gnosis

To call upon her Gnosis, a werewolf must get into the proper mindset. Once learned (using different methods dependent on tribe as described above), it takes only a brief moment to do so. Experienced werewolves are perfectly capable of doing so equally well during times of relaxation or in the heat of combat. The core similarity between the methods is that the werewolf must allow at least a portion of her mind to "let go," disconnecting from the physical world and aligning closely to the spiritual world instead.

When used, Gnosis feels soothing, refreshing, like a cool breeze or immersion in a cool stream on a hot day. Werewolves describe the sensation as "flowing," as if they are a conduit, drawing the Umbral energies through the Gauntlet and allowing them out into the physical realm. Still, this sensation is sometimes different, depending on what exactly the Garou was doing with it.

Mari spends Gnosis to activate a fetish, a large double-bladed axe called a labrys. As the Gnosis flows through her, she doesn't feel the usual refreshing chill. Instead, she feels lighter, faster, as if she's made of air.

Johan Skullsplitter, an Elder Ahroun, spends Gnosis to call upon the Gift: Kiss of Helios. The Gnosis burns through his body like a conflagration, spreading outward to wreath the mighty Garou, ensuring that he won't feel the bite of fire for the Gift's duration.

Sanderson needs a distraction quickly. Passing by a man in the crowd, Sanderson bumps him, and calls upon the Gift: Scent of Sweet Honey. As he spends Gnosis, he feels hundreds of buzzing wings flow through him. Shortly thereafter, the man screams and flails around, trying to shoo away the vermin clinging to his clothes.

Usually, a werewolf can only spend Rage or Gnosis in a single turn. The Garou Nation, as a whole, doesn't have



a good explanation as to why this is beyond the idea that Rage and Gnosis work against one another. Unleashing Rage interferes with the serenity that Gnosis use requires. Other werewolves just accept that they can't use both energies in short order, and plan accordingly. Despite this, some spirits bequeath some rare Gifts that require both to function. In these cases, the spirit rewrites a portion of the werewolf's spirit half, permitting this limited allowance. To date, this is the only known way to unleash both Rage and Gnosis at the same time.

Animism and Faith

Throughout human history, religions have risen and fallen. The faithful have been responsible for both miracles and atrocities. Arguments over which religion is "right" explode into wars. All of this is over ideas that may or may not be correct. Humans have killed, and continue to kill, one another over ideals, beliefs, or over which group of people should possess the same strip of land. The simple existence of faith can fill a person with a great deal of conviction to *do something*.

Werewolves find themselves in a very different situation. Animism—the belief that everything from rocks, to animals, to complex technology has a spirit—suffuses Garou society. They know it to be true, as they have seen it. However, werewolves don't need to have faith in that, per se. One definition of faith is "belief that is not based on proof," yet every time a werewolf senses or travels to the spirit world, she can see for herself that her version of animism is true. She doesn't *need* to believe, and thus she's more than happy to kill for what she knows to be true. Spirits are everywhere, acting as allies, as suppliers of Gnosis, or as enemies. With all this proof staring her in the face, some Stargazers wonder how a werewolf can have any faith in Gaia?

Perhaps ironically, the existence of proof serves to fuel many werewolves' belief, not in the provable animistic universe but in the broader myths and legends. Through the Umbra's existence, one large part of the Garou Nation's belief system is empirically accurate. It's no great stretch to believe that the rest of the tales are true: that Gaia exists, and is somewhere in the Umbra, crying out each time a Wyrm creature inflicts more punishment on her corporeal body. These werewolves claim that the proof of the spirit world shows that Gaia must be out there somewhere and that she is most certainly in anguish. Fewer still claim it's why Gaia made the Garou as Her warriors in the first place. She knew this day would happen, and so ensured that She would have defenders when the time came.

Such a belief system, coupled with definitive proof that much of it is true, results in a great deal of conviction, far more than most humans can bring to bear. While most sensible werewolves don't look down on their human and wolf Kin

too much, the Garou are stronger in many ways. They enter situations and fight terrible entities that would make those with less strength shake in their boots. Garou combine this strength with their faith in Gaia; often, their beliefs are the only things keeping them going. When a warrior returns to the sept, bone-weary from battle, only to find a messenger bearing news that enemies are attacking from another direction and the defenses there are crumbling, her faith and her resolute need to kill anything that denies it is the only thing that makes her charge once more into the fray.

Even outside of the spirit world, a werewolf can always smell the Umbra, she always has a distant sense of what is around her. Rarely, this brings her comfort; in places where the Wyld is strong it can reinforce her faith. In most of the world, however, she feels the crushing webs and smells the antiseptic stench of the Weaver, or the toxic fumes and diseased flesh that signifies the Wyrm. She cannot escape the ever-present insight that Gaia is dying, and her faith may be for nothing.

The Umbra

The Garou Nation calls the ability to enter the Umbra "stepping sideways," and teach cubs how to reach the Umbra as soon as is practical. While great figures among the Garou need only meditate on a reflective surface, others wait for specific times when Luna shows her face in the sky or find places where the Gauntlet is weak. Others use drugs or pain to push themselves into the necessary ritual mindset to cross between worlds.

While the sensation of stepping sideways is strongest the first time a werewolf does so, it never goes away. It simply fades slightly as she gets used to it, becoming easier to tune out somewhat, but never get rid of entirely. The hair on the back of her neck stands up, and her heart rate speeds up in a mixture of anticipation and terror. A sense homecoming wars with a sense of paranoia, like someone or something is watching her, waiting to pounce. Her nose sniffs even the faintest scent, and her ears prick up at each small sound. No matter if Helios or Lunashines in the Umbral sky, she perceives her vision as being sharper than it was in the physical world.

Some homid Garou liken stepping sideways to stepping through the door of a childhood home after many years. The house is the same as he remembers it, down to the creak in the floor, but at the same time, it's changed. The creak is in a different place in the floor than it was last time, and this place isn't where it'll be the next time he steps through the door. The house is a recollection and a living creature at the same time, changing and evolving as fast as memory. Werewolves who hold to this analogy claim that the Umbra is indeed like going home again, if "home" is both intimately familiar, and has a better-than-ever chance of killing you.

Still, the Umbra calls out to each werewolf's spirit side, beckoning softly to return. Occasionally, a Garou feels more at home somewhere in the Umbra (be that in the Penumbra,

FUTURE FATES: THE UMBRA

While W20 assumes that stepping sideways remains as easy for the Garou as it has been in the past, that will not be the case forever. The Gauntlet has hardened throughout history, as humanity has spread the Weaver's influence over the world. Two great cataclysms will make the Umbra far harder to access.

The first is what human mystics call the Avatar Storm, the result of a great disaster throughout all levels of the spirit world. After it starts, the Gauntlet not only thickens, razor-sharp edges lash out as the Garou step through, cutting at their flesh and threatening their concentration. Increase the difficulty of all rolls to step sideways by 1 (maximum 9); Garou suffer a level of lethal damage whenever they cross the Gauntlet. Failing or botching the roll makes this damage aggravated instead.

The second great catastrophe is the Malady and the Betrayal. The increased global temperature caused by climate change is not just a physical phenomenon, it is Gaia's fever manifest in the physical world. Sick and close to death, She distances herself from the world to protect herself, slipping into a comatose state as she does. Her dreams and nightmares make caerns and other places close to the spirit world more dangerous to be in, but they are the only places the Garou can cross. The Wyrm, by contrast, can only lash out at places of particular corruption: sites of environmental disasters, industrial 'accidents,' great oppression and injustice.

For Garou, increase the Gauntlet rating (W20, p. 310) of all places by 4. The Garou cannot step sideways at any place with a Gauntlet higher than 9. Spending five minutes getting into the appropriate mindset reduces the difficulty of stepping sideways by 1, but still does not allow crossing at a place with a Gauntlet higher than 9.

some deeper section, or even in a Realm of some sort) and stays. At first, he lingers only a little while, but he returns repeatedly, staying longer each time. Eventually, he doesn't come back, preferring the place he feels at home to a world that hates and fears him.

For all that the Umbra feels like home to the Garou, for all that their spirit halves feel more at peace there, werewolves

are beings of both flesh and spirit. They don't truly have a home in either world, and the Umbra is just as much a danger as the physical realm, perhaps even more so.

Auspice

While only Gaia may know in advance who will or will not Change and enter into Her terrible army, Her sister Luna marks those who Change as well. Which moon phase a future werewolf is born under determines her auspice, her role within Garou society. An auspice is part outlook on life, part job description, and for some, a little slice of prison. In whatever manner any particular werewolf reacts to the role her mad aunt called her for, it's hers for life.

Ahroun: The Full Moon, The Warrior

Michael leapt from one Bane as his claws raked across another's hard carapace. He kicked the first as he went by, feeling a satisfying crunch under his heel. It released a loud screech and fell, dazed, and Michael concentrated on the bigger prey.

Grabbing onto the thing's hardened skin, its claws tearing at him, Michael managed to twist just the right way and tear a piece of chitin from the Bane's back. Plunging in his claws, he quickly tore it to shreds, feeling it disorporate into the Umbra under his fingers. He turned to deal with the second to find it fleeing.

Blood and ichor matting the fur of his Crinos form, Michael tossed back his head and howled his victory to both Gaia and Luna.

The front-line warriors in the war against the Wyrm, the Ahroun do not shirk from battle. No, they seek it out. They crave it. Not necessarily for bloodlust, although the Garou Nation does contain quite a few who fit that description (and not all of those are full-moons). The truth of the matter is, that boiled down to its truest, purest essence, these werewolves crave the competition.

Battle is a true test of self: of skill, strength, speed, toughness, and perhaps most of all, self-control. By pushing herself in combat, an Ahroun knows her limits and, more to the point, both *how* and *when* she can push past them. By finding her boundaries and finding proper ways to exceed them, she wins a skirmish's sprint while saving herself for the war's marathon. Because of this, the full-moons believe they know themselves better than any other auspice. How can they not, after all? By finding themselves on the battlefield, and measuring their qualities against their foes in the ultimate test, it's an easy deduction to make.

While the full-moons are perhaps uniquely suited to combat among the auspices, that does not mean they have no use outside of it. If the caern isn't currently in the throes of battle, an Ahroun likely believes that's only because the enemy forces aren't attacking right this moment. As such, a

full-moon will do all she can to ensure that her sept is prepared for when their enemies *do* attack. She leads others in both physical and mental activities: lengthy runs in multiple forms, obstacle courses where the participants must shift forms periodically to advance, strategy sessions, or building and reinforcing physical defenses.

The Ahroun studies her opponents; both the ones she knows about, and the ones she suspects. A caern's most obvious enemies are the Black Spiral Dancers, Fomori, Banes, and other forces of the Wyrm. That said, some septs do test their neighbors' defenses. In some cases, these tests are of a "friendly" sort, a way to ensure the safety of all nearby Garou. If any one caern falls to the Wyrm, that allows the Nation's enemies a beachhead. The Ahroun do everything in their power to prevent such a scenario from happening in the first place.

In other cases, other septs end up acting as enemies. Perhaps they feel that a caern's defenders are unworthy in their role, incompetent, or simply too weak to protect that place of power. Ahroun fall on either side of this conflict—as aggressor or defender—and must plan and react accordingly.

For either of those roles, coordinating with other members of the sept is essential. No Ahroun worth her salt ignores advice or input from the other auspices. As living repositories of history, Galliards recall old battles fought, whether immortalized in the Silver Record or not. If a similar conflict—especially between the same two forces—is tilted against the full-moon's side, she learns what happened and vows not to make the same mistakes.

The sept's half-moons can inform the Ahroun well before battle ever breaks out. While Garou have no problem fighting one another, such as when one side or another throws an accusation of Wyrm-taint around, few Garou go out looking for an excuse to murder other werewolves. The Philodox assesses the chance of peaceful negotiation working, and if it can't, can inform the Ahroun of the opponent's emotional and mental state. A perceptive full-moon turns such information to her advantage in the resultant conflict.

Information is power, and the Ahroun knows that this is nowhere more accurate than during a battle. Both the crescent-moons and the new-moons provide essential intelligence, but in very different arenas. Umbral spies can sneak through almost any sort of defensive barrier to glean information, but spirits don't have the same frame of reference to accurately prioritize and describe what it sees. A Ragabash might have some more difficulty with defenses in the physical world, but has a more pragmatic mindset that—to an Ahroun—properly assesses threats, and describes them when she returns. For an Ahroun to earn respect from her peers, she must learn to combine both sets of information to paint an accurate picture of the battlefield, and then act properly and decisively.

Quite a few Ahroun, overwhelmingly homids, study human texts and theory on battlefield strategy. Books such

as *The Art of War* by Sun Tzu, and *The Book of Five Rings* by Miyamoto Musashi are popular works among full-moons. To a lesser extent, Machiavelli's *The Prince* might be useful for some more politically minded septs; perhaps stereotypically, some Shadow Lord caerns privately swear by it. Certainly, any book on modern military strategy, particularly those focused on guerilla warfare, suits the Garou well as a resource. For all their individual frailty and other skills, humanity has proven incredibly skilled at killing one another. The Garou would be fools to let such hard-won lessons go untaught.

A Furnace of Anger

As the "warrior auspice," an Ahroun is also closely in touch with his Rage. It isn't something that simmers in his chest, cool with occasional explosions. No, for an Ahroun, Rage is an ever-present thing, a hot and insistent companion. Eventually, every single werewolf born under the full-moon owes his life to his Rage, and its ability to keep him going or to push him to kill his enemies quickly. Over time, the werewolf stops fearing it, or even glorifying it. It's simply another tool in his toolbox, another weapon to bring forth when the killing time comes. It's rare that a werewolf of another auspice shares the same utilitarian outlook.

Tales say that the full-moons have the most Rage because that's what the fullness of the moon represents: Luna's fury brimming over. Her filling anger shows on her face, and bleeds over to her most violent nieces and nephews.

More pragmatic werewolves point out that it's simply a survival trait. The full-moons are the Garou most often on the front lines of combat with the Wyrm. As such, they require a larger reserve of Rage. Without that ability to hold and channel large amounts of Rage, such warriors would have fallen long ago, handing decisive battles to the Wyrm. For the Garou Nation to continue, its soldiers must have the means to push beyond the pale and live to fight another day.

A Bloody Precursor

An Ahroun finds herself thrust into a combative arena almost immediately after her Change. Looking back on her life before she realized her birthright, the full-moon sees many similarities. She recalls her rejection of authority, her rebellious nature, and her willingness to initiate and perpetuate conflict. Equally important memories include the times she defended those weaker than she, and times when she beat down people who stood in her way.

Of all the auspices, the full-moons are perhaps the most similar both prior to, and after, the Change. It's not surprising that the nascent werewolf holds her loved ones and possessions close, and will lash out to defend them. On the other side of the coin, quite a few future Ahroun are nothing more than bullies; bigger and tougher than their peers, and happy to throw their weight around to get their way.



Whether a werewolf lives her life as a protector or aggressor, conflict and competition are parts of her life from the beginning. It makes her view people and situations as black-and-white. For an Ahroun, the shades of grey that make up life for others are just obstacles in her path to push through or destroy. Fortunately, she's particularly well suited to getting those obstacles out of her way.

Tribal Fury

The full-moon's anger expresses itself in different ways, often colored by the werewolf's chosen tribe.

- Michael Changed relatively late, after years of fighting in a war not for ideology or the fate of the world, but to fatten rich men's wallets. Over a dozen people, some friends, some foes, died that day. The scions of Fenris found him, bloody, naked, and confused near a pile of meat that used to be human. They give him purpose, and put that anger, that Rage, to good use. Now he fights and kills, and for the most part is content. However, Michael's tired of simply attacking the symptoms when he could be attacking the cause. Sure, he has heard the cautionary tales of the White Howlers.

He thinks, though, that instead of an army, a small surgical strike force may be able to achieve the unthinkable. Maybe that force would be in position to strike the killing blow. For now he waits, learns about his foe, and bides his time, but a growing sense of urgency beats in his chest.

- When the Fomori attacked, Cricket was meditating. They were two, these Wyrm-creatures, and they thought they had found easy prey. One of the beasts swung a large, gore-stained axe, fully intending to add to its toll of victims. Instead, Cricket rolled smoothly to the side, shifting into Glabro as she went. She hooked one of the Fomor's arms, planted her hip against its side, and hurled it from the balcony. She barely noted the creature's scream as the mountainside opened into nothing but air. Turning to the remaining beast, she shifted into Lupus to avoid the first attack, Homid to spin around the second, and then finally into Crinos to tear the beast's head from its shoulders. Control, she thought as she went to check on the others, control and direct the Rage, do not let it control and direct you.

- The streets are not necessarily the hardest environment to live on, no, but that didn't mean they were a picnic. Sanderson knew that the full-moons in the other tribes laughed

at him. He didn't care. They fought when they had to, when danger came calling to them, in their protected caerns. Here, on the streets, danger was far more personal. Sanderson personally knew several men and women who were down on their luck. Circumstances forced them to do whatever they could just to survive another day. In another time, in their former lives, they were good people. Upstanding citizens, just beaten down. These were the threats Sanderson dealt with on a daily basis. Less Earth-shattering, perhaps, than the struggles of other Ahroun, but no less important.

Galliard: The Gibbous Moon, The Moon Dancer

The Blue Divers pack surfaced as one. The sea-cave had a feeling of age to it which none of the werewolves could put a finger on. Perhaps it was a particular scent, but more than likely it was just a feeling they all shared.

Kalea, the pack alpha, directed them all to crawl up onto the rocks and search around. Although this end of the cave was accessible only by diving, the pack had no idea where, or if, the cave opened otherwise.

The gibbous moon, Iolana, was the first to find anything of note. Glyphs, carved into the wall with mighty claws, told tales of ages past. She opened her waterproofed pack, pulled out the appropriate equipment, and started making rubbings. Within a few days, she had the glyphs transferred, and in the process added a few new tales to her repertoire. More importantly, she knew the secret ways to a lost caern of great power.

Werewolves born under the gibbous moon are the most passionate of their brethren, howling their stories to the night sky. Possessed of boundless energy, a Galliard can rouse her packmates from lethargy or depression, or push them to even grander glories. She must possess clear vision, knowing her pack as well as they know themselves or better, as well as knowing the pack's goals and aspirations.

In many ways, a Galliard's fortunes are the same as her pack's. While that accurately applies to most any werewolf, it binds the gibbous-moons more tightly. A teacher needs students. A performing artist, whether a storyteller, musician, or actor, must have an audience or else his talents are wasted. A Ronin Galliard, with no pack or sept to inspire, is a sad and pathetic creature, trudging his own lonely path through life.

Detractors might claim that a Galliard is nothing but a glory-hound, a selfish braggart who seeks out challenges to bolster his own ego. In a few cases, that may well be true. The gibbous-moons don't all march in lockstep, after all; each Galliard discovers what best works for him: what tales come most easily to his lips, what songs resonate more brightly in his heart. In addition, many Galliards seem that way on the surface, and others only discover how deep the gibbous-moon's feelings go for his pack and sept. No matter the face they put on for the audience, these werewolves are some of the most complex individuals to meet.

Howl at the Moon

What sings in a Galliard's heart? That's for nobody to decide but the Galliard herself. Each werewolf has something that she holds dear, something that keeps her going when the fight against the Wyrm seems the bleakest. While the details differ, not only does that thing drive the Galliard, it helps her to drive the rest of her pack and perhaps her sept as well.

In order to drive a pack of werewolves or more, the Galliard absolutely must have boundless passion and energy. She needs to take the energy of her pack and reflect it back at them, matching them and driving them onward: faster, harder, stronger. Hers is a vital and important howl in the night, calling her brothers and sisters to battle, or singing a lament for a fallen warrior.

Glory is not for the weak, or the listless. The tenets of Glory demand action, and not just that, but action that others can see and recount. For the Glorious werewolf, a healthy reserve of Rage helps push him above the rank-and-file. Exceeded only by the Ahroun, a Galliard's Rage is a passionate, vital force, keeping his heart beating no matter in which situation he finds himself. Unlike his full-moon brothers, it's not enough for the Galliard to beat the enemy. No, he must do so with style, in a new and inventive way, or at least in a way that makes for an interesting story after.

A Galliard not only begins life as a werewolf with almost the same amount of Rage as an Ahroun, but he tends to keep pace throughout that life. As a lover of glory, he very well may have nothing more than his Rage to keep him alive at least on occasion. It's best if he possesses a sizeable reserve to draw from, just in case.

As much as many Galliards enjoy personal glory, like many things, it is best if shared. The gibbous-moon brings his pack along on his hunts, dragging down prey they shouldn't, and getting into (and more importantly, out of) situations that should kill them. The Galliard drives everyone to greater heights, pushing them and making the most of the pack's synergy to overcome any obstacle.

These skills make a Galliard the perfect battlefield alpha in the absence of a talented Ahroun. Even in some packs with an Ahroun, the Galliard leads because the full-moon doesn't have the patience or the aptitude to do so.

Lessons of the Past

In what is perhaps a sharp contrast to their passionate nature, the gibbous-moons are also the record-keepers of the Garou. A Galliard might travel around the Earth many times to learn ancient tales. Conversely, he and his pack might instead create those stories; some of which may even be sufficient to add to the Silver Record. Even in relation to the relatively sedate task of learning and recounting stories, a Galliard's life is never boring.

Most of the stories a Galliard learns exist only in the Garou tongue (p. 24). While individual moon dancers may translate the stories into their native human language, each of these legends of the Garou lose something in the translation. As such, a Galliard's time learning stories frequently requires her to memorize tales, and learn many dialects of the language of the Wild. These stories, told in their original form, preserve the original form of the language. A studious Galliard is as much historian and archeologist as he is rock star among his peers. Even though a werewolf who can never quite remember which dialect or term she should be using among her peers may be mocked and insulted, being able to recite great sections of the Silver Record in the original form is a widely-respected skill, and a task that is very important to the Garou Nation.

The Moon Dancers don't search for old stories just to add them to their repertoire. It's possible, however unlikely, that in some forgotten portion of the Record, some scrap of information exists that will lead the Garou to defeating the Wyrm for good. Perhaps some concrete information on Gaia exists out there in a long-forgotten tongue, and the first Garou to discover and translate it will find a place in the Silver Record, solidifying his legend for all time.

For the gibbous-moons, Glory takes many forms. Not all of them occur on the battlefield.

Tribal Tales

Despite being the carrier of tradition, and the bearer of living history – or perhaps because of it – no two Galliards are alike. They travel through life with passionate variety, daring others to challenge them. After all, only the victors can howl their glory to the heavens!

• Caiomhe Sunset-Singer of the Fianna was known everywhere for both her stories and songs. Other Garou traveled for hours, sometimes days, simply for an audience with the revered lore-singer. Her command of stories from the Silver Record was unmatched, from the Songs of the Dawn to the Lament of the First Ronin.

When she spoke, even Elder Garou listened. When she sang, all those who were in audience became still, enraptured. Others honored those few Garou who she mentored above most other gibbous-moons, for they clearly had done something noteworthy to attract the great one's attention.

Even so, time comes for all living creatures, werewolves not excluded. When Caiomhe finally passed from this world and into the Mother's keeping, her stories – both those she carried, and those she created – lived on.

• Not all gibbous-moons howl to Luna or share the Silver Record with tales and ballads. Ahmes Glory-of-the-Road, famed Galliard of the Silent Striders, is one such werewolf. Garou who have traveled with him – and for most outside of the Striders, that hasn't been for long – recount that he lives up to the "silent"

part of his tribe's name all too much. For many werewolves, that would be odd enough, but doubly so for a gibbous-moon.

Those who manage to keep up with Ahmes for any length of time, however, have a different take on this most unusual of Galliards. They claim that, while he doesn't talk much, when he *does* talk, listeners had best pay attention. Even when he isn't talking, his actions reflect the stories of old. It's not what he does so much as how he does it, and wise (and attentive) Garou can learn much from him, if they can find and keep up with him.

• The more combative members of the Garou Nation may look down upon Unicorn's children, despising them as pacifists and weaklings. Despite this opinion, the Children of Gaia are still werewolves, still burn with Rage, and still seek Glory. Even so, Glory is of no use to if nobody remembers it, and the best way to create a memory – a legacy – is to build it.

Delilah, originally of the Roaring Meadow sept, travels the world with a simple message: if the world is to survive the Apocalypse, the Garou must not just destroy the Wyrm. They must also build something lasting to leave behind as a legacy for whatever may come afterwards. No matter where she goes, she gets many dissenting opinions. Other Garou call her weak, they call her vision foolish. They say that she's putting the cart before the horse: Why worry about what's coming after the Apocalypse if the Garou haven't fought the final battle against the Wyrm yet?

Still, for every dissenting cry, for every disparaging shout, Delilah receives a quiet question, or subdued agreement. It's a small swell of support, but it's some support, and her name and message are getting out there. She's used to it; she's been a Child of Gaia for years, and other werewolves treat her tribe in a similar fashion. Besides, so long as she keeps her momentum, Delilah knows it's only a matter of time before her detractors can't marginalize her anymore.

Philodox: The Half Moon, The Judge

Rami, the Breaker of Scales, sighed inwardly. He'd been here, in the barren wilderness of Canada, for far too long. He longed for the feel of the open road under his feet, or paws, for what that was worth. That, much to his personal dismay, had to wait. Duty called.

He didn't yet know why or how a pack of Fianna had managed to get lost here – or, really, even get "here" in the first place. But here they were, and they managed to anger the local sept, which was made up almost exclusively of werewolves from the Wendigo tribe. Little Brother was an angry brother, especially at these interlopers.

As he arrived at the agreed-upon neutral ground, Rami sighed again. It would be so easy to just rule in the sept's favor and allow the Wendigo to exact whatever vengeance they saw fit. It would be easy, but it wouldn't be right. So with one last sigh of regret for the road, Rami stepped between the growling parties and began mediation.

Good and evil. Light and dark. Chaos and order. All extremes with, at times, a very thin line dividing them.

The Philodox of the Garou Nation stand across this line, and know the extremes intimately. They must, so that they might balance between them, acting as neutral parties, mediators, negotiators — and judges.

Talking the Talk

Although it is the role others usually remember them by, the Philodox are not solely arbiters of the Litany. They also act as councilors, negotiators, and mediators. The Galliards bind werewolves together by reminding the Garou of their shared history. The Half-Moons bind the Garou Nation together through their actions in the here and now.

A Philodox who cannot communicate with those she's mediating or in negotiation with is effectively useless. "Useless" is not a label that sits well with any werewolf, and the half-moons in particular. To mitigate that issue, many werewolves of this auspice strive to learn several languages. Some visit far-flung caerns, learning directly from the inhabitants. Others take advantage of modern technology, using language-teaching software, or picking up vocabulary online. Still others who have a solid hold on their Rage (and have the money to do so) enroll in a local university and take advantage of the school's language arts program.

This practice is more prevalent outside of the United States. In Europe especially, simple pragmatism encourages most Philodox to learn what they can. A half-moon living in a caern in the Swiss Alps might not have a day-to-day need to speak Italian, but her cousins to the south are not far enough away that she can ignore them. Still, she'll prioritize languages that are close to her geographically. Her duties might take her to Russia, but it's more likely for a caern in Italy, France, or Greece to need her first. As such, she'll learn those languages first and spread out from there.

Simple necessity breaks this tendency, of course. A Philodox who becomes famous throughout the Nation finds that septs any distance from her home need her assistance. Need dictates what languages she learns, although in this case she picks them up not through study, but by repeated use "in the field." Lucky half-moons find that the receiving sept has someone on hand who speaks her language and acts as both translator and teacher, while others seek out Gifts that allow anyone to understand them.

Garou in the United States approach the linguistic issue differently. The US spreads from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific — some three thousand miles — and yet, almost everyone in the country speaks English. It's comparable in size to the entirety of the European continent, where a traveler can encounter not one, but easily a dozen or more languages depending on where he goes.

While an American Philodox may not need anything but English unless he travels south to Mexico or north into

certain portions of Canada, he will likely pick up the languages spoken around him, from Spanish to Cantonese. Other American Philodox come from Latin communities and speak mostly Spanish, and find that interacting with Anglophone Garou can be a problem. While werewolves themselves have their own tongue, a half-moon must frequently interrogate Kinfolk and normal humans alike.

The Weight of a Nation

Their auspice calls these werewolves to judge their brethren. Unsurprisingly, the half-moons do not take this task lightly, nor should they. It is their duty to listen to accusations, review any available evidence, and render judgment on the guilty party. Each Philodox judges her peers through her own ideology, holding them to a vision of purity that only the half-moon truly understands. Each tribe's Philodox sees crimes through their own ideology, framing everything through the concerns of her tribe.

In order to do so, a Philodox must be wary of misrepresentation, outright lies, falsification of evidence, and all other ways that the truly guilty party may try to frame someone else. A Philodox has ways to get through the muck, ranging from his own experience and skill to supernatural abilities. Despite this, Gifts sometimes fail. No matter how much experience the werewolf possesses, an entirely new and unexpected situation can throw him off his game. In the end, the Philodox must act within the bounds of his conscience, especially when calling for another werewolf's death. Many half-moons have no problem with that, trusting their own judgment implicitly.

To enact these judgments, a Philodox has many tools at his disposal. For lesser transgressions, simple punishments work well. Usually, he orders the guilty party to repay the aggrieved in some manner, often in the form of service. Many half-moons believe that hard work is an excellent teacher; in addition, by using work as a form of punishment, the Philodox' chosen punishment helps the sept or caern.

For larger transgressions, only punishment rites will do. Most Philodox make it a point to learn a variety of these rites, taking the responsibility of executing their judgments themselves. Some Philodox — and some septs — prefer experienced ritemasters to perform the ritual, under the half-moon's supervision. In either case, the Philodox still carries the burden of making the judgment in the first place, whoever enacts the punishment.

The only punishment for some crimes is death, though which punishment fits which crime is up to the individual Philodox, as she views what happened through her tribal ideology and the need for the Garou to remain pure and free of the Wyrm's influence. All too often, Garou 'justice' is a baying mob of werewolves lead by half-moon ideologues, crying out for the blood of the criminal.

Obviously, this is no small matter. Humans in the same situation often experience guilt or regret, second-guessing

past judgments, and wondering if they did the right thing. Werewolves are no different, except that they feel more strongly. Just as a Garou feels the burning fury of Rage in his heart, so too can guilt bury him in a depressive state. Known as Harano, it keeps those subject to it from acting without a great exercise of will.

Common knowledge holds that werewolves born under the half moon are more likely to succumb to Harano than their fellows. The burden of judging other werewolves is too great, and eventually wears every Philodox down. While not every werewolf of this auspice falls to Harano, it's a constant danger, lurking just out of reach in his mind. It's the small voice in the werewolf's head, reminding him of every judgment he's not completely sure of, every failed mediation, and every negotiation that went wrong.

As they are aware of this tendency among themselves, the half-moons keep an eye on each other. When a Philodox sees another werewolf of her auspice acting unlike himself, she intervenes, talking to him and making every attempt to pull him back from the brink. Sometimes these efforts succeed. Other times, they do not, or, worse, a Philodox doesn't have much contact with others of her auspice, and so has nobody to watch out for her. These unfortunate half-moons often press on despite their state. They continue to mediate and provide judgments even as their confidence wanes and others lose faith in her. Until another Philodox arrives and notices the signs, or things become bad enough that the rest of her pack or sept conclude that something is wrong, her failures compound, making her depression worse. It's a vicious cycle, and it rarely ends in anything other than more sadness.

As balanced as they are, it is no surprise that the Philodox are neither bereft of, nor overburdened, with Rage. As she travels through life, a Philodox keeps her Rage in check without letting it wither. Unconsciously, she keeps it in balance as she does with any other aspect of her life. Order is her watchword, and excessive Rage is its antithesis, keeping her from remaining level-headed and handing down justice.

A Philodox in the throes of Harano is inherently unbalanced, however, and this may express itself through her Rage. Despite depictions to the contrary, depression is rarely an ongoing miasma of listlessness. Occasional periods of activity punctuate the gloom. Alternatively, the sufferer may mask her true emotions out of deference to others. She doesn't want to be a burden, and the Litany commands that she not force her pack to tend her weakness. Such a werewolf often burns through her Rage to demonstrate her utility, returning to a sense of apathy once she exhausts it.

Tribal Balance

What the Philodox do does not define *how* they do it. As the judges of the Garou Nation, these werewolves possess a great deal of flexibility in how they execute their duties. Often, local tradition influences how a half-moon acts, as

she usually practices in the same manner as her mentor taught her. Werewolves who find themselves before a judge for some infraction far away from their home had best be wary. The rules in far-flung locales may not be the same as the rules at home.

- Magistrate William Harrington of House Gleaming Eye is the ranking Philodox of the Sept of the Soaring Spire. He accepts petitioners each day at noon precisely. While he typically hears only a few cases daily, the entire affair normally takes hours. The cause is twofold. First, the sept is extremely traditional, and audiences with the Magistrate carry a great deal of pomp and circumstance. Secondly, William is attentive, taking both sides into consideration and doing his best to levy judgments that are fair and just.

Still, he is not without rivals. Critics abound, citing a number of recent judgments as proof of William's growing madness. The sept Elders aren't sure what these foes want to accomplish, but the slander continues, seemingly without end.

- Werewolves at the Sept of the Crooked Forest know better than to violate the Litany. The sept's reigning Philodox, Michal Doom-Speaker, metes out harsh punishments for even trivial offenses. Without fail, werewolves who err find themselves given menial, but difficult, tasks for the good of the sept, or branded with silver. He may send a guilty party's entire pack on a suicide mission; after all, they harbored the miscreant. He frequently calls out anyone who does not adhere to his strict reading of the Litany, ostracizing an entire pack from the sept just because he deems two packmates to have become too close. Even without formal punishment, the pack becomes outcasts. Some try to work their way back into the sept's good graces, but others know that the best route is to find a different sept, one that has not heard of Doom-Speaker's judgments.

Michal himself is a dark-haired man, brow often furrowed in thought or glare. The other werewolves of the sept find it hard to tell the difference. He pushes the rest of the sept hard, for both glory and their continued survival in the face of the Wyrm. Only by strictly adhering to the Litany might they all survive the Apocalypse. To Michal's mind, he has only one way to ensure that outcome. He must keep the members of his sept on the straight and narrow by any means necessary.

- Joanna Hunter-of-Guilt is, by day, a respected lawyer. Known to her human colleagues as Joanna Mercer, she exhibits a certain cutthroat nature. Sometimes, she worries her coworkers, who think one day will be the day Joanna finally snaps. The other lawyers in the firm suspect that when that happens, all hell will break loose. They don't know the half of it.

Despite the urban focus of both her human lifestyle and her pack, at least once every couple of months, Joanna puts down her cell phone, unplugs, and "goes native" for a few days. She eats only what she can hunt and kill on her own, and uses

no human-produced items, from complex tools to clothes. She claims that by getting in touch with her wildness, it helps her center herself. Her pack has started to worry, though, as she spends more and more time away from her duties.

Theurge: The Crescent Moon, The Seer

Jasmine organized her ritual components carefully. To the north, she placed two handfuls of soil from the Louisiana bayou, dug up with her own hands. To the south, she burned two sticks of sandalwood incense. To the west, a small crystal bowl filled most of the way with sage water. Finally, to the east, a pair of crow feathers, representing the air.

She double-checked the placements, and went over the ritual in her head. Mentally ticking off each step, she wiped away the beads of nervous sweat that had gathered on her forehead. She looked at her mentor, Mama Aubry, for just a moment. The older Creole woman looked through Jasmine's preparations thoughtfully, and then examined her student. She saw no reason to encourage the younger woman. She had to succeed or fail on her own terms.

Jasmine took a deep breath and began.

Most werewolves are a direct and obvious threat. Their claws and teeth, as well as their ability to change shape and heal from tremendous injury, don't leave much room for subtlety. The crescent-moons go beyond the stereotype, but not in the same way as the Ragabash. Instead of the new-moon's tricks and stealth, a Theurge defeats his enemies without being near them in the first place.

A Theurge is wise in the ways of the Umbra, and of its spiritual inhabitants. She gathers spiritual allies and servants the way a miser hoards gold. Some Elder crescent-moons have veritable armies at their command. With some work, even a young Theurge can collect an impressive number of spiritual allies and contacts to call upon.

Anyone who threatens a werewolf must also deal with that werewolf's pack and sept. Anyone who threatens a Theurge must deal with all of that as well as her spiritual allies. If the assailant isn't spiritually sensitive, foes he cannot see — and likely didn't account for — will tear him to shreds.

Still, defense isn't necessarily the primary reason behind a Theurge's desire for spirit allies. One of the crescent-moon's most notable personality traits is the need to know things. The Umbra, and often by extension, its denizens, holds vast reserves of knowledge. Some werewolves of this auspice spend years, or even decades, summoning and befriending spirits to sate their insatiable desire to learn more.

Other werewolves might stereotype the crescent-moons as eccentric weirdos, and in many cases those Garou aren't far off, but it's not for the reasons they may think. Unlike those werewolves who treat spirits as less sapient, the crescent-moons see them as creatures to respect. In that vein, the Theurge may wear substances emblematic of a spirit's nature

(or, conversely, avoid substances or phenomena contrary to that spirit's nature). The more spirit allies a given Theurge has, the more peculiar behaviors she adopts, the better to keep her friends happy. An old werewolf, bedecked with oddities and exhibiting strange behaviors isn't necessarily crazy. Instead, it's more than entirely possible that she is, in effect, a one-werewolf army, able to call upon a horde of spirits that will viciously defend her.

Other crescent-moons aren't happy with a sedentary lifestyle, calling spirits to them. Instead, they have a sort of spiritual wanderlust that drives them to explore not only the Near Umbra, but as many Umbral Realms as they can reach. By necessity, these werewolves are the most combative of the auspice. To do otherwise is for the werewolf to sign her death warrant, as quite a few Realms are dangerous to the Garou, if not downright lethal. Similar to crescent-moons who seek out certain types of spirits as allies, these werewolves cultivate their Rage more than other Theurges, running counter to usual expectations. By embracing their Rage and combining that with their knowledge of the Umbra and its various Realms, these are some of the most dangerous Garou on the planet, at least on the spirit-side of things.

Seeing the Rest of the World

Of all the auspices, the crescent-moons have perhaps the most difficult First Change. The stereotypical First Change ends with violence, but that's not necessarily the way a Theurge goes through his. Nor is his Change always quick. For some, it truly starts quite some time before the night of the actual event.

Even before the young Theurge undergoes the First Change, he finds that spirits are interested in him, even though he doesn't have the frame of reference to comprehend what's going on. All he sees is the byproduct of the spirits' attention: moving or misplaced objects, electronics shorting out, areas of cold air, and the like.

He might think he's being haunted. He might think he's going crazy. He might think both of those things at the same time. What most don't do most of the time is tell anybody about what's going on. Even if he isn't going crazy, others will certainly think he's not fully in control of his faculties. Some part of him — maybe it's a quiet part of him, or maybe he believes that voices are speaking in his head — keeps him from reporting the phenomena.

Some few attempt to approach the situation in a scientific manner. A seemingly irrational event surely has a rational explanation, right? The soon-to-be werewolf sets up a secret camera, certain in the belief that someone's stolen into his room and moved his things around. Across town, another future Theurge tears apart her laptop, convinced that she has to find what exactly shorted out in the machine's innards.

Without a rational explanation, however, these efforts are doomed to failure.

Eventually, the attention (which isn't malicious; the spirits almost can't help themselves) becomes simply too much for the new werewolf to take. Even though he never had an anger management issue in his life, the constant distraction of things happening around him with seemingly no reason causes him to boil over. He snaps, assuming his birthright and finally discovering exactly what's been going on for the past several weeks.

Still, most crescent-moons carry little Rage within their hearts, for what they feel are very good reasons. Their auspice duties revolve around the Umbra and spirits. As a result, Gnosis is a far more precious and useful resource for them than Rage. In fact, depending on what spirits a Theurge typically interacts with, Rage is an active detriment. For example, a Child of Gaia crescent-moon dealing with one of Unicorn's brood is better off without a surplus of Rage. The peaceful serenity of Gnosis resonates more closely with the spirits.

Rage isn't without its uses, of course. A Theurge who cultivates his Rage finds that some spirits — mostly those of great predators — are easier to deal with. Perhaps the spirits can sense a kindred soul, or maybe they know that bloodshed is imminent and they will feast on plentiful Gnosis.

Tribal Secrets

While Garou ritemasters work their rituals in much the same way, some regional variations occur. The crescent-moons value not only flexible thinking, but also results. Other than the most traditionally minded or hidebound ritemasters, werewolves appreciate new or different ways to approach rites, so long as that variation remains respectful to the spirits. Without a doubt, Garou of this auspice have innumerable ways to express their displeasure to someone who disrespects the Umbra or those who dwell there.

- It was already cold enough for the wind to feel like a thousand tiny knives piercing his skin. Even so, Aputi continued his drumming dance. He couldn't help but flash a brief smile behind a mask made of whalebone, of a type called the *yup'ik* by his Kin. As the temperature dropped even further, he knew the ritual was working, and soon a servant of the mighty Wendigo would arrive. Aputi's sept, as isolated as it was, and distrustful of others, needed reliable help to drive out the interloping werewolves. At the culmination of the rite, a raging blizzard appeared from nothingness, and a large furred shape stepped into the ritemaster's view. Soon, the feast would begin.

- Of all the crescent-moons at her sept, Sabina is the most skilled at finding new places on both sides of the Gauntlet sacred to Pegasus. Much like those people who have a head for maps and directions, Sabina combines her growing network of spiritual allies with an instinctual gut feeling that hasn't steered her wrong yet. While she downplays her ability to others, privately she feels that, as a metis, she's more in-tune with the Umbra and — perhaps — even Pegasus.

Regardless, she tirelessly seeks out these places so that her sept and tribe can bring them under the proper protection.

- Hunts-Under-Broken-Skies howls across the Umbral border, calling spirits to his aid as he and his pack run on four feet through the forest. His Red Talon brothers and sisters are the fiercest Garou he knows, but his otherworldly allies — spirits of great predators, servants of Griffon — know blood, bone, and the tearing of the prey's throat just as well, if not better. Hunts-Under-Broken-Skies doesn't treat them any less for not being of the flesh, just as he knows that they do the same for him for not being spirit. The mutual respect each holds for the other is the only oath needed to bind them to the same purpose.

Ragabash: The New Moon, The Trickster

When you're the Fool, the world's your oyster. Things are even better when you're a shapeshifting warrior of cunning and fury who heals like mad. That said, don't get cocky, kid — you're not invincible. You must know when to ask questions, when to point out flaws, and how to do both so that others will listen.

Just as importantly, you need to know when to shut up.

That's right; I said shut up. See, we aren't all wisecracks and questions. Sometimes, we're the silent killer in the dark, or the scout ranging far from the pack. Even when we are asking the questions, you need to know your bounds. Cross these boundaries, and you run the risk of being throated right quick.

Stick with me, kid, and you'll go far. On the other hand, if you want, go your own way and see how far it takes you.

The Questioner of the Ways. That simple title gives the Ragabash an enormous amount of leeway among the rest of the Garou Nation. She can cajole, lampoon, satirize, and thumb the noses of the older and powerful, but only so long as she keeps two guidelines in mind.

First, the questions must have *purpose*. The new-moon finds flaws in any given course of action, whether that action is to negotiate with a rival sept, or a battle plan to invade a Black Spiral Dancer hive. Her quips and jibes must come from a place to improve the Nation's position, not to reduce it. A Ragabash who forgets this cardinal rule is reminded the hard way, as other werewolves deploy an instructive beating.

Ragabash fresh from the Change lack this essential skill. Fortunately, the clear majority learn it over time, making their queries and challenging the status quo when necessary, but not to the extent where they destabilize their pack or sept.

Second, the must know her limits. She has leeway, yes, but that doesn't imply carte blanche to say whatever she likes. American Garou compare this to the First Amendment, in that while a Ragabash shouldn't dish it out if she can't take the consequences. If she pisses off an Ahroun, she has to be willing to take a beating — or worse.



As long as a Ragabash keeps these two guidelines in mind, she has little reason to worry. However, neither guide is as cut-and-dry as it seems. She must adapt to the mores and attitudes of her sept; what one finds purposeful is frivolous to another, and treasonous to a third. If she isn't careful, a travelling Ragabash can make a number of powerful enemies even though she believes she is doing her duties.

For that reason, elder Ragabash teach cubs the all-important lesson of how to read people. Other Garou think the skill is more suitable to the Galliards or Philodox, but the new-moons have found it invaluable. By reading others, the trickster discovers not only how far she can push them, but also how to do so in the first place.

Uniquely among werewolves, Rage is a detriment for a Ragabash who would to excel at her role. Fortunately, these Garou do not have a surplus of it in the first place. Even after her Change, a fresh Ragabash doesn't feel anywhere near the same amount of Rage in her heart as her Ahroun brother, or even her Philodox sister. It's counter-productive to any endeavor for which she's best suited. For that reason, she doesn't usually put more than a token effort into embracing her Rage as she becomes more experienced. Despite that, Rage is not a bad thing; when a new-moon's activities put her squarely in a compromised position, Rage helps her

survive her own cleverness. As such, most Ragabash see Rage as an ace-in-the-hole rather than the first tool in the toolbox.

Rage, by its very nature, is loud and overt; a hammer that sees every problem as a nail. The new-moons prize lateral thinking and quick wits. Succumbing to a Rage-fueled frenzy, for a Ragabash, means that everything that she has built is about to come crumbling down.

To Wear a Fool's Cap

No other auspice understands quite understands exactly how the mind of a Ragabash works. The Philodox may claim they do, citing some notion of "balanced thought" or some such, but the new-moons know better. They needn't work hard to think outside of the box, for their minds are already there.

Werewolves born in the dark of the moon have a natural aptitude for questioning. Of all the auspices, the Change is perhaps the least traumatic in this regard, as they have spent their whole lives challenging authority and questioning all that they've been told. Transferring those habits to the structure of pack and sept is not usually that difficult. The only problem that arises is getting the Ragabash to fit into a pack in the first place, as he's become accustomed to operating alone rather than with others.

Older Ragabash help the cubs the only way they know how — through trickery and deceit — letting the younger werewolves learn to separate truth from lies, and consider the deeper meanings behind everything. It's often a maddening experience for the cubs, but the lessons learned and the means of teaching will stand the trickster in good stead in her life to come.

Eyes from the Shadows, Knives in the Dark

While the new-moons are the stereotypically happy-go-lucky trickster, like so many things with the Ragabash, much more lurks beneath the surface. In addition to being the Questioner of the Ways, a Ragabash knows that her sept calls on her to perform duties others find difficult, or even distasteful. The Ragabash werewolf has skills her counterparts in the other auspices don't favor and access to Gifts that others do not care to learn.

Ambushes, espionage, guerilla warfare, and unconventional tactics, all of these and more fit well into the new-moon's box of tricks. In addition to quiet assassinations, they take a perverse pleasure in psychological warfare. Where an Ahroun might favor a frontal assault, a Ragabash can accomplish the same feat by befriending the enemy and hitting them when their guard is down.

Ragabash also make excellent scouts. Gifts can make them hard to see, silent, or impossible to track. A trickster's knack for figuring out weaknesses means that any intelligence he brings back is valuable. His familiarity with deception makes him best-placed to recognize and see through it, foiling the counterintelligence efforts of his enemies.

On rare occasions, a Ragabash ignores — or outright rejects — the teachings he received as a cub. He acts on his own more often, reckoning that his pack is slowing him down or getting in his way. He concludes that his stealthy approach keeps him safe from harm, allowing him to avoid getting into fights in the first place. Since he can manage that, what need has he of the Ahroun? His adaptability means that he doesn't need the Theurge or her spirits. He doesn't need the Galliard ruining his ambushes by howling the pack's approach, and he certainly doesn't need the Philodox, with her disapproving glares over his methods.

Lucky or smart Ragabash either come to their senses and realize that each member of the pack serves a purpose and that with so many enemies, he can't afford to go it alone. New-moons who aren't so lucky, or who have pushed their packs away through their actions, usually end up as abject lessons for future generations of Ragabash.

Tribal Riddles

As the most flexible of auspices, the new-moons don't fit as neatly into boxes as the others. Despite this, the Ragabash do have some general tendencies and similarities, without which they wouldn't be a cohesive auspice.

- Kristina of the Silver Moon Sept never expected to lead a pack into battle. She was a Ragabash, better suited for pointing out flaws in a plan than for actually leading one. Still, she was a daughter of Falcon, and she'd be damned before she'd allow the Wyrm to gain a foothold here.

From her location tucked in between boulders on a rocky hillside, she watched other warriors in her sept fight off the attackers. She knew the rest of her pack behind her was eager to rush down the hill and join in the fighting. Their blood boiled with Rage and guilt that their brethren were fighting and perhaps dying while the pack sat here watching.

Patiently, Kristina waited for the right moment... she'd know by instinct when it came. When it did, with several Fomori hesitating when their leader stumbled, she burst from hiding, adopting the war form.

She led the charge down the hill, with hell following after.

- The entire sept knew Seamus was the worst Ragabash ever. Where every other new-moon was quiet until needed, he was loud and raucous. Nobody in the sept could ignore him, although quite a few certainly tried. His antics were as annoying as he was, if not more so.

Then Pentex came. They erected tainted devices that prevented the sept from escaping through the Umbra, then set up a perimeter around the caern — daring the Garou to come out to meet them. The elders met to decide how best to deal with the issue, and someone eventually noticed Seamus was missing.

The next morning, the devices were no more than scrap, and Seamus came walking into the bawn whistling a tune. The First Team soldiers were drunk, the leaders dead, and their entire operation falling apart. The rest of the sept had no problem removing them afterward.

- Walking Mist slunk through the underbrush, silent as death. He knew his pack was behind him, but far enough that they couldn't quickly rush to his aid if the Spirals noticed his approach. He had to live up to his name to have any chance of success. He inched closer, spotting his prey: five Black Spiral Dancers and three Fomori. Fortune was with him, as they were arguing amongst themselves. They did notice the ear-splitting howl from Walking Mist's pack mate, a Galliard called Blood Howl. All eight of the Wyrm creatures turned at the sound, as the rest of the pack closed in. It was their fatal mistake. Concentrating on the obvious threat, they never saw the Ragabash spring from the shadows, taking lethal advantage of their distraction.



BRIAN
L. BRIAN

Chapter Two: Born a Warrior

Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou.

This is the first commandment of the Litany. It is also the one with the most visible symbol of its breach, namely the metis. These unfortunate cubs are born deformed in body, mind, or spirit and are a constant reminder that there has been a violation of the Litany. They grow up the target of scorn and quite often their parents distance themselves from their "mistakes." While metis present some formidable advantages — the assurance that they are full Garou rather than Kinfolk, being able to regenerate in any shape and instant transformation into Crinos — that might cause some Garou to argue that metis aren't all bad, they are still a violation of the ancient werewolf laws. And even if this were not the case, metis are sterile, unable to help breed a new generation of Garou.

While many homid-breed Garou come from the Kinfolk who live in and around a caern, such Kinfolk's early life more closely resembles that of a lost cub than that of a metis. The mules grow up entirely within the sept, indoctrinated from their first year into the beliefs of Garou, sept, and tribe. What little they know of the outside world comes from the stories of the local Kinfolk and whatever the Den Father/Mother has told them, plus books, newspapers, and TV, if the sept deems this appropriate. From their earliest years,

the other werewolves of the sept teach them the worldview of the Garou and do not contrast it with the human world outside the caern. Also, many metis do not see the outside world until shortly before their Rite of Passage.

Metis combine possible parental abandonment with constant berating for something that is not their fault and an upbringing in something that closely resembles a religious fanatic compound. It is little wonder that many metis end up screwed up in the head, from a human or even homid perspective. Certainly, even the most open-minded metis upbringing in no way resembles that of a human, Kinfolk or not. Even the most strong-willed and individualistic metis forever bear the mark of their experiences.

Born in Sin

From the journal of Jeffrey Packless of the Glass Walkers.

Dear cousin,

My host here in Sweden, Peter Law-Speaker, has graciously provided me with access to the campus of Uppsala University and I have a little time before leaving for Africa (more about that later). I am using that time to transcribe some of my

SPONTANEOUS METIS?

At the Uppsala Högar Sept, I heard a few rumors about “spontaneous metis”: Garou born sterile and with deformities, but with only one werewolf parent. I managed to track this rumor to a pack of Garou from Pripyat in Ukraine, right where Chernobyl is (it was part of the Soviet Union back then). If this is true, then it raises many horrible possibilities, especially since Chernobyl is by no means the only nuclear disaster out there (re: Kyshtym, Fukushima). When I return to Europe, this certainly merits further research.

interviews and put my notes in order for you. I will send it by mail; after our sept ordered you to cease your genetic research, I fear they might be monitoring your email. As such, some of the papers you are going to receive will be hand-written notes and not all of it may be relevant. Also, I know that this hardly constitutes “scientific research,” but I am storyteller, not a scientist. Besides, you just asked me to gather as much information about metis as I could in my travels.

I was in Germany when I finally managed to contact one of my tribe in Lagos. She readily extended an invitation for me to come visit and I hope to interview some Bastet (even though my contact told me that the Bastet seem to have their hands full fighting what they claim are whole Fera fallen to the Wyrm) about metis within their species of Fera. As you know, my interviews in North America did not go too well (see separate papers; Nuwisha and Gurahl). Before leaving, I accepted an invitation from the renowned Peter Law-Speaker to attend the Disablot Moot at Uppsala Högar in Sweden. This moot brings Get of Fenris from all over the world, as well as mixed packs from Scandinavia and Garou visitors from all over North Europe. This is the most metropolitan mix I have encountered since the US and I thought it would be a fitting end to my research among the North American and European Garou.

On the Conception of Werewolves

from “Birthing Metis,” by Dr. Hannah L. Archer, M.D.

Carrying and giving birth to a metis baby presents a whole host of problems not associated with a normal pregnancy. The fetus is larger than a human baby or wolf cub and the mother must stay in Crinos shape at least from the beginning of the second trimester. Unborn babies generally cannot survive their mother changing shape from this

SHAPESHIFTING WITH A METIS

While a female Garou can change shape right up until the final days before she delivers if pregnant with human or wolf children, things are different when a Garou is pregnant with a metis

This is not a big problem during the first trimester; the expectant mother is a bit more ungainly and the shapeshifting is a bit more painful, but this is a matter for roleplaying and has no mechanical effect.

During the second and third trimester, the effects of a normal pregnancy are magnified whenever the mother is not in Crinos, and changing shape becomes more difficult; not just because of the increased pain, but also because the Garou body is fighting to remain in the correct shape for the birth.

The pregnant Garou increases the difficulty of rolls to change shapes except Crinos by +1, but changing to Crinos is at -1 difficulty. During the third trimester, she suffers three levels of aggravated damage from the strain to her body when shifting into any form other than Crinos.

During the second and third trimesters, a werewolf carrying a metis can resist changing out of Crinos, either because of falling unconscious, or due to a supernatural effect. This is a survival instinct, designed to protect the mother as much as possible. Resisting is a Stamina + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 5).

point on, and the size of a metis baby makes it even more vulnerable. This, of course, presents its own problems, since the Crinos shape is not the natural shape of the mother and werewolves tend to return to their birth form when knocked unconscious. If that should happen, the mother will likely die painfully as the monster growing within tears through her body faster than she can regenerate

In my experience, werewolves are slightly more fertile than normal humans. This could be a result of their more robust constitution and maybe a side effect of their regenerative powers, but it might also be because most werewolves avoid several of the modern chemicals that affect fertility, such as parabens. Once pregnant, werewolves are also much less susceptible to pregnancy complications than human women. For example, one of the most common complications in the modern world is eclampsia, something which

I have never seen in a pregnant werewolf. The powerful immune system, incredible stamina, and all-round health of werewolves, especially their virtual immunity to disease and infection, means that pregnancy trouble is very rare for them. This holds true even with a metis baby; while the fetus' claws might scratch the inside of the womb, this does not interfere with the pregnancy in any noticeable way until late into the third trimester. The complications arise once the baby must be delivered.

One of the most frequent problems that occur during the birth of a metis is incorrect placement of the baby. In fact, Garou are more prone to this than humans or wolves. While the Crinos shape is larger than Homid or Lupus, much of the extra mass is upper-body. There is room enough for the baby, but Crinos hips are not well-suited to giving birth. Under normal circumstances, one would perform a Caesarean section, but that carries its own risks.

I have not, myself, had to perform a C-section on a werewolf, but the first time I was called on to attend a mother carrying a metis baby, I considered the possibility. The first problem is that a C-section involves cutting the mother open. With the rapid regenerative powers of the Garou, this is simply not an option with regular medical tools. The only way I can think of would involve a silver scalpel, something I am not entirely sure *can* be made. Then there is the pain; I cannot imagine any werewolf willing to take traditional pain medication, considering their attitude to pharmaceuticals. This leaves more natural (and less effective) painkillers, such as turmeric, valerian and, of course, alcohol. However, I would not trust these remedies to ensure that a werewolf patient would lie still while someone cuts her with silver.

Another common complication is shoulder dystocia, where the shoulders of the baby either cannot pass through the pubic symphysis or, in more severe cases, get stuck there. Since a metis baby's shoulder are very wide compared to the hips and pelvic area of even a Crinos-shape mother, this is almost a given. In human women, shoulder dystocia requires significant manipulation of the fetus or even an emergency C-section. In the case of werewolves, the regenerative powers of both mother and child mean that one can simply pull the baby out, though it is incredibly painful, especially as the child's claws will tear into the mother's flesh. When I have done this, I have always had several other werewolves holding her down, as frenzy is a real possibility if the mother survives.

Beyond the mother succumbing to frenzy, the trauma of birth can spur the baby to frenzy. While a metis birth is normally painful and damaging, a frenzied baby will tear the mother to shreds during the birth; and while most werewolves may laugh at the idea, a frenzied metis presents a real danger to anyone else nearby.

My own experience tells me that if a werewolf mother can bring a metis baby to term, the actual birth leaves both



mother and child alive more often than not, however other complications can occur. Sometimes, the baby's stamina and regenerative powers aren't enough to repair whatever damage the birth has caused. Though it can take several hours, the baby dies in incredible pain.

Growing Up an Outsider

Even a human Kinfolk that grows up in a sept has contact with the outside world. Some attend school and have "normal" friends, others might be homeschooled, but no matter how isolated, they will have *some* knowledge of, and experience with, the world outside the sept.

Not so a metis.

For the first 6 to 8 years of their life, a metis cannot enter human society. While she may learn to understand human languages, the Crinos form cannot form human words with any skill. Until she goes through her First Change, a metis will endanger the safety of their sept if humans ever see her. As such, any knowledge a metis gains about human society comes through secondary sources. Human Kinfolk (and, sometimes, other Garou) might tell stories, and many septs, except those under the control of Red Talons or *very* traditionalist Garou, do allow books or magazines that Kinfolk can read to the child. Some septs even have access to the Internet, though seeing a Garou in Crinos shape trying to type on a laptop or, even worse, use a tablet, is a pitiful sight. As a result, the child is forever disconnected from human society.

The caern's Den Father or Mother takes responsibility for a sept's metis – or at least, is supposed to. The Den Father or Mother in question often sees this as a thankless job and it's no small wonder that many Den Parents treat their charges poorly and try to hand over much of the

responsibility for metis children to Kinfolk. But problems arise almost as soon as the metis child is old enough to walk: she is extremely strong, comes equipped with claws and fangs and, as anyone who's ever tried taking care of young children knows, self-control and rational thought is not their strong suit. This last problem goes double for metis children; not only is the Crinos shape heavily geared towards combat (even outside of combat, it is hard to choose anything except a direct and violent solution when in Crinos shape), but they also keenly feel the effects of their inner Rage. A temper tantrum from a 5-year-old can be bad enough without the child being as big and strong as an adult, clawed and fanged and able to draw on supernatural anger. Fortunately, while a young metis is influenced by her Rage, she has not yet learned to control it fully. She can only use Rage to take extra actions when extremely angry and cannot yet frenzy. The mood swings of a teenage Garou are one thing and while it is rare for such mood swings to lead to the mauling of a Kinfolk, even a human child can hurt an adult when they give in to anger or frustration. A young metis can easily kill a full-grown man if, say, she is denied a treat or is scolded for being bad.

As such, other Garou usually rear, raise and instruct a metis from about the age of 3. Sometimes, the parents are involved, other times, the parents chose to exorcise their shame by ignoring the child. Some septs force the parents not to have anything to do with the child as punishment for their misdeeds and, paradoxically, others force the parents to take time away from other duties to tend to a young metis. In all cases, however, the metis grows up knowing she's an outcast, a shame to her parents, and an embarrassment to her sept. Such an upbringing will almost certainly affect the child, as discussed later. Since experienced Garou are usually called upon to do important work in fighting the Wyrm, running the sept and tending to the caern, a metis will often be handed off to younger werewolves and can end up as a hot potato, being passed around between Den Father/Mother, parents, and young Garou.

Being raised primarily by werewolves within the confines of a sept leads to what some young Glass Walkers refer to as "The Hogwarts Problem": that the people educating the metis teach her the laws of the Garou (and consistently telling her she is a violation of the Litany's first law), their traditions, lore, history, the lore of her tribe, and all the things that a Garou needs to know. But a young child also needs to learn how to read and write, do at least basic math, learn some of the history and culture of the human society around the sept. These are all things that they will *not* automatically teach her. There are some septs that assign a Kinfolk with skill at teaching to convey some basic knowledge to a metis, many more septs simply forget this or think that it isn't important. The result is a Garou with the same limitations as a lupus, but someone who's often more comfortable in a two-legged shape. In

WHAT'S IN A NAME?

As a child, a metis rarely receives a normal, human name. If this happens, it is usually the result of a homid parent and a way for that parent to declare his or her support for the baby. The sept as a whole will usually stick with some kind of quick descriptor, often a dismissive or even insulting one, like "Mistake," "No Change," "Disgrace," etc. It's only after her Rite of Passage that a metis can shed this name. Often, a metis without a human-sounding name will adopt one when she has to interact with human society in earnest. This just adds to the emotional baggage of a metis.

fact, some few metis might not even speak the dominant human tongue of the area they grew up in, though this is rare, and occurs almost exclusively among the Red Talons.

Since metis are brought up inside the sept and mainly, or exclusively, taught the ways of the Garou, their worldview is often quite unsophisticated. Even a lupus Garou has spent some two years outside Garou society, but a metis does not have anything at all to contrast with. For metis who come from septs where having knowledge of, and contact with, the outside world is something that is rare or discouraged their upbringing is something akin to growing up in a religious fanatic compound, and while some metis have expanded their minds since then, many remain extremely fanatic, unwilling or even unable to question the teachings of their sept and tribe. Even in septs where metis learn about human society, they are usually punished if they question the truth of what their fellow Garou tell them. Some Garou might wonder if this is not a good thing; after all, it was a disregard for the laws and traditions of the Garou that led to the birth of the metis in the first place. And since the Garou are warriors in a holy and true cause, is it not a good thing to have fanatical soldiers, ready to fight for the cause? The problem is that fanatics don't think. A fanatic is likely to charge blindly towards whatever they see as a threat, unwilling to consider any other approach. Their attitude is completely inflexible, and such dogmatic behavior often leads to problems. The Wars of Rage, and the near Civil War between the European and American tribes are historical examples. The Glass Walkers' acceptance of the tools of the Weaver was once seen as a mark against them, but now, most tribes accept at least some technological tools. Finally, as much as some tribes might not like it, the Garous' work in the modern world often requires some level of stealth and subterfuge. Metis are much less likely to be open-minded and willing to work around the Litany or Tribal traditions, even if this could lead to a better solution.

It doesn't help that the Garou are, at heart, a warrior culture and that they see their mission, their reason for being, as fighting for Gaia. Yes, "fight" in this case does not automatically equate to "do physical battle," but this is the most common way the Garou express it. With the corruption of the Wyrm growing, the direct, physical way of fighting becomes increasingly predominant. As a result, metis grow up in very physical, even violent, societies. They see disputes being settled by ritual combat and often, leaders are chosen through ritual combat. Constantly, warriors train and practice around them. This cannot help but shape a young metis' outlook, especially when her own form is the battle-ready Crinos shape. A lot of young metis have a very "when all you have is a hammer" attitude to just about any problem, something that does not go well with their tendency towards fanaticism.

Another thing that screws with a young metis' mind is her lack of friends and playmates. She can't be allowed to

play with Kin children lest she mauls or even kills them in a dispute over a toy. Her only friends are other Garou, and even the youngest of those will be in their early teens, and quite busy with their first years as a Garou. While many septs have young Garou look after metis when they have nothing else to do, this does nothing to alleviate the problem. And since it's rare for a teenager to like babysitting, the metis they look after become targets for the frustration of young Garou, as well as the animosity of the elders. Many metis become insular and withdrawn, prone to inventing invisible friends. They also become precocious, and many metis try to emulate the way adults act, since they have no other children to act as a mirror. Far too many metis never have a real childhood and it mars their development, leading to even more psychological trouble later.

The fact that a metis remains solely in Crinos shape until their First Change also colors her behavior quite a lot. Primarily, metis are usually quite overconfident; their natural form is strong and tough and they regenerate. This follows them through puberty and metis commonly get into more than their fair share of trouble when first exposed to human society. They have to learn the limitations, and advantages, of the Homid and Lupus forms, as opposed to the Crinos. It also affects their language. While nowhere near as reliant on body language as the Lupus shape, a Garou in Crinos still uses posture and body movements a lot more than someone in Homid, even when speaking a human language.

First Change for a metis usually happens when she is eight to ten years of age, younger than for homids, relatively speaking. This is because a metis, being as much wolf as she is human, enters puberty at a somewhat earlier age. This does not show when she transforms, however, as she will look appropriately older in both Homid and Lupus shape. Access to her Rage and spiritual abilities, however, comes earlier than their First Change. A metis can often tap into her Rage around the time that she learns how to walk, though for the first several years, it remains instinctual and only surfaces during times of very strong emotions. Metis usually gain access to their spiritual heritage around six years of age. The problems their Rage creates have been mentioned, but a metis' spiritual abilities can also result in trouble. First, when a metis learns to step sideways, she often finds a secret hideaway in the Umbra that she can run to when the real world becomes too much for her. She might also try to befriend spirits, or she might run into spirits that despise her for being metis. If any ancestor spirit has taken an interest in the young metis, she begins to hear him at this time, taking the concept of the invisible friend to a whole new level. This, too, can result in the metis being messed up in the head, especially if the ancestor despises them for being who they are. Imagine a voice you cannot shut up and which is constantly telling you that you are a disgrace;

it's enough to drive some nearly insane. And of course, the Umbra is not a safe place. The bawn isn't a problem, but a young metis straying outside the caern's protected area can meet all sorts of dangerous spirits, without the abilities needed to deal with them.

After the First Change, many septs let their metis out into human society to "acclimatize" them. In the US, some septs refer to this as "*Garou Rumspringa*." Such a *Rumspringa* occurs more often in septs of mixed tribes, though the Glass Walkers are also quite fond of it (while the Bone Gnawers, do it out of necessity more often than not). Of course, some septs do not let a metis outside until their Rite of Passage, and there are some septs that never allow their metis to leave, keeping them as caern guards.

Unless a sept is completely insane, they will assign at least one Garou as a chaperone for a metis leaving the caern for the first time. The customary practice seems to be to send a metis out with a few Kinfolk and a Garou or two and then gradually scale it back, until the metis is trusted enough to be sent out with only a single Kinfolk as an escort. A few septs send the metis out into human society alone for the first time, as a sort of "trial by fire," but the danger this poses to the sept – and to the Veil as a whole – makes this very rare. And no matter how open-minded a sept is, a metis cannot integrate into human society after her First Change. Sending her to a human school or letting her have human friends to make her better at blending into human society is a recipe for disaster.

The metis must also learn how to deal with her new forms, which are in most ways weaker than the Crinos shape. Most septs discourage wearing the Crinos shape unless they expect trouble, so the metis must get used to spend most of her time in a shape that is not natural to her and comes with its own limitations. Human form requires clothes (trying to get a metis child to wear pants for the first time is quite an experience), while the Lupus form has a vastly different focus when it comes to senses. In fact, this whole "wearing a shape that is not your own" adds considerably to the stress that any metis feels. She is only truly herself when she is wearing the battle-form and when this happens, others naturally assume that she is getting ready for trouble. Even after the First Change when she has integrated herself as much as possible into Garou society, a metis has great difficulty relaxing and being herself.

The First Change

For a metis, the First Change is a very, very different experience than for a homid or a lupus. For one thing, *she knows it's coming*. Even human Kinfolk growing up near a sept knowing about shapeshifting might not have been told

about the First Change, and wolf Kinfolk are usually not told about this, since it's nothing something they would really understand. But a metis knows, as soon as she is old enough to comprehend, that one day, she will be able to change shape. She sees it all the time around her, and most dream about that day. For one thing, it's what marks a metis as being a full Garou, but many also believe they will be more accepted once they can take on a human or wolf shape. The people she sees around her, the people she looks up to, her parents, teachers, and friends (even though they may be people that treat her badly), almost never wear the same shape that the metis does. So, a metis grows up being used to seeing and interacting with others in Homid and Lupus shape and will often associate these shapes with what is normal.

As a result, the metis is prepared for the First Change, in a way no other werewolf can be. A human Kin might have been told that he could one day become a Garou, but being told about it and spontaneously erupting into a 9-foot-killing machine are two different things. So she has one advantage over the homid and lupus Garou: she is ready for the First Change when it comes and it does not traumatize, confuse, or overwhelm her as much as it does the other breeds. Indeed, for her, it is a joyous occasion and most metis will spend a lot of time experimenting with shapeshifting as soon as they can. Since this normally happens a few years before a metis is ready for her Rite of Passage, she will have a leg up on her homid and lupus packmates. By the time she is accepted into a tribe, a metis tends to be especially good at partial transformations, since she's had years to train.

For a homid, the First Change almost always comes at a time of great emotional agitation: fear, anger, frustration, even hatred. For a lupus Garou, things are different (see Chapter Three). In both cases, however, it's an instinctual shift into Crinos shape, an effortless transformation fueled by the spiritual power of the First Change. For a metis, the shape she assumes when experiencing their First Change is keyed to the dominant shape of the sept she grew up in. If a metis is mostly used to wolves around her, she will change to Lupus shape; if she is used to seeing humans, she will change to Homid.

For a metis, the idea of the First Change is that of yet another skill, like running or howling (for wolves) or speaking, reading, and writing (for humans). It's something that will come when she grows old enough to do it properly, so all she must do is wait. The difference is, that until the First Change actually happens, it's not really a skill she can train. She learns to run by first crawling, then staggering on two legs with walls, chairs, and anything else for support, then walking properly. Howling is first loud yips, then shaky ululations, and finally the full-throated wolf howl. A metis cannot practice shapeshifting, however, until the

First Change and the spontaneous full shift that happens then. Afterwards, however, a metis can take full advantage of all five forms and partial shapeshifting and practice to her heart's content.

Most septs that accept metis to a greater or lesser degree mark the First Change in some way. For some metis, this is a joyous occasion, complete with a gift or two, while for others, it simply represents an increase in chores, instruction and/or training.

The Personal View

Growing Up Broken

Whitenose, Uktena Theurge, muses on growing up metis

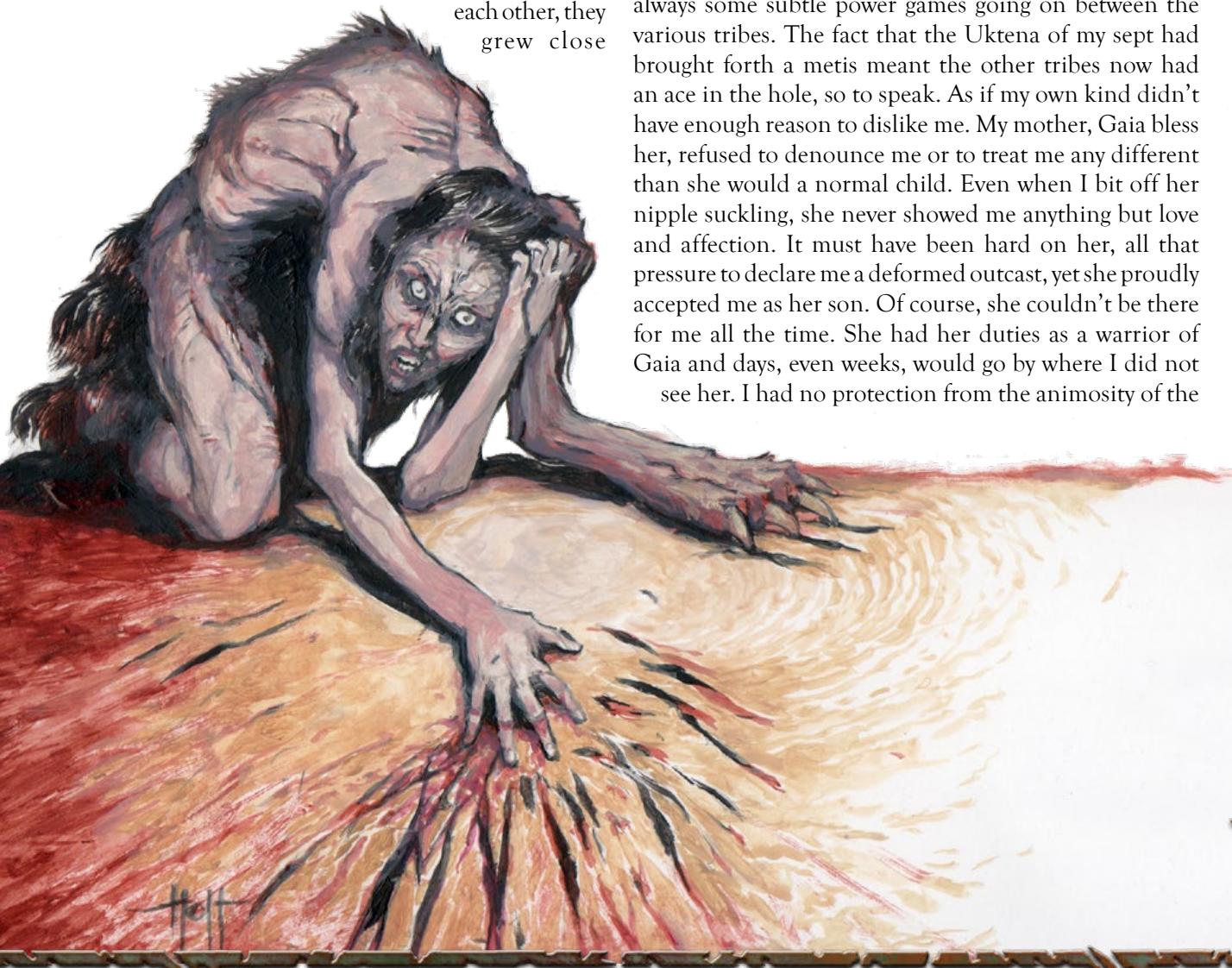
Which direction should I speak? Ah, there, good. You understand that I can only speak for myself, my sept, my tribe, and even just my deformity, right?

Well, I suppose I should start with why I was born. My mother was a lupus, somewhat confused by the urges that came over her when she became a Garou. She describes it as being lightly in heat *all the time*. She fought side-by-side with my father, a homid, in the same pack, for two years. They liked each other, they grew close

because they were always together, constantly fighting danger. And then, after a particularly hard-fought battle, where several of their packmates died, they finally spent the night together. I am not trying to make excuses for them – I am just trying to make people understand the situation they found themselves in.

I suppose I was fortunate. Our sept isn't all that big and it's located near several corrupted areas. My sept might not have liked it, but in the end, they could not afford to have me or my mother killed. Interestingly enough, I don't think the sept ever considered killing my father. They punished both my parents, of course, as is only fitting for someone who had broken the Litany, and in the end, my father died leading a suicidal charge against a Black Spiral Dancer hive. I was only three months old when that happened; and I can't stop myself thinking that I was the reason he died.

So I was born, a metis, a shame on not only my mother, but my entire sept, and my tribe. My birth also caused considerable pain to my mother and damaged my body in ways that took weeks for me to heal, even with my natural regeneration. I don't know if you're from a sept with several tribes, but let me tell you – there's almost always some subtle power games going on between the various tribes. The fact that the Uktena of my sept had brought forth a metis meant the other tribes now had an ace in the hole, so to speak. As if my own kind didn't have enough reason to dislike me. My mother, Gaia bless her, refused to denounce me or to treat me any different than she would a normal child. Even when I bit off her nipple suckling, she never showed me anything but love and affection. It must have been hard on her, all that pressure to declare me a deformed outcast, yet she proudly accepted me as her son. Of course, she couldn't be there for me all the time. She had her duties as a warrior of Gaia and days, even weeks, would go by where I did not see her. I had no protection from the animosity of the



other Garou. In a way, I was glad that I was blind. I could hear their taunts, but not see the way I imagine they must have looked at me.

As much as my mother tried to be there, it was mainly the Den Father who raised me, with the help of those Kin-folk he assigned to take care of me. It's not easy, being the target of scorn and ridicule, one parent dead and the other away for days and days. At first, I lashed out, but when I realized how badly I would hurt the Kin-folk around me – not to mention the beating I got from my fellow Garou when this happened – I withdrew into myself. Now, as an adult, looking back... it was child abuse. I was constantly reminded that I was worth less than other werewolves and that I was a stain upon my sept. My sept never let me forget that my mother, the only one who gave me any love, and my father, a dead hero for me to idolize, were lawbreakers. Because I was blind, I wasn't given much in the way of traditional education. I don't know how to read or write Braille. I don't know much in the way of human history or world geography. I was taught the Litany, the traditions of the Garou, and the history of my tribe and I was told that my foremost duty was to fight and die for Gaia.

My First Change was a revelation. When I first became a wolf, it was like being able to see. My senses of smell and hearing were far beyond anything I had been used to. For a time I toyed with the idea of running away, but by then I had promised myself that I would show them all that they were wrong about me. Besides, I knew nothing of the outside world, except that it was filled with dangers, Wyrmspawn, and careless humans.

After my First Change, things started to change. Slightly. It was as if the sept realized that one day I would have to be a member of a pack. Other Garou than my mother and the Den Father began instructing me. I was still at the bottom of the hierarchy, but I began to regain some sense of self-worth. The first time the caern's Gatekeeper took me into the Umbra, I knew I had found my calling. I still can't see in there, but I have other senses and most of the spirits don't treat me any different from other Garou.

Interestingly enough, when I was sent on my Rite of Passage along with other young Garou from the sept, I performed a lot better than most of them. I had more knowledge of our ways and, more importantly, I was a lot more comfortable with being a werewolf. In the end, the sept accepted me as a cliath and they even forced some of the other young Garou to accept me as a member of their pack

Looking back, I probably had it better than many metis, at least most of those I have spoken to. I was mistreated and even abused, but my mother stood with me, and my deformity probably protected me from the worst of it. Still, not a day goes by where I don't wish that I had been born a homid or lupus.

A Practical Approach

Jeff Talks-Too-Much, Glass Walker Galliard, talks about growing up metis

I wasn't the first metis to be born to the Sept of the Bull's Horns and I won't be the last. After my tribe won the leadership from the Fianna, they stopped the practice of giving away metis to the Bone Gnawers of London. My tribe also reduced the punishment of the parents to a simple rite for the father and nothing for the mother; except the knowledge that she had broken the Litany and been forced to endure the pain and shame of birthing a metis. The elders of my sept believed that, with the Apocalypse approaching, we cannot waste a single warrior. I will not go so far as to say that they encouraged the creation of metis, but it certainly carries much less of a stigma than once it did. I was even given a human name along with a dead name, something that is rare for metis.

That's not to say I had it easy, especially since my father was a Fianna. His tribe hated me and hated the fact that my mother's tribe tacitly accepted their indiscretion and my birth. In the end, it drove my father to denounce me. Throughout my upbringing, I constantly felt the hatred of him and his family. My mother, it turned out, wasn't much better. She truly loved my father and she bore a great shame due to my birth, so in the end, she simply stopped having anything to do with me. I think the fact that there were no outwards signs of me being a metis actually made it worse. If I'd been missing an arm or had a twisted spine, they might have seen it as an obvious sign of Gaia's disapproval. But I look hale and hearty and as such, it was clear to the Elders of my sept that my deformity would be mental or spiritual. They watched for such signs and for much of my early upbringing, any temper tantrum or strange behavior was attributed to me being a metis. It was only after my First Change that my fits of madness were confirmed to be the result of my parentage.

The sept took care of me. The Den Mother not only assigned Kin-folk to teach me human language, reading, writing, math, and geography, she also assured that I had tutors in the lore of the Garou. Of course, I was always told that while I was a valued warrior in the fight for Gaia, I was also the result of a terrible mistake. That being said, the war against the Wyrm was the important thing and I grew up knowing my place, knowing that one day I would be called upon to risk my life in the service of Gaia.

It wasn't long after my First Change that the Garou of my sept allowed me to go out into the human world and, at least two Kin-folk and one Garou would always chaperone me. My sept wanted me to know how the outside world worked, to make me understand how best to fight the good fight. Since I wasn't the only metis, we naturally formed a group, which I think cut down a good deal on the scorn and derision that other Garou normally heap upon us, especially the young ones. The older Fianna still

treated us like outcasts, though they were willing to admit that we would make good warriors against the Wyrm. In retrospect, I think I've had it a lot better than other metis.

Unworthy

Leatherhide, Silver Fang Ahroun, shares the pain it is to grow up metis

My parents made a terrible mistake and for that, they suffered. By rights, I shouldn't be alive, but the leaders of my sept decided to spare my life, in their infinite wisdom. They saw that, worthless as I was, I might still be of some use in the glorious battle for Gaia. So, to remove me from the taint that my parents represent, I was sent to another caern, there to be raised as a proper Garou.

As was only right, my upbringing was hard. The Litany is a sacred law and I am a violation of one of the very things that make us what we are. The fact that I was a Silver Fang means that I am inherently superior to other Garou, even as a metis, but that did not help me much. Our tribe, if not all Garou, expect us to excel, and so it was for me since an early age. Better for me to die during the tests set before me than to fail on the field of battle, where the lives of better Garou than I hang in the balance.

The task of teaching me the basics of reading and writing was given to Kinfolk, enough so that I could function in human society, but it was other Garou that taught me what matters, what is important. I was educated in the Litany, the traditions of my tribe and sept, the history of the Garou, and I was taught the sacred duty that befalls us all: to fight, and eventually die, in the service of Gaia. I learned how humans have been poisoning the Earth for thousands of years, how they are a blight upon the world, how the Silver Fangs were chosen to be the leaders of our kind, and how the other tribes envy us and look down upon us for being their betters. These were hard lessons learned. My tough hide meant that my tutors could beat me fiercely when I strayed from my lessons, spoke out of turn, or made demands. As a child, I did not always understand why my mother and father could not be there, why I was always the last to be given food and why I had twice the chores of anyone else.

The sept celebrated my First Change and my training doubled in intensity. My tribe was not the only one in the area and the Elders of my tribe put pressure on me to present the best possible image of a Garou, even though I am an abomination. After my Rite of Passage, they graciously allowed me to join a pack and since then, I have strived to wash away the sin of my birth.

The First Law of the Litany

Peter Law-Speaker, Get of Fenris Philodox elder, shares his wisdom on the Litany

At face value, it's simple, right? Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou. The problem here is the word "mate." It causes as much interpretational trouble as that damn comma in the Second Amendment of the American constitution. The term "mate" refers to sex, but to sex with the purpose of procreation; it's more commonly used when referring to animals, rather than humans. True, this is a translation from the Garou tongue, but it tends to crop up in all translations. In Swedish, the word used is "*para*" or "*avl*," which once again refers to sex for procreation. Couple this with the fact that it is only when the sex results in pregnancy that you have a "physical representation," if you will, of the problem and you can see why some individuals, and even tribes, have different interpretations.

The Litany was created in primordial times, and I believe that those who wrote it had a simpler, less "lawyerly" way to look at things, which is why this law is now up for interpretation. Some tribes — the Fianna, Red Talons, and Wendigo chief among them — go in for a very strict interpretation, saying that the law strictly prohibits any sexual relationship between werewolves. Other tribes say that it merely refers to sex for the purpose of procreation.

While a few werewolves think that abortion can erase the evidence of their sin against the Litany, most septs reserve even harsher punishments for those who try. In many septs, this extends to any werewolf mother who attempts to abort their fetus. The child may — will, in the case of a metis — be Garou, and every werewolf is needed in the dwindling Garou Nation. Traditionalists may slaughter the parents before the child is born, but many septs will force the mother to bring the child to term before meting out final punishment.

The Children of Gaia are the main proponents of this, with the Glass Walkers also supporting this interpretation. Both tribes see no problems with homosexual relationships among werewolves. Several other tribes, especially the Black Furies and Bones Gnawers, don't interfere with homosexual relationships, but try to discourage it — not out of any semblance of human bigotry — but because the Garou population is already tiny, and every potential werewolf born bolsters the ranks of Gaia's warriors. Some Glass Walkers go so far as to suggest that sex between two werewolves using protection is not against the Litany, but werewolf physiology means no contraceptives are particularly effective. Chemical contraceptives burn out of the werewolf's system, while surgical modification (such as vasectomy) falls foul of the werewolf's regenerative capabilities. Physical means such as condoms and spirals break in the heat of the moment.

In the end, there really is no clear-cut answer, but one should look at the facts; "mate" *can* mean just sex and as such, sex between two werewolves is against the Litany. As much as there might be attraction between us, especially when we fight side-by-side every day, keeping things platonic is probably a Garou's best option.

Metis Camps

From the journal of Jeffrey Packless of the Glass Walkers.

As outcasts, metis often gravitate towards other metis (though others shy away from their own kind, as they are painful reminders of what they are: twisted breaches of the Litany). Over the years, various groups of metis have evolved. I call them camps, for they resemble the various political, philosophical, and ideological groupings within the tribes and, just like tribal camps, not all metis are members of one. Garou society has brutally suppressed or even wiped out some of these camps during their history, while they have tolerated others. The following is a look at the ones I know of as being active right now.

The Followers of Vulcan

We might've been born deformed, a violation of the Litany, but that don't mean we can't make a positive contribution to the Garou Nation. We ain't never gonna be leaders, but we got our own Gifts, we got a connection to what it means to be Garou that few can match and we're willin' to make great sacrifices.

– Jon Manyscars, Fianna Theurge, Klaivesmith

The Followers of Vulcan believe that metis must serve their tribe and sept to the best of their ability, and never seek undue power or reward. Many of them focus on the crafting of talens and fetishes, while others serve as messengers between septs, instructors to young Garou, or any other task that most other Garou are reluctant to take up. They strive to be humble, accepting their station, and their ultimate aim is to foster acceptance of metis in the Garou Nation by showing them how useful metis can be. I have a great deal of respect for them, but I feel they do themselves a disservice by their constant submissive demeanor. We are, after all, warriors and amongst our kind, the meek shall not inherit the Earth.

The Children of Kubera

We can still fight. It is really that simple. Gaia needs us. The tribes need us. With the Apocalypse looming, no sept can afford to cast out a single Garou. So what if we were born from sin – we're willing to take the battle to the heart of the Wyrm, so that Garou who can still breed can survive to bring about the next generation. Put me in the vanguard and I will bring victory.

– Wojownik, Shadow Lord Ahroun

In case you are wondering, Kubera is a deformed Hindu god, who used to be a demon before joining the side of good and, well, fighting demons. The Children of Kubera are religious fanatics, warriors willing to do whatever is necessary in the name of Gaia. Ask these guys to strap on a vest of C4 filled with silver shrapnel and jump into a Black Spiral Dancer hive and they will do it... probably after complaining about using Weaver technology.

NEW TOTEM: OBATALA

Background Cost: 6

Obatala, a Totem of Wisdom, is a guardian of the deformed and disabled, manifesting as a humanoid figure in a pure, white robe. His spirit servants assist Garou brought low by battle scars or old age, helping them recover or guiding them towards a glorious final end. Obatala is a totem of healing, but also practical, and believes that if a disabled Garou has nothing to offer her sept (as a warrior, teacher, guard, etc.), she should seek a proper death. As a totem of the deformed, Obatala also protects metis, and his followers argue that a metis who can fight the Wyrm should be allowed to do so, something that does not sit well with traditional or hardline Garou.

Individual Traits: Followers of Obatala can use the Gift: Mother's Touch once per day, and roll an additional die when using it on fellow Garou. Any Garou adopting Obatala gains a point of temporary Wisdom renown, but loses a point of Honor renown (if the Garou does not have any temporary Honor, he loses one point from his first Honor reward).

Pack Traits: Packs following Obatala can draw upon a pool of 3 points of Willpower per story and can use the Gift: Resist Pain.

Ban: Followers of Obatala must never be disdainful towards metis simply because they are metis (though they are allowed to be disdainful towards the parents). If asked, they must always tend to the wounds, infirmities, or derangements of other Garou, except those who follow the Wyrm, until the Garou in question recovers or it becomes clear that she cannot.

Okay, maybe I am being too hard on them. There's no denying that they are single-minded, self-sacrificing warriors, but they are doing some good for the status of metis by showing other Garou that being born from a violation of the Litany doesn't necessarily make one a bad warrior. And much as I hate to admit it, one of their central tenets is true: the death of a metis, while lamentable, is preferable to that of a Garou that can still breed more werewolves. The problem is that they create an image of metis as expendable warriors who can be thrown away for a tactical advantage.

The Sisterhood of Bes

We are the protectors of Gaia, the wardens of the Wyld, the only thing that stands against the Apocalypse. We can discuss the finer points of the Litany once the world has been cleansed, don't you think?

— Laughing Ice, Wendigo Ragabash, Den Mother of the Frozen Lake Sept

As far as I can determine, the Sisterhood of Bes originated with the Black Furies (even though Bes is an Egyptian goddess) and has existed for at least a thousand years. Once, it admitted only female members, but times have changed. The Sisterhood does its best to argue against the killing of metis. They also help to arrange adoptions if needed. Finally, they try to act as mentors to young metis if the situation permits. The Sisterhood also takes on the role of protectors and defenders of caerns, volunteering for guard duty and whatever other tasks as required. They study medicine and help both Garou and Kinfolk through pregnancies, and have a great deal of knowledge about delivering metis. Unfortunately, they have become exceptionally secretive and insular within the last decades, something that has hurt their standing among other Garou. While they are probably still the most respected metis camp, this change in attitude has caused some of the more anti-metis Garou to proclaim that the members of the Sisterhood are as bad as any other mule.

Society of Erichthonius

The Society of Erichthonius does not exist. Once, a rag-tag bunch of mongrels by that name might, possibly, have come together. But if that was the case, they were eradicated long ago.

— Honors-the-Litany, Bone Gnawer Ahroun

Maybe the Society does not exist, but they most certainly did once and they might again. With all the many stories and rumors out there, the Society cannot be discounted out of hand. I have gathered as many as I dare, for simply speaking of the Society of Erichthonius can lead to some unpleasant attention.

The Society was (or is) a group of metis united in the purpose of elevating metis to the position of leaders of the Garou Nation. Their philosophy states that metis are "pure born" Garou and since they are the only werewolves to be raised from birth knowing full well what they are, they are best equipped to lead other Garou. Needless to say, non-metis (and many metis) consider this to be utmost heresy and septs will punish any Garou expressing even the slightest sympathy towards this position.

The rumors I have unearthed indicates that the Society were building some vast conspiracy within the Garou Nation, possibly even trying to destabilize several of our most powerful caerns, so that the septs have no choice but to breed more metis to ensure enough warriors to fight

NEW METIS GIFT

- Deny the Birthright (Level Three) — This Gift is almost exclusively taught amongst the Society of Erichthonius and is considered heretical by most right-thinking Garou. It allows a metis to ignore his inborn deformity for a while. The gift does nothing to alleviate battle scars or deformities brought on by Gifts or other supernatural powers, simply the deformity that comes with being born a metis. Rumors exist of a Level Five version of this Gift that transfers the deformity of a metis to another Garou. Only an ancestor-spirit that was herself a metis in life can teach this gift.

System: The player spends one point each of Willpower and Gnosis. For the scene, the metis is completely unaffected by their deformity. Physical deformities disappear (limbs growing out, sight being bestowed), while mental and spiritual deformities cease to affect the Garou. The duration of the Gift can be extended for an additional scene by spending another point of Gnosis and can be kept going for as long as the Garou has Gnosis to spend. While denying his birthright, a Garou cannot regain Gnosis in any way.

If anyone discovers that a Garou possesses this Gift, he immediately loses a dot of Honor. Every time after this that someone sees the Garou use Deny the Birthright, he loses a temporary point of Honor and Wisdom.

against our enemies. I cannot in any way condone such action and I have trouble believing that any right-thinking metis could join this group.

Views From Without

Every tribe has their own outlook on metis. However, much like how the tribes view each other, the overall view of the tribe can vary from member to member to member. Garou are not stereotypes, but individuals. Opinions on metis will naturally vary from sept to sept. In general, a sept that is comprised solely of a single tribe is more likely to have the stereotypical view of metis. A sept with two or more tribes is usually more open-minded. Of course, as will be touched upon later, outside events or circumstances might also force a tribe to moderate their view of metis.

Another important thing to mention is that most tribes are more accepting of homosexual relationships between Garou

(which cannot lead to metis) than they are of heterosexual ones. Homosexuality is both present and accepted in wolf packs; these non-breeding males are often the most fearsome and brave of the pack as they will not provide new cubs. While the Children of Gaia are usually seen as the tribe that freely and openly accepts such relations, the truth is that most tribes are willing to at least look the other way, while others, especially the more warlike, encourage these relationships. Sharing a bed builds camaraderie, gives you someone to talk to who knows what you are going through, and forges a tight bond between warriors. The "Spartan way" is a lot more common among such tribes as the Fianna, Get of Fenris, and Wendigo as an outside observer might realize. Members of these tribes are quick to defend such relationships as being within the limits of the Litany, since they cannot lead to metis children.

Black Furies

We don't produce many metis, and those we do produce are a greater shame to us than to those of other tribes, as they are a constant reminder not only of a breach of the Litany, but also of the fact that one of us were seduced by a male of another tribe. Now, you may have heard that metis are the only males we allow in our tribe and that is true, but just as often, the dual disgrace of birthing a metis and a male means that the sept encourages (or forces) the mother to give the child up to another tribe willing to take it. We may be a tribe who revere motherhood, but some limits must be set.

– Nicole Defends-the-Land, Black Fury Philodox

The Black Furies seem surprisingly open when talking about their metis and I have observed that female metis (and those males who they keep) are treated better than metis in most other tribes. I guess that the "mother" stereotype associated with the Black Furies isn't all that far off.

One thing that I must be mention in passing, is that while metis are rarer among the Black Furies than among many other tribes (because, I suppose, it requires them to become involved with a male Garou of another tribe), the Black Furies seem to break the letter of the first law of the Litany quite often with lesbian relationships. While they don't defend such relationships with quite the same fervor as the Children of Gaia, neither do they condemn them.

I saw a perfect example of this in a small sept in northern Greece, where the sept leaders defiantly introduced two members of the sept as metis, as if daring me to comment. When I talked to those metis, one of whom was male, I learned that the entire sept had had a hand in rearing, training, and teaching them and that they had not been the subject of nearly as much derision as I had seen in most other septs I visited.

Finally, I did wonder about the fact that all the Furies I talked to assumed that the situation came about because a Black Fury allowed someone else to seduce her. There must be times when a Black Fury does the seducing, but I think it might be prudent not to ask about that.

Longstrider's comments: Packless has it mostly right here. Now, I did come across one small Black Fury sept in California that practices the ritual sacrifice of any metis child born to them. Since I am a woman, they confided in me that they see a metis child as the ultimate insult to their Totem – for a metis to be born to a Black Fury, she must have submitted to a male werewolf. I am not sure I agree with their interpretation of "submit," but there you have it.

Also, I know for a fact that sometimes, Black Furies are the ones initiating the relationship. But as Packless said, this is not something you should mention in a Fury sept. The Furies themselves prefer to encourage lesbian relationships between tribe members inside a pack or sept.

Bone Gnawers

'ere we go again. "The Bone Gnawers don't respect the Litany, look at all those metis they got." Yeah, well, ya ever take a good look at our metis? Like that big, red furred fella over there with the true breeding? We take in the mistakes of other tribes, 'cause we care about the individual. We know about bein' outcasts. And because we care, because we know, we try not to make anymore poor outcasts ourselves.

– Vincent Stab-Master, Bone Gnawer Ahroun

Despite common misconceptions (no pun intended), the Bone Gnawers are no more prone to producing metis than other tribes. From what I have been able to gather, the Gnawers usually treat their metis somewhat better than most tribes, probably since they know what it's like when others disregard and look down upon them. That being said, they don't condone the breach of the Litany that leads to the birth of a metis, and they don't skimp on punishment for the parents. Numerous rumors about, though, that some of the more desperate Gnawers have started to breed metis to ensure warriors in their battle for the streets.

Delhi holds one of the most desperate septs I have ever visited. They have adopted the metis of the local Fianna, Glass Walkers, Silver Fangs and even some Stargazers and Red Talons and, in return, have received a modicum of assistance from the packs and septs they have helped. The Gnawer sept itself had produced no metis they knew of, yet the other tribes in the area still looked down upon them.

Longstrider's comments: The rumors are not just rumors. Packless has a very Euro-centric outlook. Having been to Central and South America, I can say for certain that a few Gnawer septs do exist that have taken the pragmatic approach and have begun breeding metis to ensure the warriors needed to face the Wyrm in the hellhole cities they live in.

Children of Gaia

Only Garou understand Garou. So, love between us is something that we expect. As long as this love does not lead to breaking the Litany – to the birth of a metis – then we see

nothing wrong with that. If the Litany is broken, we punish the parents, but the child is not responsible for the sins of the parents. Every Garou is one of Gaia's chosen and their deformities are punishment enough. We accept that and because we do, other tribes sometimes ask us to take their metis in.

– Spirit-Lore, Child of Gaia Theurge

The Children of Gaia are well-known for their interpretation of the “breed” part of the first law of the Litany and see nothing wrong in sexual relationships between Garou, as long as they do not lead to pregnancy. As birth control is at best only sometimes successful, most relationships between the Children of Gaia are homosexual. Those that aren’t often rely on natural remedies and, as such, they frequently lead to pregnancy.

I have noticed that, while the Children of Gaia always profess their love for, and acceptance of, all werewolves, they have a lot of private shame over their metis and from what I have been told, they can be quite derisive towards them when no other tribes are around.

I got some idea of this at the Sept of the Pure Spirit in southern France. Here, the elders of the tribe encourage homosexual relationships between Garou as a way to build camaraderie and as a way to let young Garou have sexual partners who understand them without producing metis. The sept did have one, single metis and from what I could tell, the sept treated her with a great deal of contempt, even as they professed their acceptance of her.

Longstrider’s comments: I came across one Children of Gaia sept in South Africa during the Apartheid where the punishment for the parents of a metis child was having to kill their own offspring. The rationale was that the life of a metis was simply too painful and that it was a kindness to kill the baby before it could realize the horror of its own existence. The parents had to do this themselves, as part of the punishment, and to spare other Garou the unpleasant task of killing a child.

I will note that, while Children are the most open about encouraging homosexual relationships, they are far from the only ones. Most tribes have realized that Garou will be attracted to other Garou and try to steer these urges towards relationships where there is no chance of conceiving a metis.

Fianna

Ahh, metis. An eternal problem. We like to get our drink on and from time to time, passions that are kept under control in everyday situations are inflamed when feasting. I think most of our metis are the result of drunken fooling around after a great victory. Not that that’s any excuse, mind. The Litany is there for a reason and the deformity of the metis child is proof enough that Gaia disapproves.

– Gavin One-Blow, Fianna Ragabash

I think the Fianna might be the foremost tribe when it comes to dealing harshly with metis children. Many septs terminate the pregnancy or leave the child out to die from exposure. They have a profound respect for the Litany, and those metis who are allowed to live and grow up as members of the tribe (usually those born in mixed-tribe septs) face unending contempt and derision. This drives many Fianna metis to suicidal acts of valor and bravery to prove themselves. Those few who survive often become renowned heroes. I have my own reasons to dislike the Fianna attitude, but many other Garou respect their strong adherence to our laws.

A perfect example of the Fianna attitude is the sept of the Long Hill in the Forest of Bowland. This sept leaves any metis baby outside in the most desolate valley available, for a full night and day. Should the child die, the parents’ punishment is relatively mild, consisting of a single Punishment Rite. If the child survives, the sept puts both parents through a harrowing series of purification and punishment trials, which are sometimes fatal. The sept then does its best to adopt the child away. If this is not possible, they raise the metis child in an atmosphere of utmost hatred.

There seems to be quite a bit of homosexual bonding among the Fianna, but they often try to pass it off as the result of drunken debauchery or young Garou just fooling around; it is not that they are ashamed of the homosexuality, but more that they want to ensure that everyone knows the Litany has not, technically, been violated.

Longstrider’s comments: It’s clear that Packless’ attitude comes from talking to Fianna in England and America. I have visited two septs in the Scottish highlands that watched over some of the old White Howler caerns and fought the Wyrm creatures attracted to them. These Fianna focused a lot more on the second law of the Litany, and while they still punished parents for breeding a metis, they allowed the child to grow to adulthood so it could combat the Wyrm wherever it dwells and whenever it breeds.

Get of Fenris

You follow the laws or you get punished. It’s that simple. And we’ll make sure the punishment means you don’t break the law again. You understand? Oh, the metis? Yeah, if they fight, we let them fight. Gaia needs warriors, so we don’t deny her that.

– Sigrun Fjendeknuser, Get of Fenris Philodox

The Get don’t mess around. Anything that leads to pregnancy is swiftly and harshly punished, as is any obvious sexual relationship between two Garou. The Get expect their metis to prove themselves even more than other Get and that is no mean feat. Though from what I have seen, the Get will grudgingly accept any metis if she proves herself.

My take on the Get is that their attitude is almost the reverse of the Children of Gaia. Publicly, they decry the existence of their metis and make a show of animosity to

wards them, but when nobody is looking, they treat them almost as they do homid and lupus Garou.

While the Get punish those who breed Metis, they are often very open about homosexual relationships — sometimes even aggressively so. Among many Get, there is an idea that warriors should share everything and that companions that fight together make good partners. Since this does not produce any metis, the Get see it as a safe way for true warriors to strengthen their bonds and most Get septs seem to have at least a few homosexual couples.

I visited the small Sept of the House of Ages in northern Denmark and was somewhat surprised to find that their Warder was a metis. Up until then, I had always thought that most European single-tribe septs were quite conservative. But according to the sept Elder, the Warder had proven her mettle on many occasions and had, according to him, “risen above the unfortunate circumstances of her birth and proven herself a true Get.” He then asked if I wanted to make an issue of it. I wisely said no.

Longstrider's comments: One of the most unpleasant septs I have ever visited was a Get sept north of Kiev in

Ukraine, back when it was still part of the Soviet Union. Here, they treated any metis born as little more than an animal, taught only to fight. They reasoned that their deformities made them less “pure” and less “strong” than homid or lupus Garou. The sept sent the poor metis in first against enemies and kept them in a pen when they were not fighting. I never did find out if the parents were punished. But I do know that there are Get septs where the mother will only be punished if she has lain with a Garou who is *not* a Get of Fenris. Considering what I know about Viking culture, I am sometimes baffled by the openness about open homosexual relationships that Packless mentions. Of course, the Get are willing to fight for what they believe in. I would hate to be the one who tells a gay Get of Fenris that he is a weakling.

Glass Walkers

Yes, we are modern. Yes, we are trying to update Garou society. But there must be limits, and breaking the first law of the Litany is one of them. If you absolutely have to get your freak on with another werewolf, then avoid penetration. Even spiritually-awakened birth control methods fail far too often. Of course,



we're not the most controlled or distanced of lovers, so reining in our impulse to breed is almost impossible without physical restraining both parties. Which, yeah, some get off on. The best option is the simplest: don't fuck another werewolf. We catch enough flak from other tribes as it is, no need to add rampant metis-production to that list.

– Ryan “Power Howl” Foschi, Glass Walker Galliard

My own tribe has a real problem with metis. We encourage a modern mind-set, which includes questioning and examining traditions. This means a lot of young Walkers are even more likely to “forget” some laws of the Litany than many other werewolves. It also means the other tribes look down on us, and our acceptance of the Weaver’s tools doesn’t really help. So, we Walkers see each and every metis as yet another way for the other tribes to scorn us. Metis who grow up amongst Glass Walkers often find themselves being blamed for the way other tribes see us.

Importantly, we are one of the tribes that really discourage homosexual relations between Garou. The other tribes are already suspicious of us for our embrace of the Weaver. There is no reason to add breaches of the Litany to the list, even if that breach is only a technicality.

The Sept of the Wind Father in Chicago represents this rather well. When I talked with the sept’s members, they expressed a deep annoyance with the number of metis that they had, and the fact that this caused problems for them when dealing with other tribes in the area, so much so that they had trouble recruiting anyone but Bone Gnawers for their raids against Pentex subsidiaries. The elders of the sept had begun a campaign of harsh punishment against any Garou suspected of having sex with another werewolf, even with the use of birth control.

Longstrider’s comments: There’s a Glass Walker sept in Toronto, Sept of the Industrial Revolution, which exiles any Garou who has sex with another of our kind, to show that employing the Weaver’s tools still includes a rigid adherence to laws. They do allow the metis child to stay with the sept, though, raising it the same way that most Walker septs do.

Red Talons

We try to obey the Litany. This is not always possible. Love, lust, or foolishness sometimes leads Garou to mate with Garou and a metis is the result. This is a waste of a bitch. The nine months could have been used to carry a wolf that might become a Garou. And we have a non-lupus Garou on our hands. Most septs kill the malformed pup or give it to the Children or the Gnawers, but some few keep them, since they are not homid.

– Strikes-Like-Lightning, Red Talon Ahroun

The Red Talons *really* don’t like metis, neither their own nor those of other tribes. I have heard stories of septs killing the mother and child, as well as the father, if they

can find him. Many Talons see metis as a waste of resources and yet another blight on Gaia. Metis who are allowed to live, face several problems from being raised among Red Talons (in addition to the constant scorn and hatred heaped upon them). They are not taught to read and write and they learn nothing about human society. In addition, they have no interaction with technology, severely stunting their development and making them a liability when moving among humans.

I have only been to a single Talon-only sept, in Mongolia, and they really hated me. They had a single metis, a rather pretty, young girl, whom they used to lure groups of men away from camps and towns so they could slaughter them. I wasn’t allowed to interact much with her, but she seemed stunted in her knowledge and development, as well as skittish and unsure of herself. Nothing like a real Garou. As best I could learn, her parents were still with the sept, though barred from being pack alphas or holding any sept position.

Longstrider’s comments: What Packless describes is the most common attitude in our tribe. But I did come across a Red Talon sept in China that actually encourages each female member of the sept to breed a metis. China has a large wolf population, but the government has begun auctioning off licenses to hunt wolves and this sept plans to use metis to protect the far more valuable lupus children and wolf Kinfolk.

Shadow Lords

Metis represent weakness. Giving in to lust or love, breaking our laws, shaming your tribe and sept – this is failure, pure and simple. We expect this of other tribes, but Shadow Lords hold ourselves to a higher standard. We have fewer metis than any other tribes, as is only proper, and those few metis who we allow to live are those who have shown themselves to be paragons of what it means to be Garou.

– Born of Thunder, Shadow Lord Theurge

Nothing in my research suggests that the Shadow Lords have substantially fewer metis than other tribes. Instead, they hide them until they can point out how well an individual metis has performed, retroactively proving it was a wise decision to let them live. Meanwhile, they use each and every metis birth in other tribes to point out how weak those tribes are. Their mindset seems to be that they can break the Litany with impunity, but others must be punished. While Shadow Lords do not exactly respect their metis, they certainly see them as above and beyond members of other tribes, simply by virtue of being a Shadow Lord.

The only time I have ever seen a metis as sept leader was in a Shadow Lord sept in Crimea. According to her, she had earned her position by dint of outmaneuvering all other claimants to her post. The other Garou of the sept

showed her due deference — and smugly asserted that the Shadow Lords were so superior that they could be led by a metis without it reducing their ability to fight the Wyrm.

Longstrider's comments: A certain Shadow Lord sept in Eastern Europe (and that is all I am going to say) encourages their most attractive male members to seduce female Garou of other tribes. The Shadow Lords then use the resultant metis birth as a political bargaining tool to reduce the power of the other sept. The Shadow Lords also offer to adopt the child to spare the mother the embarrassment. The metis child is raised knowing full well it was adopted away from its mother tribe, indoctrinated in the ways of the Shadow Lords, and taught to hate its mother's tribe. I learned of this when a young and inexperienced (but handsome) Shadow Lord tried this on me. Knowing the Shadow Lords, I made my case to the Elders of the sept, who reacted with what I assume was feigned surprise and indignation. They offered me the chance the gain satisfaction in the form of a formal challenge, an offer I gladly took them up on. In the end, I left the young pup dead for his insolence, but I can't help but wonder if I actually helped the sept. After all, I did rid them of a somewhat incompetent member.

Silent Striders

Seriously, when you're on the road for days, weeks, even months, it's hard to ignore the feelings that arise when you meet members of your own kind. I guess it's easier for those of my tribe who stay put, but for us travelers, emotions tend to surge when we visit a caern. Doesn't exactly help that we tend to be out of there before any pregnancy begins to show, so either you've just left some poor female Garou with a metis baby or you're a pregnant werewolf on the road. So even if you don't want to obey the Litany because, well, it's The Law, do it because it avoids a lot of trouble.

— Aaron "Primal" Jackson, Silent Strider Ahroun

The Striders are a secretive lot and I haven't been able to learn much about how they treat their metis, especially since so many of them travel so much. They are much more likely to let metis children live when compared to other tribes, probably because they are fewer in numbers. From what I can tell, a lot of Strider metis are left in the care of other tribes, with their parent checking in on them from time to time. I have never heard a Strider be downright proud of a metis child, but they often seem sad and resigned, rather than ashamed and hateful, towards their metis tribemates.

Since I have never been to a Strider-only sept, I really can't say what the prevailing attitude is when these Garou stay in one place.

Longstrider's comments: We do have septs. Few, true, but they exist. Garou who mate with Garou in those septs will be severely punished. Other Garou already see

us as a strange tribe, since several of us wander without a pack, so we consider adherence to the Litany important. Metis children will usually be raised communally and we encourage them to take up a wandering lifestyle. As for the parents, well, we usually go light on the physical punishment, preferring Rites instead.

Silver Fangs

It is a shame whenever one of our kind breaks the Litany and every metis, though a potent warrior against the Wyrm, is a black mark against the tribe. We do our best to teach our young to express whatever affection they may have towards each other in non-sexual ways, but from time to time, even the best slip up. Of course, the result is a Silver Fang, which makes this metis much, much better than the metis of other tribes. So at least we have some consolation; other tribes, however, should know better.

— Natascha Silvertongue, Silver Fang Ragabash

Yes, many Silver Fangs really have their heads so far up their own asses that while they might officially regret the birth of a Fang metis, they still celebrate that another purebred werewolf has come into the world. Of course, a metis among the Silver Fangs doesn't have it easy. The tribe is elitist and a metis will always be at the bottom of the pecking order, someone that even the most disregarded member of the sept can look down upon, deride, and despise. The sept raises them to see themselves as better than others, but at the same time, they are constantly being told that they are lesser beings. It doesn't help the hypocrisy that Silver Fangs publicly condemn members of other tribes who breed a metis, while at the same time smugly intimating that "lesser tribes" simply don't know any better.

The first sept I visited in the Americas was a small Silver Fang sept in eastern Canada. Here, the single metis was the messenger of the sept, sent out to deal with other tribes. As the members of the sept explained, a lesser Fang was best suited for dealing with lesser tribes. They also proudly pointed out just how clear the tribe's blood ran through this Garou, even though he was metis. Interestingly, it seemed that both his father and mother had been exiled when they produced a metis and the child had been raised mainly by Kinfolk.

Longstrider's comments: I believe that if metis could breed, the Silver Fangs would be pumping them out. Still, I did come across the Sept of the Silver Pinnacle in the Kuznetsk Alatau mountains of Siberia. Here, any mother found pregnant with a metis child will be killed (as will the father, if they can find him) The sept sees the parents as impure in spirit for violating the Litany and the child as impure in body (their deformity) and they are quite obsessed with keeping the Silver Fangs tribe as pure as possible.

A short note: Good luck getting any Silver Fang to admit that he or she is involved with another Garou of the same gender. More so than other Garou, Falcon's children

are fanatics when it comes to breeding. While any individual Silver Fang is as likely to be gay as any other Garou, the tribe pressures — and in some cases forces — them to breed with members of the opposite sex regardless. Beyond producing more of Gaia's warriors, it helps reinforce the tribe's pure blood.

Stargazers

We know that physical love can never compare to the purity and beauty of a spiritual connection. Sex is a distraction, necessary for procreation, but one should attempt to avoid it simply for pleasure. As such, the coupling of two Garou is doubly wrong and the child an expression of the violation of purity that created it. Such children are spiritually stunted, unable to achieve true enlightenment, fit only to be base warriors. While such warriors have their place, it would be better had they not been born.

— Knows-the-Way, Stargazer Philodox

If you thought the Silent Striders were hard to know, then the Stargazers are worse. They tend to be philosophical about a lot of things, but metis aren't one of them. They always punish the parents harshly and while the Stargazers in general do not believe in killing the child or giving it up, they also see it as not a full Garou. Metis raised among the Stargazers frequently receive menial tasks and little instruction in anything but fighting. The Stargazers believe that metis have a harder time expressing what it truly means to be a Garou — ironic, given that metis are born in Crinos shape and grow up in caerns among other Garou — and as such, few metis ever gain any true status in Stargazer-only septs.

I briefly stayed at a Stargazer sept in the mountains of northern Pakistan where any metis child who made it to their First Change was put into a metis-only pack. From what I learned, the pack fluctuated between two and four members and the sept used them as shock troops in any battle they entered. When not serving in this capacity, the pack members handled various physical labors in the sept or patrolled the region, looking for signs of Wyrm infestation. The punishment for parents of metis within this sept was, apparently, to meditate for three days on a rocky outcropping, naked, in Homid shape, without food or water. I took a look at the meditation place and anyone falling off would plummet at least 500 feet.

Longstrider's comments: One of the first septs I ever visited on my travels was the Shining Cave Sept in northern India. Here, the Stargazers point to the fact that metis are born in Crinos shape and have a more intuitive connection with the Spirit world than homid as proof they are more in tune with what it means to be Garou. While metis births are not encouraged, the children are raised to become lamas by the oldest members of the sept. They believe that metis, being halfway between human and wolf, provide unique insights.

Uktena

The metis are a natural part of what it means to be a Garou. Sure, they are the result of a breach of the Litany and, ideally, metis should not exist. But a metis is a resource too valuable to be squandered, so after the parents have been properly chastised, one must look to using the metis to the best of her abilities.

— Susan Ghigau, Uktena Theurge

Not all Uktena have the kind of pragmatic and efficient attitude towards metis that they might claim. Certainly, many metis have it a lot easier in Uktena septs than they would have had among any other tribe, but they still face animosity and outright hatred. What the Uktena do not skimp on is training and education for their metis. Some septs seem to regard metis as pure weapons, much like the Stargazers, while others simply take advantage of a pup that can be trained and taught about the Garou world from a very early age.

I stayed for quite a while in a sept in southern Texas, where there were no less than four full-grown metis and two children. According to the members of the sept, they had been lax in the punishment for breaking the first law of the Litany, but the presence of a large number of tainted mining operations and powerful Bane lairs nearby led me to believe that the sept had, at least implicitly, encouraged the breeding of metis. During my time, I saw very little scorn directed towards the metis there, and the entire sept was involved with raising the children.

Longstrider's comments: Deep in the jungles of the Yucatan Peninsula lies the Sept of the Sleeping Rock, dedicated to watching over a massive Bane that sleeps deep in the Earth. Here, all metis born are given to other septs if possible and killed if not, since the Uktena of the sept believe that the spiritual pollution the metis represent might awaken the sleeping Bane. The parents of the metis child must go through numerous and painful rituals of cleansing before they are allowed back into the caern.

Wendigo

Before you Wyrmcomers invaded our shores, the Pure Tribes had no metis among us. Once in a hundred years, a foolish youngster might disregard the Litany and become pregnant, But the septs dealt swiftly with this; they killed the child, punished the mother and father, and used the incident to show the young of our tribe the truth of the Litany. Now, you have brought corruption and false ideas to these lands. Our young think that the old laws are foolish and we cannot afford to make examples of metis, for we need every warrior.

— Otakta, Wendigo Galliard

While numbers are almost impossible to come by, nothing in my research indicates that the Wendigo (and Uktena and Croatan) did not produce any metis prior to

the coming of the Europeans. Certainly, they might have produced *fewer* metis, seeing as how they apparently faced fewer Wyrm foes than European Garou did, and so might have had the luxury of getting rid of potential warriors.

These days, the Wendigo remain scornful of metis, and those among them whom they allow face a harsh existence, constantly berated and belittled by their tribemates. The Wendigo are even stricter than the Fianna when it comes to the Litany and do not take kindly to any breach of it. As such, the sins of the parents follow Wendigo metis, usually until they die. Only the greatest acts of heroism can erase the stain of their birth.

The Sept of the White Veil, high in the American Cascade Mountains, leaves metis babies outside on mountaintops as an offering to the spirits of the wind. Sometimes, a Theurge of the sept is given a vision that tells him to go collect the baby, in which case the metis is given back to the mother to be raised by her alone and whatever Kinfolk she can persuade. The father, if he can be found, is punished with both a Rite and silver, while the mother is forbidden from ever rising beyond whatever Rank she held when giving birth. However, when I passed through the sept, one of their more respected elders was a metis who had proven herself in countless battles.

Longstrider's comments: While it is true that the Wendigo respect the Litany, I did visit one sept in Alaska, on one of the Aleutian Islands, where metis are accepted as long as both parents are Wendigo. The reasoning is that the so-called Wyrmcomers have decimated the "pure" tribes and that letting a Wendigo die simply for being a metis is a crime against Gaia.

Black Spiral Dancers

Oh, we looove metis. More warriors. Who cares about the Litany? Who cares about some silly deformity? We are all brothers and sisters, are we not? You're metis, aren't you? So, come over to our side and you will never again be treated badly for something that isn't your fault.

– Unnamed Black Spiral Dancer

Getting information about the Black Spiral Dancers is notoriously hard. Most of what I have learned came from the interrogation of a Dancer captured in a raid against a derelict oil rig in the North Sea. He was clearly a metis himself, with curling horns, and if he is to be believed the Dancers produce an awful lot of metis and treat them no different than other Garou. In fact, they might even be given a slightly higher status. It makes sense when you think about it. Not only do the Black Spiral Dancers have no respect for the Litany, but they are but one tribe against thirteen. It makes sense that they would take any warriors they can get. It is only fortunate that metis are sterile and so cannot breed even more Dancers.

I hesitate to note this, but in order to be complete; while I haven't encountered many Garou that have gone

over to the Dancers, there seems to be a marked tendency for such renegades to be metis.

Longstrider's comments: Like Packless, I don't really know much about the Black Spiral Dancers. I did, however, hear a story when I was in the Amazon. A pack had patrolled the area around a known Black Spiral Hive in preparation for an assault and had come across a massive pit where no less than six Black Spiral Dancers, all obviously metis, had been ritually sacrificed. While some claimed this was simply a perverse Wyrm rite, others theorized that the Spiral Dancers have realized they will die out if they only produce metis and some of their septs have begun a "purification program."

Sept Positions

Even in septs that accept metis on a more or less equal footing with homid and lupus Garou, metis have to work harder to gain the respect and trust needed to earn an official sept position. Usually, in those few septs that encourage (or silently accept) the breeding of metis to increase the number of warriors, the metis *also* face a somewhat uphill struggle to gain enough standing to take on a sept position. Such septs usually regard the metis simply as resources they can use to fight their enemies.

When they *do* fill sept positions, the two most often occupied by metis are Keeper and Gatekeeper. The position as Keeper is one that even Kinfolk can fill and it comes with little to no political power. Plus, it keeps a metis occupied within the caern and much of the position's duties consist of the kind of menial labor that is supposed to be spiritually fulfilling, but which most Garou would rather not perform. As for Gatekeeper, this is another position with very little political power, but with more social status than Keeper.

Guardian comes a close second to Gatekeeper, though many septs seem to discourage making metis Guardians until they have proven themselves not only as great fighters, but also to be trustworthy. Many septs still see metis as problematic, prone to the influences of the Wyrm and not fit to be tasked with the security of the caern. There are some septs that either only allowed their metis to be Guardians, never letting them out of the caern, or who bred metis specifically to be Guardians to free up other Garou for constant active duty.

Caller of the Wyld, Master of the Howl, and Keeper of the Land come next, which means these are positions that you *might* encounter a respected metis in, if the sept is relatively progressive, but it is very rare. While Caller of the Wyld isn't really a political position, many septs consider it an insult to let a metis summon the sept and caern totems, preferring a "pure" Garou do it. Master of the Howl is a position often filled by a lupus Garou and it's a very public position, which means many septs dislike having a metis

fill it. Finally, Keeper of the Land is a somewhat powerful position, both politically and socially, so many septs are loath to let it go to a metis.

For different reasons, the positions of Den Father or Mother and Talesinger are even rarer for metis to achieve than the previous three. Den Parents are expected to instruct and care for the young Garou of the sept and this means having an awful lot of influence over shaping their opinions with regards to werewolf society. A metis must gain the explicit trust of her sept to fill a position that requires her to explain to the young Garou how wrong the existence of a metis is. As for Talesinger, this position carries with it even more social standing than Keeper of the Land, so it's extremely rare for a metis to be given enough status to hold it.

Finally, there are the really powerful positions: Master of the Challenge, Master of the Rite, Wyrm Foe, Truthcatcher, and Warder. Because these positions shape the social and political landscape of a sept, a metis would have to be above and beyond that of her peers (and belong to a very open-minded sept) for her to take one of these positions. That is not to say that it does not happen, but when it does, it is a rare and momentous occasion.

As for sept Elder, well, this varies immensely, though in septs that accept metis and have a council of Elders, a metis who reaches the highest of ranks is usually accepted among the Elders.

Different Approaches

In the modern world, septs comprised of just one tribe are becoming rarer and rarer, even in Europe. Mixing tribes and outside influences affects how a sept looks at metis.

Firestone Sept, Caracas, Venezuela

– told by Stoutheart, Fianna Philodox, Warder

Look, the Litany was written in another time, a better time, a time before all... this! Have you walked the streets of Caracas? Have you seen the corruption of this land, the relentless advance of the city, the drugs, and the murders? The Wyrm has its talons deep in this land and we must fight it. "Combat the Wyrm Wherever" and all that. To do that, we need warriors. We need Garou. We need all that we can get and trust me, just because the parents are violating the Litany doesn't mean the kid is going to grow up to be a lawbreaker. Sure, having sex with another Garou is a violation of the Litany, but if we let the Wyrm grow as it has, there won't be any goddamn Garou left to remember the Litany. Punish the parents, let them and the entire sept know that they did wrong and then get on with it, that's our way.

Now, I realize that this might seem disrespectful towards the ways of our people. But what you must understand; we have no choice. The Uktena who held this sept before

we came had the luxury of doing this "right." These days, corruption has grown; and now, we use the weapons at our disposal. The biggest problem, of course, is raising a metis from birth. Kinfolk just won't cut it, but the Garou of the sept have other duties, especially being this close to a center of Wyrm corruption. Our Den Mother is in charge of making sure the metis are raised right. Often, she passes on the duties to young Garou with no or few caern duties, as well as older and more experienced Garou who are in recovery from battle. When they have gone through their First Change, we take them to the city, so they can experience human culture and see the corruption firsthand. The first couple of times, they go with some Kinfolk and one or two experienced Garou, but soon, they can accompany young packs on scouting missions into the worst areas of the city, so that they can get a taste of what they will be fighting against. Should a confrontation happen, the pack will have an extra fighter and the metis, should he survive, will have gained some valuable experience.

I personally don't like metis, but I won't see them mistreated. I know that some Garou within our sept see them as easy targets, convenient outlets for frustration or anger, but the Litany teaches us to respect those beneath us. The metis must be taught that they are the result of a breach of the law, sure, but I see no reason to punish them for something that is not their fault. Their deformities are punishment enough.

My hope is that one day, we will win this war and we will not have to rely upon metis to make up the ranks. But as things stand, we simply cannot let ourselves be limited. The metis are a resource, a weapon for us to be used in the most important battle of them all, the battle for Gaia.

Sept of the River Dolphin, Amazon Delta, Brazil

– told by Serena Speak-In-Light, Child of Gaia Ahroun

Gaia is weeping. Gaia is in pain. The Apocalypse grows closer and closer and we, her children, her defenders, her warriors, have failed to stop the relentless advance of the Wyrm. Nowhere is that more obvious than here in the Amazon. So, the elders of our sept decided to promote the breeding of metis.

You look surprised. Even shocked. I understand that. Is it the violation of the Litany? Yes, "Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou," that is what it says. But these are desperate times. With the Apocalypse looming, with the minions of the Wyrm advancing almost unchecked through one of the most sacred of Gaia's places, we have instituted martial law. We need Garou warriors for the coming Apocalypse and the only way to ensure that a Garou breeds true is to create a metis. It is a regrettable sacrifice, but Gaia will forgive us. We are doing this to save Her, after all. What is the birthrate of Garou among Kinfolk, one in a hundred? In these final days, we cannot find

any way to breed enough warriors to fight in the Apocalypse if we have to rely on mating with Kinfolk alone. And as for punishing the parents, well, I can attest that birthing a metis is a punishment in and of itself. The pain, the sadness of a deformed child, this is all the punishment needed.

And it works. 20 years ago, our sept began to promote the breeding of metis and now, we are pushing back the Wyrmspawn from the borders of our caern. We have more than twice the warriors of any other sept in this area and we can take on our enemies head to head. Others have condemned us, have claimed that we are blatantly flaunting the sacred laws of our kind, but when you see Gaia bleeding, then I see only one law: *Save her*.

So, we breed metis. And we raise them as warriors. The advantage to accepting metis is that we can train them and teach them to be valuable additions to the fight against the Wyrm. Metis from other septs are insecure, unstable, filled with issues. They hate their parents, their sept, their own kind and, most importantly, they hate themselves. They may be Garou, but they are not the best warriors. We accept metis and treat them little different from those born as humans or wolves, so they become just as efficient more so, in fact, since we raise them from birth to be warriors for Gaia. Our metis have known all their lives what they are, what their duties are, and what they fight for. We have even allowed metis to take on positions of responsibility within our sept, something that rarely happens elsewhere. This helps motivate them.

Should the final battle be won, we will reexamine our ways, but for now, you have to look at it practically. We need warriors. Two Garou having a child is guaranteed to produce a warrior. We cannot allow ourselves to let the Litany stand in the way of our sacred duty to Gaia.

Sept of the Labrys, Lefka Ori Mountain, Crete

– told by Wyld Singer, Black Fury Galliard, Mistress of the Challenge, Warden

Metis are an abomination. Gaia curses them for the sin that created them. You just look at their deformities to see that Gaia disapproves. So, Garou society can never fully accept them. Yes, some Garou say they can be valuable warriors in the fight for Gaia, but how can something so sinful be used in so holy a cause?

It is a sad fact that metis are being born all over the world. They always have and they always will be, but that does not mean that we have to accept it. We must discourage it, which is why my sept have the practices we do. We never let a metis forget that he is born of sin, an outcast, an abomination.

You think we are harsh? That we should punish the parents? We do that. We punish the child and the parents

see what happens to their offspring as a punishment on them for their sins. Parents love their children and they are willing to bear any pain, any punishment, for them. You see now? The best way to discourage metis birth *and* the best way to make sure the parents feel punished is to inflict the punishment on the child and prevent the parents from helping.

I have heard some Garou say that we should not blame the child, that simply being born is not a sin, but being a metis is a sin. Every metis born is a Garou spirit that could have gone to a pure Garou, one not tainted with a breach of the Litany. The child must know that, lest he thinks to rise above his station.

The birth of a metis is a great shame, both upon the parents, but also upon the sept. We should have raised them better. We should have taught them more respect for the Litany. For this reason, we do not allow our metis to leave the caern, except in the direst of circumstances. Metis have their uses, since they grow up steeped in Garou lore and traditions. They make excellent guardians and tenders of the caern and in doing so, they free up other Garou – real Garou – to do the holy work we were chosen for. By right, we should probably kill the metis, but no matter how deformed, no matter how cursed, they are still Garou. They are Gaia's children, unwanted as they are, and they should live so they can serve Her. But we cannot trust them to act rationally and as such, we must confine them to the sept.

The biggest problem with metis is the drain on resources. We have to raise them and tend to them, teach them and train them, and Kinfolk are not equipped to do so. Our tradition has been to let those Garou who cannot leave the caern due to sept positions, age, or injury teach the metis. Never let a metis teach one of their own; that might give them the wrong idea. Fortunately, the metis do not need to know much, beyond how to fight, how to stand guard, and how to properly serve and respect Gaia.

Painted Rock Sept, Southwest Oklahoma

– told by Snake Killdeer, Wendigo Ragabash

What part of “Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou” is so hard to understand? We Wendigo knew it back before the European Garou came to our shores, and while some tribes apparently feel that they can interpret the Litany, others know better.

You won’t find any metis in this sept and with good reason. We are pure. This land is pure. The caern is pure. And we respect the Litany. That is not to say that we haven’t made mistakes or that we won’t make mistakes in the future, but whatever mistakes we have made, they have been erased.

Yes, we kill any metis born in this sept. They are a walking, talking, living violation of the Litany. They are

deformed and they are prone to the influences of the Wyrm. I have fought my share of Black Spiral Dancers and as my elders say, it cannot be a coincidence that so many of that fallen tribe are metis, now can it? Besides, the best way to discourage any mating between Garou is surely to show them what happens to their offspring. You may feel attracted to another Garou, but if you know that any child resulting from such a union will be killed, you're going to back off.

Now, I know that other septs allow metis to live. They talk about valuable resources, about needing warriors for the coming Apocalypse, about compassion for children who cannot be faulted for what their parents did. Well, all that talk about valuable resources sounds like Glass Walker Weaver-speak to me. And we don't need deformed warriors born from a violation of our most sacred laws. We true Garou, born the way Gaia intended, can win the final battle and stop the Apocalypse without resorting to some demented breeding program. We are not without compassion. I see no compassion in letting a child grow up knowing that she is tainted. Letting her grow up an object of hatred and disgust. Better to kill the child quickly and mercifully.

Like I said, despite our laws, it happens that two Garou cannot resist each other. In older times, we would exile the mother, and the father if he was of this sept. But these are tough times and we need every trueborn Garou we can get. As such, we punish the parents harshly. We administer the Rite of Ostracism and the Satire Rite and sometimes, we also perform wounding with silver. Such harsh measures are a sad necessity to ensure that we Garou are kept pure. Now, we are aware that not all Garou "mating sessions" result in a child, but it still *can*, and so the parents need to be taught how to behave properly, via the Satire Rite. It is another matter entirely, however, when it is two Garou of the same gender. No chance of a metis, no chance of deformed pup. Such relationships often strengthen a pack or a sept, and while we do not encourage them (we do need children), we don't punish them either.

The Red Sept, Moscow, Russian Federation

— told by Maxim Ash-Picker, Bone Gnawer Theurge, Master of the Rite

Give us your tired, your poor, your huddled metis. No? Damn, I thought I was a poet.

So, you wanna know how we deal with metis, huh? Well, practically, is my answer. We're a huge sept and we got Bone Gnawers, Children of Gaia, Glass Walkers, Silver Fangs, and even a couple of Black Furies here, so we're used to make things work on a practical level. Not to mention being smack in the middle of one of the biggest cities in the old world. It's not like we're in the wilds of Siberia or China or Canada, where one can afford to adhere strictly to the

Litany. We're fighting the Wyrm where it's strong and we need to survive, to keep our caern safe, and to strike back.

So, we not only deal with metis when they come along, we also adopt them. Like I said, we're a big sept, the biggest in the Central Federal District, so we have room for a lot of Garou. And we need a lot of Garou. The Wyrm is strong in urban Russia, especially here in Moscow. So, when some sept out in the pristine wilderness has a metis child who embarrasses them, we take that baby in. If it's a girl, she's raised by the Furies, if it's a boy, then it goes to us or the Children. We get ourselves a valuable warrior and the other sept gets rid of a potential problem. Interestingly enough, we don't actually get that many metis births among our own, about one each decade, at most. I think it helps, having all those metis children around. Our young Garou of human and wolf extraction see the result of breaking the first law of the Litany first-hand and so they're less likely to break that law.

Of course, having a bunch of metis running around isn't easy. They need education and training. It wasn't until I had to deal with metis children that I realized how much we pick up living as human children. A metis child is ignorant of the most basic knowledge about human society unless someone tells her about it. They haven't been immersed in human culture the way a homid Garou has, even one who's grown up as a Kinfolk. The same holds true for wolf culture and lupus Garou, I guess, but let's be honest: it's a lot more important that a metis can get along in human society than in wolf.

Fortunately, our adoption program means we always have at least some experienced metis around to help educate and train the younger ones. They also have help; if any Garou from our sept is responsible for giving birth to (or fathering) a metis, part of their punishment is to be taken away from their pack to help take care of the metis that we have for a while, before being sent back to their own pack. It's gotten to the point now where we have some experienced metis teachers who can take care of the young metis and there is almost a standard curriculum. We've learned what a metis needs to know — human language, reading, at least basic writing and math, social and societal customs, and traditions — and what we don't have to focus too much on, mostly Garou law and traditions; they pick up a lot of this simply by living in the sept. We also learned that metis children often respond best to their own kind, which is why we always try to have metis teach metis.

In the end, our ways leave us with a large pool of well-trained and very loyal Garou, ready to serve the sept and fight for Gaia. I won't say that we treat them just like we treat Garou born of wolf or human; they *are* tainted by the breach of the Litany that produced them. But we let them prove themselves and those that live up to the standards of a true Garou can, eventually, shed the sins of their parents and even rise to occupy positions of power in our sept.



The Kinfolk Perspective

Kinfolk, whether they be homid or lupus, rarely have much influence in sept matters. But Kin are still a part of the life of a metis and most metis growing up will, at some point, be taught or cared for, by Kin. For humans, opinions vary wildly, while wolf Kinfolk don't distinguish between metis Garou and other Garou.

Ernst Jonsson, Get of Fenris Kin

A werewolf is a werewolf. Sorry, Garou. All are worthy of respect from us Kin. You were born to be Gaia's foremost warriors and all we can do is support you. I understand the problem with breaking the Litany, but from my viewpoint, more warriors fighting the good fight is a good thing. Metis might be disregarded and scorned by other Garou, but to me and many of the Kinfolk that I know, they are still greater and more powerful beings. We will give them the respect a Garou is due and leave the finer points of werewolf law to the werewolves.

Lena Wozniack, Glass Walker Kin

I know I am not supposed to say this, but really, I don't like metis. I live near a caern and spend most of my time helping the sept. One of the things I've gotten saddled with is babysitting young metis and let me tell you, that's

one of the scariest things I have ever done. Even adult werewolves have trouble realizing how fragile we normal humans are. A metis child throwing a fit is probably the most dangerous thing I have ever faced. From time to time, a werewolf comes by to tutor the child in your rules, laws, and traditions, but the rest of the time, they're too busy and it falls to Kinfolk to take care of your mistakes.

Metis and Auspices

Garou of a philosophical or spiritual bent often discuss whether auspice affects a Garou's outlook or if it is her natural inclination that draws her to be born under a specific moon. This is no different for a metis than for a homid or lupus, but the unique circumstances a metis faces will affect how she acts within her auspice.

Ahroun

In some ways, this auspice is the best for a metis. Not only are they very suited to the role of warriors, being more accustomed to the Crinos form and able to heal rapidly in any, but it allows a metis to prove herself as a warrior, as well as work out any frustrations she might have. Some difficulties arise, however. Ahroun are often leaders; they are especially common as alphas of young packs and Garou tend to settle a lot of arguments with combat. Metis are

rarely accepted as leaders, no matter who they defeat, which can lead to several problems when a metis tries to assert herself. And with the... let's call it less *nuanced*... outlook that many metis are raised with, you get fanatic warriors unwilling, or unable, to adhere to anything but the most basic of tactics.

Galliard

Like Ahroun, this auspice meshes well with being a metis. Metis grow up around the stories and lore of the Garou, giving them a better grounding as storytellers than a homid or lupus. Garou society still expects Galliards to be frontline fighters, but it is rare for them to rise to the greatest positions of leadership, most instead become trusted advisors.

The main problem Galliard metis face is the prejudice most Garou hold towards metis makes it harder for them to motivate others. A rousing speech or blood-rushing howl somehow seems to mean a little less when coming from a metis.

Philodox

Some may think that this auspice is a great match for a metis; being raised in Garou society should prepare them quite well for a role as judge, adjudicator, and interpreter of the laws. Of course, this is rarely so. As metis are walking violations of the Litany, it is a huge struggle for them to be taken seriously as experts of Garou law. It doesn't really help that Philodox are just as expected to take on leadership positions as Ahroun are. Being Philodox can be quite an uphill struggle for a metis.

Theurge

With the strong spiritual connection that metis have, again coupled with being raised in Garou society, this auspice can seem like a perfect match, and in many ways, it is. In fact, it allows metis to rise to such positions as Gatekeeper and even Master of the Rite in some progressive caerns. The biggest problem facing a metis Theurge comes not from other Garou, but from spirits. Numerous spirits exist whose loyalty to the Garou extend to the Litany and who are even more predisposed to dislike a metis than his fellow Garou.

Ragabash

Many a young Garou say that this must be the perfect Auspice for a metis. The Ragabash flaunts the rules, customs, and mores of Garou society, after all. Any experienced Garou, however, can easily see the flaw in this reasoning. The role of the Ragabash is not to break the rules with impunity. It is to teach others, to make them consider why we have the laws, rules, and customs that we do. A Ragabash challenges the rules to strengthen them and many Garou believe that

this rings hollow when coming from a metis. Most metis Ragabash end up taking their position very seriously and are far from the traditional tricksters and pranksters most Garou envision when thinking about this auspice.

Final Notes

From the journal of Jeffrey Packless of the Glass Walkers

Well, cousin, that is what I have for you so far. I need to get ready for my flight. Hopefully, I will have some insights for you once I have travelled through Africa. I don't know that my interviews and stories can help you much in your genetic research, but you did say that you wanted to understand what it means to be metis. I pray to Gaia that you succeed and manage to find a cure for the sterility and deformity that plagues us, so that the Garou Nation might be able to breed pure, true warriors for the coming Apocalypse.

New Deformities

The following deformities add to the list found on pp. 74-76 of W20.

Barred Shape

One of the shapes that other Garou can shift into eludes you completely. This is most likely to be the Glabro or Hispo shape, but it can be any shape other than Crinos. The form still counts when figuring out how many successes you need when shifting shape.

Brittle Claws and Fangs

Your claws and fangs shatter under any pressure and may even rip out of your body if you are unfortunate enough. If the target soaks even a single health level when you attack with these natural weapons, or if you use them against reasonably hard inanimate objects (wood, rock, metal, etc.), you lose that particular attack for a full turn, until your regenerative powers have regrown your claws or teeth. Should you botch an attack, the claws or fangs are ripped painfully from your body, inflicting a single level of lethal damage. This adds one turn to the time needed to regrow your natural weapons.

Eyes of Darkness

Your eyes are completely black, including the sclera. This is unsettling to say the least; among humans, you might just be able to pass it off as some funky contact lenses, but you're still at a +1 difficulty on any non-intimidation social interactions. Among Garou, who see your eyes as a very bad omen, the difficulty increase rises to +2. When it starts to get dark, your eyes begin to glow with a greenish glow that many Garou consider eerily reminiscent of various Wyrm fires. At night, any social interaction with humans who can

see your eyes (other than intimidation) becomes impossible and you clearly stand out as supernatural.

On the plus side, you can see in anything short of complete darkness as if it was full daylight and in complete darkness, you see as well as on a cloudless night with the full moon out, though only in shades of grey.

Hip Dysplasia

One of your hip sockets is malformed and your femur's head does not fit properly. This causes a constant, low-grade pain, which is intensified if you put any strain on the leg, which includes walking on it properly. Normally, your speed in any form is halved; should you choose to move at normal speed, you suffer -1 to all non-reflexive dice pools due to intense pain for as long as you do so. If you ever botch a physical roll involving moving your legs (including most combat), your femur pops out of the socket, causing you to collapse. You cannot stand properly until someone spends at least a minute resetting the bone. Without prior experience, this is an Intelligence + Medicine roll (difficulty 4).

Hirsute

Your fur and hair (including facial hair for both males and females) grows long, thick, and fast. Your Lopus shape looks like you're half Old English Sheep Dog and your Glabro shape resembles the traditional image of a Yeti or Bigfoot. In Homid shape, you need to spend an hour each morning cutting your hair and shaving your face (even if you are female) not to look like a freak show performer; if you do not, you lose a die on all Appearance rolls. In Crinos, Hispo, and Lopus forms, your fur is almost impossible to keep clean. Without time to clean yourself up properly, you suffer a -2 penalty

on Appearance in these forms. On the plus side, you get an additional die on soak rolls when in these shapes, as well as an additional die to resist cold.

Monstrous

Your appearance is horrendous to behold in any shape, with patchy fur, limbs of mismatched length, a twisted face, and scaly or scabbed flesh. Your Appearance is automatically 0 and should any human or wolf be willing to interact with you socially, you have a +1 penalty to all difficulties. Garou certainly consider you ugly, but apart from being a metis, you suffer no further social penalties.

Musk

You exude a strong, animal smell. In Homid and Glabro shape, this translates into a +1 difficulty on all social interactions with humans who can smell you, and animals act as if you were in Lopus shape. Garou and wolves (including wolf Kinfolk) are not all that bothered by the smell. In any shape, the difficulty to track you by smell is reduced by -2.

Nervous Transformation

You were born in Crinos shape and you instinctively seek to return to this shape whenever you are in danger. Whenever you are intimidated, threatened, attacked, or feel you are in danger, roll Will-power



(difficulty 8) to avoid instantly assuming Crinos shape. You cannot shift out of Crinos until the threat has passed, though if the situation changes you can try to shift to another form by rolling Willpower again.

No Fangs

You were born with human teeth instead of fangs and they persist in any shape where you would normally have fangs (Crinos, Hispo, and Lupus). As a result, your bite does bashing damage (though the massive jaws of the Hispo form still adds an additional die) and you can never use gifts that require you to bite, such as Rattler's Bite. Also, no matter your shape, you have serious trouble eating raw meat.

No Muscle Mass

You were born with the muscles of a homid and when changing shape, your muscle mass doesn't really change. Your Crinos shape is between 6 and 7 feet tall and noticeably slimmer than normal, your Hispo shape looks like a tall, lanky wolf, your Lupus shape looks emaciated and your Glabro shape merely resembles a more human version of your Crinos shape. Other Garou laugh at you, don't take you seriously, and don't lose Renown for refusing physical challenges from you.

Slow Healer

You do not regenerate as quickly or as fully as other Garou. You cannot roll Stamina to regenerate in combat; outside of combat, bashing damage heals at the rate of one health level every 5 seconds, while lethal damage requires a full minute per health level. Aggravated damage requires two days of rest to heal and you always receive a Battle Scar from taking Aggravated damage. You can still roll Rage to remain active (see p. 256 of W20), but when doing so, Gifts cannot heal the Battle Scar. You also cannot learn the Gift: Combat Healing.

Spiritual Deformity

Spirits loyal to the Garou cause can sense that you are the result of a breach of the Litany and the spirit world

itself rejects you. You suffer a +1 difficulty to step sideways anywhere except a Blight or Wyrm caern, and a similar penalty when interacting with any spirit that respects Garou. Finally, Totem is a discouraged Background for you (see p. 135 of W20). On the other hand, you gain a -1 difficulty on all social interaction with Banes, who find you very interesting. Black Spiral Dancer metis never have this deformity.

Third Eye

You have a third eye growing in the middle of your forehead, which, in all forms, looks just like your regular eyes. You can see with this eye just as well as with your other eyes and in fact, your depth perception relies upon it. If you cover it up (say, to blend into human society), all ranged attacks suffer a +2 difficulty. In addition, all social interactions with Garou are at +1 difficulty when they can see your third eye. Some very few Stargazers might see your deformity as a sign of spiritual wisdom, but don't count on it.

Unnaturally Colored Hide

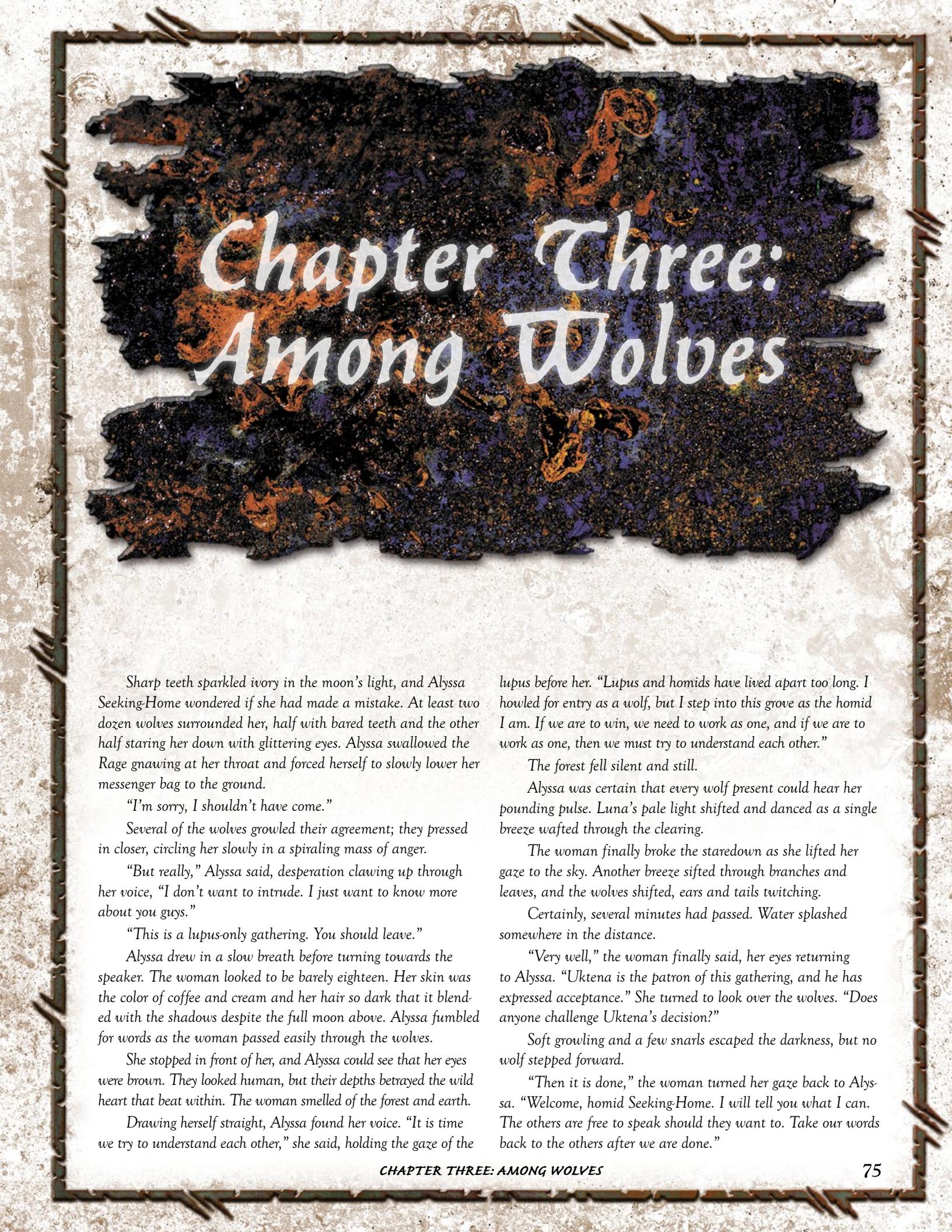
Your fur (and all body hair in Homid and Glabro shape) is an unnatural color, like green, blue, pink, or purple. Other Garou will find your appearance ridiculous, even laughable, and you take a +2 difficulty on any social interaction with other Garou who have seen you in Crinos, Hispo, or Lupus shape.

Weak Voice

Your voice is weak, reedy, shrill, or raspy, barely able to raise it louder than normal speaking. Your growls sound laughable, your roars are pathetic, and your howls are more like the yips of a pup. During Moots, you suffer a +1 difficulty on all social rolls, you cannot use any of the howls on pages 58-59 of W20 and you cannot learn any gifts requiring you to howl, such as Howl of the Banshee.



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Chapter Three: Among Wolves

Sharp teeth sparkled ivory in the moon's light, and Alyssa Seeking-Home wondered if she had made a mistake. At least two dozen wolves surrounded her, half with bared teeth and the other half staring her down with glittering eyes. Alyssa swallowed the Rage gnawing at her throat and forced herself to slowly lower her messenger bag to the ground.

"I'm sorry, I shouldn't have come."

Several of the wolves growled their agreement; they pressed in closer, circling her slowly in a spiraling mass of anger.

"But really," Alyssa said, desperation clawing up through her voice, "I don't want to intrude. I just want to know more about you guys."

"This is a lupus-only gathering. You should leave."

Alyssa drew in a slow breath before turning towards the speaker. The woman looked to be barely eighteen. Her skin was the color of coffee and cream and her hair so dark that it blended with the shadows despite the full moon above. Alyssa fumbled for words as the woman passed easily through the wolves.

She stopped in front of her, and Alyssa could see that her eyes were brown. They looked human, but their depths betrayed the wild heart that beat within. The woman smelled of the forest and earth.

Drawing herself straight, Alyssa found her voice. "It is time we try to understand each other," she said, holding the gaze of the

lupus before her. "Lupus and homids have lived apart too long. I howled for entry as a wolf, but I step into this grove as the homid I am. If we are to win, we need to work as one, and if we are to work as one, then we must try to understand each other."

The forest fell silent and still.

Alyssa was certain that every wolf present could hear her pounding pulse. Luna's pale light shifted and danced as a single breeze wafted through the clearing.

The woman finally broke the staredown as she lifted her gaze to the sky. Another breeze sifted through branches and leaves, and the wolves shifted, ears and tails twitching.

Certainly, several minutes had passed. Water splashed somewhere in the distance.

"Very well," the woman finally said, her eyes returning to Alyssa. "Uktena is the patron of this gathering, and he has expressed acceptance." She turned to look over the wolves. "Does anyone challenge Uktena's decision?"

Soft growling and a few snarls escaped the darkness, but no wolf stepped forward.

"Then it is done," the woman turned her gaze back to Alyssa. "Welcome, homid Seeking-Home. I will tell you what I can. The others are free to speak should they want to. Take our words back to the others after we are done."

"That's it?" Alyssa watched the woman, perplexed. The woman laughed then, a joyful sound that reverberated through the trees. The tensions in the grove eased; wolves lowered down to the earth.

"Is that it?" her eyes danced as she took three steps back and then lowered to sit cross-legged on the ground with fluid grace. "Homid, don't try to complicate matters. Clear your mind. Try not to think in circles and loops. I am LoreSeeker, lupus of the Uktena, and I will tell you what it is to be lupus."

The Cycle

Experience begins within the womb, and all beings obtain wisdom through age, but it is the fuzzy time of youth, hardly remembered, that defines the perspective of life.

Birth

The first memories of any wolf are scents: the scent of a mother and litter mates, the scent of warm milk, and the scent of the earth that shelters the den. A keen sense of smell is everything to a wolf, young and old. Her identity is tied to how another perceives her through a few brief sniffs. Wolves take on their scents as birthnames, but birthname is a loose term. Unlike human names, wolf names are in constant flux. An adult wolf does not smell the same as a pup. Some aspects of an individual's scent remain the same, and for the rest of her life, her family can recognize a wolf by only her scent. Yet, throughout life, enough changes that a wolf's name reflects everything she has been and everything she currently is. A wolf's scent reveals a great deal about her character, her nature, and even her health and diet. It is a reminder that everything she consumes and returns to the earth is a part of who she is.

A lupus remembers little from when she lived within the den. Like human children forgetting their first years, memories fade as the cub leaves the dark and starts her sprint towards yearling. But once she steps out into the sun, a lupus will find her memories staying with her for longer periods of time. The powerful scents of the forests and the other wolves of the pack, the strange new creatures, and the bright light of the sun all overwhelm and bring immense joy to the young wolf. Pups spend their young days romping around near the den, tumbling about one another in chaotic fits of play and wrestling.

Sensing

Hearing and sight are more important once the pup leaves the den. Homids marvel at how much they can hear and smell the first time they take their Lupus forms, but these supposedly heightened senses are normal for any lupus. The greatest difference in what a wolf hears is not how far they can hear, though that is certainly an advantage, but rather the pitches they can hear. Imagine listening to a harmonizing

choir, but only being able to hear half of the parts. That is what it is like for a lupus to take Homid form. A lupus' perception of sound is based entirely on her wolf's sense of hearing. All the sounds of existence have an important part to play. The croak of a raven in the distance can alert a wolf to nearby prey while subtle step of a cougar's paw on stone can mean danger for any member of the pack.

But where a wolf's hearing and sense of smell are sharper, sight is simply different. A wolf's vision is both better and worse depending on the given situation. A wolf is partially colorblind. Wolves do not see just in grey scale, but rather a wolf cannot distinguish between reds, oranges, and greens. They all appear as a hazy shade of yellow. Wolves can see different shades of blue, though they still see far fewer differences than a human, and shades are not nearly so vivid through lupine eyes.

But grey, on the other paw, wolveen eyes reign supreme at seeing different shades of grey. As the sun sets and wolves are left with only moonlight to find their way, greys become dominant. Homids may balk at seeing as a wolf during the day, but a lupus' night vision is far superior. A wolf has a broader field of vision, and day or night, it is easier for a wolf to detect movement than it is for a human. Where a human might flounder blind through a forest in the darkness, a wolf can easily pick her way through using scent and sight to guide her home. Prey stands no better chance against lupine senses at night than it does during the day.

Childhood

Pups grow accustomed to their senses of smell, sight, and hearing as they explore the area around their dens. They practice scent marking and the movements that are integral aspects of the lupine language. They make their first attempts at howling, copying the adults, and learning to harmonize with one another in a chorus.

If any key difference exists between the lives of young humans and the lives of young wolves, it is this: wolves learn everything through imitation and play. Being a young wolf is a thoroughly enjoyable experience; the only exceptions are threats from outside the pack. All pack members are tolerant of the young, and the young exist outside the social structure of the pack. Litters commonly form their own hierarchy, the larger, stronger, and smarter taking over in various games and when eating. It is all in practice for their coming future as packmates.

For all the enjoyment that comes with being born a wolf, a harsher side to life follows the pups as well. The mortality rate among wolf pups is quite high, especially when compared to the mortality rate of human young. Depending on conditions, half of a litter or more could be lost before they reach their first year. While lupus are less likely to die, being generally healthier of body and mind, it still makes



death as close to her as any brother or sister. By the time a lupus is going through her First Change, she already has an intricate understanding of death that eludes most humans for their entire lives. Where most humans run from death, wolves accept it as an inevitability, to be avoided if able, but to accept if needs be. Without obvious and violent death, a wolf would die of starvation. A human may not have to kill to feed himself, but a wild-born wolf never has any such option.

Lupus Pups

Lupus are, of course, different from their littermates at birth, but not different enough that it is easy to sniff them out. As with their brothers and sisters, lupus learn about their environment through play; however, they possess greater reasoning capabilities than their siblings. A lupus is usually the alpha of the litter, but even that is not universally true, and the adult pack members show little to no favoritism towards their young born with the chance to Change. Packs give no indication that they can tell a lupus from a normal pup. If they can, it is a secret they guard from even their Garou kin.

It is also important to note that wolves are pragmatic when it comes to the survival of their litter and their pack. Adults commonly kill and consume wolf pups who show

signs of mental or physical trauma. It seems harsh, but eating a sick pup increases the chance of the pack and litter to survive. In turn, the pup—who would die anyway— aids the pack's survival through a quick and merciful death. Have wolves killed their own lupus offspring? Likely, yes. Any pup displaying outward signs of trauma through nightmares or visions is a potential threat to the pack. A werewolf might be lost, but, in turn, the pack of Kinfolk survives to have another litter another year. Whether the loss of the Garou was worth the survival of the Kinfolk is something that wolves, and even lupus Garou, don't even stop to consider.

Rendezvous

As wolf pups grow old enough to travel, the pack abandons the den and goes on the move to broaden its search for food. The pups follow in line, traveling miles in one day to a rendezvous point. There, they are left on their own while the pack goes to hunt game that had avoided the denning area. The rendezvous points are chances for the pups to learn more about their surroundings and the territory of the pack. Young wolves quickly learn which scents mark boundaries and start mapping their home by sight and smell while they continue to grow into their gangly bodies.

Adults bring back food still, which they regurgitate for the anxious pups. It sounds disgusting to homids, but it is the only way to feed pups once they have weaned. A wolf eats enough that, when they return to the young, they can sacrifice some of what they've ingested for the survival of the pups. Not only is this an efficient method of carrying food, but it also makes the meat easier to eat and digest for the pups. It is not disgusting; it is simply necessary. Full adults ensure that the young will be full as well, and then play resumes as the pups, who have spent their time resting, feel at liberty to explore under the protective gaze of their pack.

Wolves move from rendezvous point to rendezvous point throughout the rest of their first three seasons until mating time returns. These points are rarely new to the pack; they're typically the same points from litters past and are some fair ways apart. The distance not only allows pups to become accustomed to the traveling they will need to do as adults, it also allows the adults the greatest access to prey throughout their territory. As much as humans may wish to believe in the idiocy of nature, prey animals learn where wolves den and even where territory boundaries exist. They use that information to their advantage. Once a pack is no longer tied to one spot, it becomes much easier to hunt, and movement becomes commonplace.

Before long, the young join the hunts. Through the hunts, they connect with the rest of their pack, with their brothers and their sisters, learning various strategies for taking down their prey. From ambushes to simply running animals to exhaustion, the pups must learn how to use their home terrain to their advantage if they're going to succeed in the future, either as a member of the pack or on their own when they disperse.

Yearling

The weight of the first year settles about the almost fully grown yearling, and strange yearnings develop within. The urge to smell the world, to find a niche among the cycles of the wilderness, and yet to stay with the family and help to raise the coming generation all swell within, fighting for dominance.

Yearling is commonly the harshest time for future Garou. A wolf who reaches her first year starts to fully develop into her own independent personality while retaining the need for companionship and the dependence inherent in the nature of the pack. Wolves tread a fine line between the self and the whole, and yearling is when a young wolf starts to define her own sense of balance between the two truths.

When a wolf nears her first year, a difficult choice lies before her. Some yearlings leave, seeking a future mate or another pack with which to run; others stay with their parents to help raise the next generation, should there be one. Throughout the winter and into the early part of spring, the

LITTERMATES

Rarely a litter will yield more than one lupus. The phenomenon only tends to happen when a Garou mates with Kin. Sibling lupus are companions for life. As children, they learn and experience everything together. The two are never apart, and, by the time they are yearlings, they know that a strange connection exists between them, something that the other wolves cannot truly fathom, nor would likely care to. They are usually of the same auspice, but not always as sometimes a birthing that begins near the end of one lunar phase spans into the beginning of the next. Still, they are close enough that they feed each other's potential Rage and Gnosis, spawning greater insight into what they are to become.

I have never heard of lupus siblings staying with the pack upon reaching yearling. They carry a shared secret, and their companionship means they cannot ignore it and pretend to be a normal wolf for another year. So, they leave. They leave and they travel and they experience the world. They spurn all other companionship and just seek fulfillment in nature. Sour experiences only lead to half-hearted snaps or flattened ears before the other relents and the relationship stabilizes once again. Then the transgression is forgiven and forgotten and life goes on. It must be strange to homids; the roots of sibling rivalry grow deep among their kind. Human siblings scratch and fight one another, looking for a way to best the other. Lupus siblings work in tight synergies, adapting, aiding, and flowing with each other in a single whole, much like a very small pack.

— Heart's Wound, Red Talon Ahroun

lean times take their toll on all packs. Wolves eat less while a mother is denning. They cannot travel too far from the den, and they need to sacrifice some of the food ingested to the mother wolf. Yearlings find their places cementing within the hierarchy of the pack, and they find themselves taking on more roles as adults and functional members.

A lupus Garou is more likely to leave the pack at this point. The spirit within that connects her to the human world and intellect knows that more exists out among the forests and mountains, that she is different from the others even though common perception says otherwise. She leaves,

seeking more like herself. The wolves, accepting of those who wish to leave, offer departing yearlings no hatred or malice.

But not all leave. Where most go, many stay with their packs for one more year, helping to raise the next litter. These lupus know best what it is to be a wolf within a pack. They learn how to operate as a unit, how to take direction, and how to act as one for a common purpose. Lupus who disperse and do not find and join another pack in their search, never truly experience being part of the whole. Pups exist outside the greater unit, as separate entities playing pack much as a human child might play hunter or vampire.

The Pack

A lupus who stays with his birth-pack very rarely becomes the alpha. He might grow larger, stronger, smarter, or faster, but he is still young. How commonly does an adult human look to a ten or twelve-year-old or even a fifteen-year-old for advice and leadership? It does not matter if that child is stronger or even smarter. The child has not fully developed, and the same holds true for a yearling lupus. Any lupus who stays with the pack does so with the acceptance of the pack. Wolves kill trespassers, sometimes ruthlessly, and they would have no qualms doing so to one of their young if they wanted him out.

For those who do stay with the pack, life as an individual fades into a whole. The breeding female picks out a new den, and it is up to the rest of the pack, including the yearlings, to keep her healthy and fed so that she might whelp and that the new pups will survive. From the tenth month of a pack wolf's life, the wolf learns the intricacies of hunting from his fellow packmates. After the pregnant female has chosen a den and settled in, the pack is anchored to one spot, and hunting becomes more difficult as herds move to stay out of range of the den.

Life drifts into constant travel within a day's distance of the den; a wolf is always hungry and always looking for more food for himself and the mother back home. Being part of a pack allows a lupus to transcend himself on a continual basis, to commonly sacrifice time and effort not just for his own reward, but for the benefit of the future generations to follow. Normal wolves think about the current generation, but as a lupus continues to advance into spiritual awareness, he starts to sometimes think about the future and ponder on the past. If a young wolf ever speaks of the future beyond the direct influence of the present, a good chance exists he is a lupus just waiting to Change.

With the onset of calving season, food suddenly becomes more abundant, especially if prey is healthy and populous. The birthing season brings forth many young, and the packs of wolves, hungry from the lean times, are ready to test the young and their mothers. For all the young born to prey, many fall to the teeth of wolves. The young

are slow and weak, and their mothers cannot always protect them. So, the body and blood of young prey animals become the body and blood of the wolf pups.

As bellies fill and tensions ease, as the surviving pups grow healthy and strong, the wolves of the pack relax, and play becomes an aspect of life again. Tag, wrestling, and keep-away are all part of pack life. The yearling lupus finds himself amidst the joy of simply living once more. The challenging times have passed, soon the pups will be old enough to rendezvous, and the pack will be free to make full use of its territory. Life becomes a balance of feeding the pups and the mother and romping with the young and the old. Storms come and go. The sun rises and sets. The world simply is. They do not try to understand it. It just exists.

And then summer starts to fade into fall. Prey grows fat for the coming winter and mating season. They fight for mates, sometimes injuring themselves and succumbing to the maws of predators. The pups learn to hunt, and howling choruses resonate through autumn nights. Every wolf's howl is different, and wolves recognize one another and harmonize with each other, taking their place within the chorus. It is much like a human singing, and wolves commonly do it for no other reason than to express joy of living.

The Dispersed

The other path a yearling might follow is that of the dispersed. A lupus, already feeling different and separate from the rest of her pack decides to turn and leave as soon as they have finished teaching her the necessities. As mentioned, wolves feel no hatred, anger, or malice towards the young wolf for leaving her pack. Wolves are allowed their own choices in this matter without judgment from her family.

Future lupus are not the only wolves who leave their pack at such an early age. While many wolves stay with their packs for another year or even longer, several strike out on their own, adventuring into a world that they are just coming to fully comprehend. Lone wolves commonly subsist off smaller prey, including pretty much anything they can catch without risking too much harm to themselves. Sometimes a lone wolf will meet with another dispersed wolf, and they will travel together, searching for territory, or simply enjoying each other's company. Young males are occasionally even adopted into other packs. If prey is plenty and the pack is healthy, they might even be allowed to mate with another wolf of the pack, and the pack will rear two litters of pups.

The possibilities are almost endless for the adventurous who strike out on their own. If many packs exist in their area and prey is not so bountiful, dispersed wolves commonly leave, traveling hundreds of miles either on their own or with others, sometimes even with a future mate, seeking territory to mark their own. Wolves expand their range this

way, and it's very effective. Already a wolf has traveled as far as Arizona, one that was verified to not be Garou or Kinfolk. It is impossible to truly tell how far wolves have managed to spread. Of course, the Garou send out seekers, looking for packs so we might help keep them safe, but the Garou have many other duties, and their numbers are so few these days.

They listen and they hope that the packs will continue to breed, grow, and disperse successfully, despite human attempts to cull them.

A lupus who disperses commonly finds herself avoiding other wolves. If she meets one, she might stay with him for a few days, but then she'll move on. Strong bonds form only in the rare instances where two dispersed yearling lupus meet. Such a meeting is like finding a twin or soulmate the lupus never knew she had. The wolves will cling to their similarities and the comfort and companionship they provide. Breaking such a bond is nigh impossible, and these bonds might just be the forerunners of Garou packs.

But, for the common lupus who finds herself alone, she goes her own way, meeting nature on nature's terms but along a path of her choosing. The dispersed lupus commonly travels to the edges of wovlen territory, braving trails that other wolves are hesitant to tread. Throughout the next year of the yearling's life, different qualities of nature start to become more apparent. The relationship between predator and prey doesn't just exist; the lupus discovers meaning and depth in the cycle. The old and young dying to feed the predators becomes more than an unpleasant fact. The necessity of death so that both wolf and prey stay strong starts to have deeper meaning.

Without the connections of a pack to distract the lupus from her mental and emotional development, she finds it easier to immerse herself in the natural world. The lupus might start to hear the spirits moving about her before she experiences her First Change, even if she is not a Theurge. The world is always speaking, and spirits are everywhere. The lupus always have their noses and ears open, and, unlike homids, lupus always trust their senses.

So, when a lupus hears or even sees a spirit, she instantly accepts what she hears and sees as true. When she catches the scent of winter on a clear summer day, she knows that the essence of winter must lurk nearby, even if it does not make sense. Whether she investigates or leaves the strange experience is all dependent on the wolf, but accepting what she smells as fact is universally lupus.

The Law

The cycle gives birth to everything through the death of another, be it animal or plant. Prey, whether it understands or not, sacrifices its life to give hope and life to the predator. Plants sacrifice themselves in part or in whole

so that prey might grow strong. The predator dies so that the plants have richer soil from which to grow.

Humans know this cycle, certainly. But, to be a lupus is to live within the cycle. Humans have stepped outside of the chain. They still affect it, but in strange ways that were never intended. Humans protect their dead in strange boxes. They bury them in parks where they suppress the growth of plants through trimming and cutting. They grow more food than they could ever hope to eat and yet leave many of their own kind to starve despite their bounty.

Wolves do kill in surplus, but they kill to prepare for lean times. Wolves cache food, leave carcasses, and after a great kill, whatever is not eaten, wolves leave for the rest of nature to claim. Ravens feed from the kills of wolf packs, as do the plants, and other predators. Wolf kills feed and shelter insects, which in turn feed surrounding wildlife that will not feed directly from the meat left behind.

Experiencing the life of a wolf gives the lupus a unique perspective from within the natural laws that govern the wild. The Wyld, Weaver, and Destroyer exist; it is a simple fact. Wolves are never sheltered from uncomfortable truths. Attempts to protect human children from these facts baffle any lupus. Why try to pretend that something does not exist? While wolves, even Kin wolves, may not understand the actual entities that form the spirit world, they see and accept the effects that they have upon existence.

When a healthy bull moose turns and runs from a wolf pack, something else is at work. The wolves do not stop to ask what it is, but a lupus might be left to wonder as the pack chases down the huge animal. Why would it ever run? Wolves are excellent at analyzing whether to try to kill prey or to leave it be. Would the risk to health and life be worth the food the animal would give? A bull moose makes for a great feast, but they are also very dangerous. When one turns to fight, wolf packs almost universally seek easier prey. But when one runs, the pack will take up the chase, dragging the magnificent animal down.

So why would the moose ever run? They sometimes do, and not just injured ones. As the lupus starts to analyze the aspects of nature that do not make logical sense, she starts to come to an understanding that settles deep within and fuels the breath of the spirit she carries. Something greater is at work in the world. A finer level of nature ties everything into a single mechanism that works. If the bull moose did not occasionally run, then wolves who live where moose are common prey would starve. If every large prey animal stood its ground and fought, then the population of wolves would collapse. Instead, Gaia granted prey fear, but not too much, so prey will sometimes run from the wolf. Gaia granted prey swift legs or burrows, camouflage, or ingenuity so that it might survive even if its instinct is to flee and thus feed the predator.

The Change

The predator nature of the lupus shapes her First Change.

Humans commonly experience their First Change through fear and terror. A threat comes after them, a predator of some form, and they react in fear. Fear closes around the homid's throat and around his mind. He loses himself entirely in the moment, doing whatever he needs to tear down that which terrifies him.

Humans are omnivores. They are — were — equal parts predator and prey. They spent an untold amount of time being culled by werewolves. Human nature is haunted by the Delirium, a reminder deep down within their basest instincts that they are not the highest being on the food chain, nor will they ever be.

And humans sometimes react like prey. They commonly scatter and run in panic when presented with a threat. They trample each other in great herds, seeking any method for escape. And then, after that threat is gone, their minds try to make them okay again. Even if they remember the events, they commonly forget the edge of fear that gripped their minds. Such is how it must be with prey. If every deer lived its entire life scared that something would eat it, they would never reproduce and there would be no more deer to eat.

The adult wolf knows no predator. As a pup, his pack defended him from predators, and as an adult, he has nothing to fear from the natural world. Blizzards and floods might harm or kill a wolf, but the wolf accepts disasters as they come;

he survives, he does not fear any repeat of the disaster. Instead, the wolf continues with life, seeking his next dinner, or chasing a playmate.

Lupus do not usually experience a First Change through fear or because of a threat, though it does happen. A hunter approaches or shoots a lupus, and in her desire to live, she leaps upon the hunter, taking a different form to tear him apart. A bear threatens the current litter, throwing a lupus into her Crinos form to protect the next generation.

But, typically, the lupus does not lose herself to the form.

Blind terror is not natural to wolves. Lupus, instead, commonly experience their First Change when they simply need to do something that they cannot accomplish in their wolf skins. The bull moose that is standing its ground needs to die or the pack will starve. The pack turns to leave, but a lupus shifts into Crinos and tears the life from the moose for the survival of the pack. Any great need or desire can facilitate the First Change. The need to run faster, the need to survive a raging blizzard, the desire to move rocks that have fallen on a den in a landslide: they can all cause the lupus to take her Crinos form for the first time.

Even rarer still are the First Changes that are not caused by a need or desire,

but simply brought on by a lupus being at one with nature and realizing his full potential. We may be the Warriors of Gaia, but we are also spiritual, and the lupus are the tightest connection to that spirit. Those with the greatest spiritual potential sometimes change simply because nature tells them they can and that it is time. Perhaps this is how it used to be with all breeds of werewolves, back before humans severed their close ties with Gaia.



PREDATORS

Wolves do have predators. Man has become the wolf's worst predator. Wolves once hunted men. Humans were dangerous prey, but when they were alone, they would succumb to the pack or even a lone wolf. In time, humans turned that around, and now they hunt us. They do not hunt us for food; they do not hunt us to don our skins against the cold. No, they hunt us for reasons wolves do not understand. Hate, spite, revenge: concepts which are altogether... human.

Beyond men, the agents of the Wyrm hunt wolves. The Wyrm knows that the Garou are losing the wolf, and the Wyrm knows the wolf is necessary if we are to challenge it. It seeks to tear out our hearts through our lupine Kin. It stalks them, killing any it chances to find, forcing the Garou to guard them or to set spirits to guard them, pushing us into defensive positions.

A lupus of the right age meeting any agent of the corrupted Wyrm will commonly go through her First Change. Not necessarily because of the threat the creature poses, but because of how wrong it is, how twisted, and how unnatural. Such things should not exist; even wolves know that. While normal wolves and Kinfolk will avoid it, many lupus will attempt to cut it down and cleanse their lands.

– Northern Lights, *Wendigo Theurge*

Realization

It is in the aftermath of the First Change when a lupus must try to understand just what has happened to her. She knows what happened was not something wrong. It happened, and nothing forced it upon her. She was simply able to change. The world is very different for a Crinos Garou than it is in Lopus form. Colors that the wolf could never before perceive suddenly spring to life, and, after whatever facilitated the First Change has passed, the lupus is usually left stunned in a world of color that she could not have imagined.

Wolves are not visual creatures. The sudden impact of seeing differently is very difficult to take in. The gift of visual acuity in return for the loss of some olfactory capabilities causes a great deal of confusion and sometimes fear. Wolves rely heavily on their sense of smell, and to suddenly

lose even a portion of it leaves the lupus feeling, in human terms, partially blind. Where wolves might not feel fear, the newly shifted lupus is exposed to many emotions that are not necessary for the wolf, and yet they are necessary for Gaia's warriors. Human emotions, thankfully, do not just crash in on the lupus mind; most wolf-born would go insane otherwise. Instead, emotions start to leak in through the folds of the lupus' subconscious.

Newly changed lupus are rarely alone for long. Garou or Gaian spirits linger nearby to come to the aid of any wolf-born Garou. Gaia's forces closely guard the wolf packs, watching for any potential lupus. Those who disperse usually have a spirit following them. Even with the coming Apocalypse and Garou numbers dwindling, the small population of wolves encourages the Garou to keep a tight vigil on their wolf Kinfolk. Mothers whelp around the same time every year so it is easier for local Garou and spirits to keep their watch for lupus cubs.

Lupus are normally both calm and confused when found. In their minds, they do not turn into monsters. Monsters do not exist. Wolf packs who witness a lupus' First Change will run, but the cub knows for certain that she is not really a wolf. She knows that she does not belong with them; the loss is not so harsh on a lupus. Garou take the lupus to the nearest sept to introduce her to the culture and ways of the Garou Nation. Lupus may be easier to lead to the Garou than homids, but transcending from a wolf pack to a Garou pack is anything but simple.

Captivity

Captivity does strange things to any animal; the wolf is no exception. Captive wolves speak and act differently. They use more verbal language than their wild Kin, and the structure of their packs tends to be rigid rather than fluid. An alpha is very insistent on being alpha, even if another would do a better job. The pack might be mostly family, but the breeding pair face no potential challengers. They do not fear a new wolf, male or female, wandering into the pack, but also, no wolves disperse unless the human captors separate the wolves themselves. Perhaps the fences harden the hierarchy. Humans force the packs to remain static, and the alpha needs to hold his dominance to keep control.

With little room to run and no need to hunt, it is easy to think that captive wolves are incapable and that any lupus born from their ranks will be equally so. Those who think that are wrong. While some wolves might be instinctually stunted, captive wolves retain much of their capabilities to hunt and kill. What they have lost is their understanding of the wild. Captive wolves might slaughter prey wantonly once released, killing far more than any wild-born pack would. Never before have they needed to restrain themselves. Never before have they had to analyze

their options regarding prey. The captive only need to act upon impulses.

But still, the captives do not lose their connection to the spiritual. Lupus born in captivity understand the Weaver, the pulse of the city, the methods of humans, and the strange things humans use better than any wild-born. Radio collars, found on many wolves, attract servants of the Weaver. The servants, in turn keep an eye on the lupines. As the lupus starts to open to his spiritual senses, he sees them, comes to know them, and even starts to accept them.

Many once-captive lupus end up with either the Glass Walkers or the Bone Gnawers. The two tribes offer them what they understand: a life among the humans, with familiar scents, sights, and sounds. Red Talons seeking to liberate their captive Kin are often baffled and angry to find wolves that, in their eyes, do not act much like wolves. The taint of the Weaver lingers about them.

Still, captive wolves exposed to the wild can flourish, even if they've lived their entire lives within a fence. They will learn to hunt, they will find dens, and nature will welcome them back into the cycle. It will take time, but the pack will slowly lose its rigidity, falling back into the fluid flow of the Wyld.

Becoming Garou

Septs celebrate every lupus, but after the commotion settles, a mentor must take the task of training the wolf-born in Garou culture and lore. Every lupus, if possible, needs a lupus mentor, one that understands what it's like to be in her position and can meet her on her own comfortable terms. Lupus cubs dislike leaving their wolveen forms. They like being able to smell the familiar layers of the forest. Wolf-born are comfortable not seeing every color of the rainbow.

Life Slows Down

Stranger than two legs, stranger than being able to see a full spectrum, a cub's relationship to time itself changes. Wolves in the wild usually only live up to eight years. The lucky live to see another four or so years before Gaia demands their return to the earth. Wolves age quickly enough that every season is significant. The urges that run through them dominate their actions and reactions lest time slip away and the wolf finds that it's too late.

Garou, however, age like humans. The urgency of being a wolf lives in the Garou because many die young and seek to make the most of their lives. Still their perception of time is exclusively human. Garou speak of decades and centuries where wolves need no concept of such lengths of time. Garou speak of passing down culture and tradition to the next generation, of making lasting impressions, of times

TERROR

It may be that terror is a rarity among wild wolves. It might even truly not exist. I wouldn't know. But, among the captive, terror and fear are real. The agents of the Wyrm do not just hunt wolves to kill them, it is much worse than that. Pentex seeks to understand the Garou, and the corporation seeks to find "the gene," as they call it. They capture wolves, normal and Kin alike, and subject them to horrific tests. From pups to the elderly, no wolf is safe from the cruel laboratories.

Within cold metal cages, wolves live in perpetual fear, and they do not handle it well. Some bite at anything that comes near them. Some just simply curl up in a corner, trying to will themselves to die. Some are attached to machines that try to extend their lifespan, and some are forced to mate, offering their offspring to the same terror they've faced.

And, rarely, one Changes. I've heard a couple stories of laboratories being torn apart in the rampage of a lupus wolf lost to terror. Some die in a hail of bullets; some succumb to the forces of Pentex, who lock them away again. The rescued few do not act like any "wild" lupus. They are nervous, scared, and almost always prone to fits of frenzy, more so than the rest of us. But still, they are Garou, and these are the final days. How could we kill them just because they might be a threat? How could we not try to help them?

– Mends-the-Wyld, Glass Walker Theurge

past that still affect today. Wolves only pass on information to the next generation that they will specifically need to survive. The idea of tradition spanning centuries is foreign to the lupine mind. Wolves act how they do because it is efficient, not for the sake of any past tradition. As habits become inefficient, wolves change and adapt to new and better ways that they then pass through generations until those methods lose efficiency.

Adjusting to a lengthening lifespan takes time. Until they adapt, lupus are more likely to desire immediate action. They are less likely to understand restraint and patience beyond waiting in ambush for the right time to strike the enemy. The desire to have pups before too many seasons slip away is also difficult to quell, and young lupus have a tendency to disappear into the packs of their Kin to seek

a mate. The habit is both a blessing and a curse for the Garou. While the Garou Nation needs as many wolf-born Kin as it can get, the young lupus have barely had time to learn about who and what they are. Lupus must strike out alone to have a chance of mating successfully, and if the enemy discovers the lupus the nearby Garou might not have time to save him before he and his Kin pack fall.

Convincing a lupus to sit still long enough to learn of the dangers that exist is difficult at best, especially with the wild-born. To have a chance with the lupus cub, a mentor must first cross the most difficult barrier between lupus and sept.

Language

Lupus begin training by learning the Garou tongue, just as homids learn the Garou tongue before they become an expert in the speech of wolves. Garou is a comfortable bridge between the two very different languages. Where humans are very vocal with many non-verbal cues, wolves rely almost entirely on non-verbal communication, including olfactory information and movement. Vocalizations, ear twitches, and body shifts of the Crinos form are much closer to lupus than they are to human, yet the arm and shoulder movements are distinctly human. As a lupus learns how to communicate in Crinos form, she starts to understand the basics of human communication.

Where Garou is not too difficult for a lupus, human languages are nigh impossible. Even languages that are supposed to be simple to learn are very strange for a wolf. Humans feel the need to categorize everything, which is silly to the wolf. Some words simply do not make sense, including many scientific names and terms but also abstract concepts loaded with cultural baggage. What is the difference between a psychopath and a patriot? Why is one form of killing all right and the other condemned? For all its difficulty, language opens the door to understanding the world from the human perspective. While most lupus will attempt to learn some of the common language of their respective territory, few attain mastery. Synonyms, connotations, and idioms are all difficult concepts, especially for young lupus who are very literal.

Worst of all, to master the human language, a lupus must spend a lot of time in Homid form, and few lupus are comfortable in their human skins, even those born in captivity. Thankfully, many non-verbal cues are instinctual. Lupus in homid form will smile when happy without thinking about it. Smiles are a natural reaction for humans in various situations. Instincts help keep lupus in their Homid forms from standing out too much in human society, but, without a great deal of practice, they still seem strange and out-of-place to anyone who bothers to pay much attention.

Wolves have their own language, of course. Not only do wolves use movements, but scent markings are also part

of their communication. Homid Garou who don their wolf skins usually "shout" words when learning how to "speak" lupus. Movements are meant to be subtle, and humans are used to grandiose gestures from their own set of non-verbal cues. I also have yet to meet a homid who understands the olfactory aspect of the lupus language. When lupus try to teach homids about the different meanings of feces, many laugh. When wolf-born try to get homids to smell the feces so they can further learn, more comedy ensues. Still, it represents a barrier between man and wolf that is rarely breached entirely.

Induction

After crossing the language barrier, even tentatively, cubs start learning about the culture of the Garou. The concept of culture is difficult for lupus to understand. Wolves have their own loose and basic culture, in a sense. Different breeds of wolves who live in different areas act in diverse ways and learn different things, but their differences are based on the adaptations they learn that are necessary to survival. Everything a wolf does makes sense for where it lives. Some wolves learn to fish, and some wolves know how to use snow as a trap where others have no need to know how to do either.

While culture is strange, a lupus can understand the necessity not to insult others and will strive to learn what he can of Garou society. It will not all make sense, and he will make mistakes, but he will not live scared of what he has become. Unlike homids, lupus do not need to rationalize everything happening to and around them before they start training. Instead, they adapt and accept the necessity to live as their own kind, lest they insult someone or tread on forbidden territory and invoke their own demise.

Wolves who stayed with their packs make the best students. They were not only learning from their parents and siblings, they were teaching the new young of the pack, helping to secure the safety of the whole, and aiding in the survival of the pups. The lupus who stayed with the pack already has had to submit to authority, follow instructions, and she knows how to sit and listen when she's told to do so. She may not understand everything she is told or taught, but she will make the necessary adjustments to live with her new pack just as she did with her old pack.

Lupus who dispersed are more difficult, especially if they dispersed as soon as they were able. Their entire time with a pack was spent outside the true hierarchy. As soon as the lupus would have been subjected to true authority, he struck out on his own, either because of a deeper calling, or maybe even to avoid that authority. He is more likely to challenge anything that does not make sense. The dispersed lupus has a harder time understanding the concept of tradition, and usually only complies with such nonsense to keep his place within the pack and his life secure.

Adaptations

Every lupus—and every homid for that matter—needs to adapt to survive among the Garou. Lupus and homids, however, must adapt in very different ways. Lupus find the human aspects of Garou culture difficult to understand, feeling that many of them are useless, unnecessary, and restricting. Meanwhile, wolf-born easily accept spirits, the hunt, and the necessity of breeding. Survival of the pack is paramount, and lupus come ready to sacrifice themselves for the survival if needs be.

Lupus find emotion, restraint, tradition, names, and the structure of Garou packs are all strange. It takes time for a lupus' mind to even desire to learn things that otherwise make no sense to him. Usually, if wolves do not understand something, they avoid it. The nonsensical has no place in a pack. To keep a lupus from ignoring what he is taught, a mentor must make everything he teaches relatable. Few lupus will accept something simply because they are told it is so. A lupus must be shown that it is so, and why it is necessary that it is so. Without that guiding principal, lupus commonly forget what they are taught. If something has no purpose, then why remember it?

Species clashes cause great frustration between homid mentors and lupus cubs. Tribes with fewer lupus have a harder time keeping cubs with them as the lupus will leave to find other tribes and mentors who are easier to understand. Homid-heavy tribes like the Glass Walkers even have a challenging time luring lupus from their own Kin into their fold. Even though they have a surprisingly considerable number of Kinfolk sheltered on large tracts of land, the lupus born from the Kin still have a habit of going to other tribes.

Gnosis

The wolf-born possess a deeper understanding of the natural and spiritual world about them. Almost all homids have been forced out of Gaia's spiritual cycle. Many have been raised to believe only what science tells them is so, and science says that spirits cannot exist. Others still seek to control nature around them rather than becoming part of its natural flow. Some tribes debate whether the Impergium or the Weaver forced humans away from that cycle, but the result still stands. Humans, for the most part, have lost their connection with nature, and most do not even want it back.

Wolves are different, of course, and they reflect that through their connection to the spiritual world. Their connection to nature, the way of life, and the spiritual essence in all things is what fuels their very existence. Without the motion of the natural spiritual cycle, everything would collapse into a meaningless disaster where prey would live in fear every moment of their lives, would likely not breed, and

would die, taking the predator with it. Plants would quickly lose their medicinal qualities, and eventually they would wither and die for want of the desire to live and provide.

Spirits are the only reason the natural world exists and works as it does. They are the breaths of life that Gaia gave to all things; spirits are the reason the desire and will to survive the harsh environment of the wild even exist.

Wolves naturally know it to be true. They accept the spirit within and without. They operate within the confines of the natural order all their lives, and that connects them to the spirit world and the ways of the spirit. With very rare exceptions, lupus are always closer to nature than homids, especially the young. Mentors do not need to teach lupus that spirits exist. Mentors do not even need to teach them how to act around spirits and how to show respect. It comes naturally.

Where normal wolves, and even lupus Kinfolk might not think of the spirit of deer as they fill their stomachs on the prey's flesh, the future lupus thanks the deer without thinking about it. In the joy she expresses when howling, when tearing out the throat of the prey, by the very act of living, she always understands that the reason she can exist is through the sacrifice of the prey. To thank the spirits is simply an expression of that understanding.

Spirits are more likely to accept lupus than they are to accept homids. Some even visit a lupus before she goes through her First Change. The rarity of the lupus combined with the natural understanding of spirits and the spiritual way all lead to lupus being common envoys between the spirit world and the physical. Homid Theurges may be able to learn to be great, but for the lupus Theurge, greatness comes naturally.

Gifts

As spiritual energy comes naturally to lupus, so do Gifts. Gifts are but a way of controlling the spiritual flow that continuously exists about the Garou. To teach a wolf-born a Gift, a spirit simply needs to teach her to mold that flow into desired effects. Where most homids must learn to trust the power behind Gifts, lupus accept that power's existence and race straight into learning how to use it.

Wolf-born also bear natural respect for spirits, where many homids instinctively desire control. Lupus have no qualms about the need to learn new things. The fact that no wolf or werewolf knows everything is simple fact, and lupus spend their entire lives learning, adjusting, and adapting. Wild-born lupus do not carry the desire to force their own paths against the tides of nature, and nature spirits are prone to favoring lupus Garou over homids.

Spirits of the city are erratic and strange to the wild lupus mind, much like humans and homids. They speak in weird ways, ask for bizarre tasks, and live where most lupus do not wish to tread. Learning Gifts from any city spirit

is much more difficult for a lupus than it is for a homid, even with the tighter tie the lupus bears to the spirit world.

Kinfolk

Tight relationships with family are key to being a wolf, at least in the one to four years that the young remain with the pack. Parents and siblings dedicate much of their existence to rearing the next generation. Lupus, with their other duties, have a tougher time keeping the close familial bond, but in turn they watch their Kin from a distance. All tribes have something watching their lupus Kin, whether it be a spirit, a pack, or a sept.

The greatest problem is that lupus Kinfolk are so few. Not every wolf is Kinfolk, of course, and humans have culled the wolf population to a fraction of its prior numbers. Wolves are making a rebound, but Kin still face numerous threats. Minions of the Wyrm hunt them down, killing and kidnapping them. Garou risk their lives to rescue trapped kin, and are often successful, but they cannot replace those killed except with more litters.

Normal wolves have a difficult time with Garou. Like many animals, they sense the primal anger that fuels the werewolves and tend to avoid them. Whelping new Kinfolk with normal wolves is a daunting task at best. Wolves do not force themselves upon one another, and a female or male is not always receptive for mating. Typically, only lupus born when the moon was completely or mostly dark can mate with normal wild wolves, and many do. It is a sacred task to father or mother more Kinfolk; it's almost as important as trying to breed more Garou.

Lupus Kinfolk are also more likely to have the spiritual blessing of Gnosis than human Kin. Teaching them Gifts can be difficult as they only have a slightly better understanding of nature than normal wolves, but it is possible. Spirits and lupus focus on teaching them Gifts that will help them hide and escape rather than fight. When faced with danger, wolves are more likely to run than they are to attack. Working with their natural impulses facilitates a better understanding of the Gifts granted to them. Spirits who watch over the packs are on a continuous lookout for any wolves who might bear Gnosis. The more wolves with the capability to save their pack, the better chance the pack will survive.

Purpose

Perhaps the easiest adaptation for the lupus, however, is learning their higher purpose. Wolves live to survive, they live to experience the world, to find mates, to hunt prey, and to just enjoy life. They don't need a higher purpose to feel complete. They just need to exist. A lupus, even before he changes, knows a higher order exists. With his First Change, he experiences the blessing of that higher order. When the Garou find and bring him to the nearest

sept, he learns the reason that he was born upon Gaia's surface. Only then, can a lupus feel complete; he has found his place in the world.

To protect the dying Wyld, to cut away the infection eating away at Gaia's flesh, and to try to stave off the tide of humans swarming the world, these are true callings to the lupus' soul. It is easy for a lupus to leave his previous life behind to answer the call of Gaia and Luna, especially since it is his duty to return to that life, to run with wolves again, and to have children.

The dispersed only leave the freedom of traveling, and even then, they often join packs that must go from place to place. The chance to do something with lasting meaning, something beyond having children, is usually a welcome change. When most wolves the lupus meets are uneasy around her and she has a tough time finding a place to stay, the sudden acceptance is enough to lure most lupus into the life of a Garou.

For the captive-born lupus, this sense of purpose is a stranger concept. Being detached from nature and living in a pen creates a sense of ennui, though wolves don't truly understand the concept. The first fight to gain the lupus' acceptance is to convince him that anything he does actually matters. Wild-born wolves see their effect on nature and the world daily. Captive-born see no such effects, and instead must form purposes out of life of their own accord. Perhaps that is why captive wolves have more rigid hierarchies, to stop the bored upstarts from usurping the pack.

Captive-born sense that they live in a world that is not their own, but they do not usually understand the actual problem. Because of that, infusing them with a higher purpose is more difficult. There was never a need for anything to really change in the world from which they came. There was no danger, food was handed to them, and they always lived in the same territory that was never threatened. Still, it is easier to instill the sense of purpose in captive-born lupus minds than it is for many homid minds. They still rarely see themselves as wrong, rather just different from the others. The resistance to becoming Garou is lessened by their acceptance of what they are.

Humanity's Edge

It takes less time for lupus to learn and accept some aspects of Garou society, such as Gifts and Gnosis, but the time it takes to learn the more human side of the culture balances their learning scale with homids. Though humanity's touch has its place in Garou society and is even necessary, the very fact of that necessity is strange to lupus. Still, they must learn human traits along with the wolf, even among the Red Talons, for the lupus to exist within the Garou Nation. Without guidance, the lupus will likely lose herself to building emotions and her inability to

communicate. Wolves will avoid her, and she will become a danger unto herself until Garou find and rescue her or until agents of the Wyrm kill her.

Emotion

Thankfully, due to the new perspective of time forced upon a lupus, new emotions seem to form within her mind in a slow evolution of realization. Lingering sensations of sorrow and anger cement themselves within a lupus' being over the course of a single season. The emotional changes from her First Change to her Rite of Passage seem overwhelmingly fast to a homid or even a metis, but to the lupus, a season would have been a large fraction of her normal wolf life.

Much like the new physical capabilities of being Garou, the new emotional senses are usually accepted as necessary simply for the fact that they exist. While an overwhelming sense of sorrow might seem strange to a lupus, they reason that it must serve a purpose. After the first season of being Garou, lupus are prone to strong emotional reactions. While the slow opening of his mind to deep and lasting emotions keeps a lupus sane while he is a cub, he is still unaccustomed to not only controlling emotion, but to the idea that controlling a seemingly natural impulse might be a good idea. Any sorrow weighs heavily on a cub's heart, and his temper grows short. In turn, the levels of happiness that he experiences also grows, and a lupus commonly finds himself reveling in joy for longer periods of time than he might have as a wolf.

For another month or two, lupus experience hefty mood swings. He'll race around with joy and a pup's eagerness only to fall into confusion and sorrow when other Garou are unwilling to join in a game. The serious nature of being Garou carries a heavy weight that can drive even the lightest lupus mind into a quiet, sad solitude, something that his homid counterparts often can't understand. Lupus have to find the balance between controlling their emotions and letting their emotions control them. Throughout his life, a healthy lupus knows that emotions are not terrible things, that they have their place, and even help the pack, tribe, and Garou Nation survive. Because a lupus does not balk at his emotions, he does not seek to control them like a homid commonly does. The lupus seeks to work with his feelings, and, in doing so, he commonly falls into a better and deeper understanding of the emotions that lie within, showing no shame in experiencing them.

Rage

Being so accepting of emotions does have drawbacks, however. Where homids have a tougher time with Gnosis, lupus have a harder time understanding the need to restrain their Rage. Accepting Rage is typically an effortless process for the lupus. Learning how to utilize Rage and let it loose

is not difficult or distressing as it might be for a homid. It is a gift from Luna or Gaia, and, even though many homids also see it as a curse, lupus rarely do. Instead, it is simply something that exists that can sometimes have negative impacts, like being very strong can lead to accidentally hurting or even killing a packmate or cub.

The concept of restraint challenges lupus. Wolves are used to only showing restraint in the face of their pack and, occasionally, towards their own kind. To show restraint on prey is not a mercy. Killing a deer slowly is cruel and something a wolf does not do. When faced with an enemy, lupus do not see any reason to let it live, and if Rage will help them tear down their enemy, so much the better. To frenzy, to let loose Rage, nothing should be wrong with that.

Thankfully, young cubs do not easily fall to the Thrall of the Wyrm, even if they were born under the full moon. Until a lupus experiences the Thrall, he has no true understanding of how terrible Rage can be. Telling a lupus that bad things can happen when he gives himself over to something as natural as Rage makes little sense. Experiencing the Thrall is solid and real and just feels wrong. The wolf meets the enemy within, and only then does he understand that the corrupted Destroyer also lies in his own heart and spirit. While wolf-born will attempt to learn to restrain their Rage out of respect for the elders of the Garou Nation, they only understand the need for restraint if they experience a Thrall frenzy.

To Be Garou

As a lupus cub passes his Rites of Passage, he finds himself in a world that needs his spiritual understanding. He starts settling into his position, filling what gaps he can with his lupine knowledge, instincts, and insight.

The Pack

The strength required of Garou alphas is unsettling to most lupus. The captive-born might be used to having a single alpha, but most wild-born are not. A Garou pack has none of the fluidity of a wolf pack, and it can be difficult for lupus to adjust. Cubs and cliaths will commonly question and challenge during what many Philodox consider times of war. Militant alphas who claim a constant time of war lash out at young lupus repeatedly until they beat the wolf-born's questioning ways out of her. Some lupus in that situation leave and find other packs or septs, but many submit to the might of their alphas, slowly losing their natural desire to test their leaders.

Whether that is for better or for worse is one of the core debates of the Garou Nation.

Narrowing down to one solid purpose of the pack gives the lupus direction, and the direct mind of the wolf finds comfort in the solidarity of the pack around



one focused goal. The pack is family to the lupus, as are most wolf packs, and a lupus is far less likely to have any romantic issues among the Garou with whom she runs. The dedication to the pack and even the occasional need for a pack to disperse come naturally, as wolves form and break packs apart depending on their situations. What lupus don't understand of the rigidity of the Garou pack is compensated by understanding the need, direction, and familial bonds that hold a pack together.

Punishment

Perhaps the most difficult concept for lupus to accept within Garou society is that of punishment. The methods used to determine the sentence to inflict upon a werewolf are just as foreign. Wolves only have three forms of retaliation, though they can vary in gravity. A short snap with proper display is usually all that's needed to back down a packmate. Short snaps, snarls, and growls are the most common forms of punishment used when a younger or submissive wolf has gone too far. In these cases, punishment is only used to let the victim know that what he did was not acceptable. Usually, the wolf submits and everything is fine thereafter.

If the wolf does not submit, then a fight might break out, and wolves take fights seriously. If fights broke out all

the time, the pack would not survive, and so they are usually very rare. The worst form of punishment is banishment or death, where wolves are driven out of their packs. Wolves do not often kill fellow packmates; they reserve death for strange unwelcome wolves who tread into their territory. Wolves do kill other wolves for assorted reasons, it's just not very common as wolves do not wish to chance their own deaths. That is why prey will sometimes roam the borders of wolf pack territories, retreating into opposing territory if wolves take up the chase.

All wolf justice is swift. They do not deliberate; they do not hold trials. Garou society, for minor transgressions, is much the same way. Punishment is usually swift and direct, something any lupus can appreciate and understand. For greater crimes, however, trials and tribunals are typically beyond the wolf's understanding. Trying to decide if a Garou was right or wrong is not usually an issue for a lupus, and grey areas rarely exist. Lupus do not normally obtain the talent for twisting words to try to make something that was wrong seem right. They also rarely focus on whether something done was technically wrong by word or law and, instead, focus on the outcome of the situation. If the Garou Nation is better off for what was done, then lupus will often side with the transgressor as being in the right.

If harm was done to the sept, pack, or Garou Nation due to the transgressor's actions, no matter the reason, they will be at his throat.

Rank and Challenge

All lupus understand the concept of alpha and rank, but the Garou categorize their ranks, define them, and expect everyone to understand and obey rank, even outside of the pack. The concept of Garou rank does not set well with the wolf-born, at least not at first. Humans needing to categorize everything and have a strong flow of hierarchy are confusing enough. Once a lupus enters a sept, she becomes part of such a system, and it commonly breeds frustration and irritation. If a lupus clith has a better idea than a homid fostern, she will expect her voice to be heard. If the lupus has greater knowledge in tracking, she will expect the pack to submit to her while following a trail, even if she is not the alpha of the pack. Wild-born lupus believe that their experience should dictate their current role in the pack, not a ranking system based on subjective insights into a werewolf's character.

Challenges are also difficult for many lupus to grasp. Understanding the ideal and even the need for challenges is simple, but wolves only challenge one another through might and will, and usually packs relent and allow the wolf who will best serve pack to lead, even if only temporarily. Obviously, most Garou are not the same way. Rage dictates the need for a strong alpha to direct his pack, but wisdom decrees that the alpha must also know when to relent. Sadly, not all alphas are so wise, and power and perceived threats commonly keep alphas from allowing their packs and septs to operate at maximum efficiency.

Gamcraft is the hardest concept for the young lupus, and the fact that the challenged get to choose the challenge is seen as unfair. Allowing the challenged to play to the weaknesses of their opponents makes winning more difficult, even if the lupus is in the right. Eventually lupus might get better at gamcraft, but to start, most find it confusing and strange. The best a lupus can hope for is a fair Master of the Challenge who will pick an appropriate form of game.

Lupus who are challenged typically prefer facedowns. Duels are reserved for only the direst of challenges, when the challenger could threaten the lives of other Garou. As snaps and quick shows of dominance are usually enough in the wolf pack, lupus see facedowns as the most efficient method to retain dominance. Garou are rarely hurt in facedowns, and homids cannot use their tricks to help them win. Homids, however, have a harder time accepting the facedown as an appropriate challenge and are not as likely to take the victor of a facedown as seriously as the victor of a duel or gamcraft. In turn, lupus are the same way in regard to gamcraft victors.

Duels are the only challenge where the victor is immediately respected by both sides. Sadly, it is also the challenge most likely to lead to the death of a fellow Garou, even if only by accident.

Breeding

Lupus are very pragmatic about breeding. Like their lupine brethren, they follow their urges to fill any gaps that exist where their children will thrive. The Garou have an enormous gap when it comes to the number of lupus, and the lupus know that and accept the challenge. A wolf-born commonly seeks to breed, and breed many times throughout the course of his or her life. Male lupus will often adopt a pack, mating with his favorite female, and watching over her during the lean time of the year while she is with litter. After she has whelped and is raising the pups from within the den, he will continue to bring food to her. Male homid Garou have the luxury of being able to mate and then leave the care of the child to the mother, even if he bears a stigma for doing so. Male lupus Garou cannot do so for fear that the mother and her pack will not be able to find enough food without his help. Male lupus sometimes disappear for a few months at a time to mate.

Female lupus leave for even longer. A denning mother lupus must stay with her pups until they are fully weaned, and even then, leaving them is difficult. Pups come to know their mother more than any other member of the pack. She is their shelter, their warmth, and their source of food for weeks. After they leave the den, they still depend on her for occasional milk to supplement their diet. While the entire pack takes part in raising the pups once they leave the den, the mother is still the focus of the pack from when she becomes pregnant until the pups develop independence. She is bound to them by the laws of the mother, and a female lupus might be gone for several months and sometimes even up to a year raising a litter. Female homids are not so different from female lupus. To breed is a sacred and time-consuming task for both breeds.

If a large disconnect exists between lupus and homid views on mating, it is the hesitance of male homids to mate with lupus Kinfolk. Where female homids can only have homid children, male Garou can choose with whom they mate and, by doing so, affect the breed of their children. The Garou are not lacking in homid children, at least not when compared to lupus children. Begetting children that are of a different breed might be uncomfortable, but all Garou are of wolf and man. We are all both and yet neither. Once the change has happened, at least from the lupus standpoint, the barrier between either species is superseded. If homids were very rare, many lupus Garou would breed with human Kinfolk to fill the gap and heal the loss. The reluctance of the homids to do the same is strange and upsetting. Rumors abound of some Black Furies finding



PERSPECTIVE

Homids have a challenging time transcending the barrier between wolf and man because they view mating differently. Where wolves mate and bear pups to populate and survive, humans glorify sex with emotional idealism. Homids are rarely any different. As lupus bring wolf perspectives to the Garou, so do homids bear human expectations. A homid seeks comfort, companionship, and understanding in his mate, something he can only hope to find in humans, particularly Kinfolk. The union is supposed to be sacred; humans learn that as young children and homids carry it into their Garou lives where they cling to the ideal.

How can a homid ever look at a lupus Kinfolk and see companionship? How can he ever hope to have a union that means something beyond bearing children? He can't, because that is all the wolf will see, Kinfolk or not. Even if Garou are as much wolf as man, mating with a wolf borders on bestiality. Can anyone expect us to overcome our repulsion? Bile rises in my throat at the thought of having children with four legs and fur; I am disgusted at the thought of mating in my wolf-skin.

I honor the lupus mindset, however, and I must wonder why I am repulsed. Technically, we are supposed to be wolf, man, and neither all at once. Homids may wretch at the idea of mating with lupus Kinfolk, but is that because we have separated ourselves from them? Or is it because we, as humans, still hold ourselves on a pedestal, too superior to mingle with our sisters and brothers in fur? I fear the answer to either question.

— Alyssa SeekingHome, Children of Gaia Galliard



those male homids sent to other tribes to breed with lupus Kinfolk, and of Red Talons kidnapping homids of other tribes to breed with the Talons' wolf-Kin.

Still, begetting lupine children yields more benefits. Wolf numbers are low, even if they are rebounding in many parts of the world. Kinfolk have a greater chance to survive in the wild than non-Kinfolk wolves. But, beyond that, where humans are lucky to have more than one child, wolves commonly have litters of four to six pups. Sometimes they have fewer, but sometimes they also have more. Each of those pups has the potential to be Garou. Garou born

of wolves only take about two years to experience their First Change. Because of this, old-fashioned septs pressure homid Garou to breed with lupus Kinfolk. At worst, they beget more wolveen Kinfolk. Such septs believe that doing so will also weaken the barrier between homid and lupus Garou.

The quickest way to increase the ranks of the Garou is through lupus Kinfolk, but as lupus numbers dwindle within the tribes, fewer Garou remain willing to regain the balance. Recognizing the disarray is easy enough, but lupus are more likely to take steps to solve the problem, even if it is uncomfortable. If homids do not step into the wolveen mind, they may lose the wolf forever.

While some homids may believe that homosexuality is unique to their species, they couldn't be more wrong. Gay wolves are not as common as their heterosexual counterparts, but they are just as accepted into wolf packs, without the bigotry displayed by many homids. Homosexual lupus likewise find great acceptance from other lupus; while their tribe may expect gay werewolves to breed, those born of wolves know that homosexual lupus are some of the fiercest warriors as they have always known they will not breed, giving them more reason to defend those who will.

The Garou Nation

Lupus are as varied as homids, and as such, they take as easily to their born auspice as any homid. Garou commonly categorize lupus as making the finest Ahroun or Theurge. What else do the wolves do other than tear up their prey and revel in their connection to the spirit? While it is true that many lupus excel under the crescent and full moons, the breed as a whole does not favor any auspice over the other. Luna shines her blessings upon the wolf-born as widely as she does the human-born.

Ragabash

Lupus born under the dark of the moon are the staunchest believers in the fluidity of the pack. A Ragabash is more likely to disperse from the pack, if he can, before his first year is complete. Wolves are very curious by nature, and while they do not need to have a reason for everything that happens, the budding lupus desires answers. Those few who choose or are forced to stay commonly challenge their alphas, even if the lupus is captive-born. Ironically enough, if a pre-change lupus does take over his wolf pack, chances are he was born under the new moon.

Once he has joined the Garou, he will rarely hold back out of respect for the hierarchy. Homid and metis Ragabash might eventually learn that they are allowed to do the same, but being born within rigid and lawful social structures means that they must learn that some challenging is acceptable. A wild-born lupus, on the other hand, steps into a sept as a

natural questioner. His packmates allowed him to question and challenge them, even as a pup. The moment the wolves could not answer his questions to his expectations, he was allowed to leave and find answers on his own.

Captive Ragabash are even more insistent with their questions. Being raised where they could not leave their packs and where their challenges were met with fights for authority, the lupus learned to fight for their right to ask questions. They are less accepting of "Because I said so." than normal lupus. They insist on answers, and they will challenge until they get them, or until they are forcibly subdued. But, if they are subdued, they are not above turning that upon their alphas. If she cannot give a clear answer to his question, does the alpha really deserve to lead?

Theurge

The crescent moon ties the lupus closer to the spiritual flow of existence. Long before her First Change she finds herself at peace with the world, knowing that she has her place within it and that all things come and go as is meant to be. Few can understand what Gaia intended for the world better than a lupus Theurge. Like the Ragabash, they usually disperse from their family packs at a young age. The call of the spiritual world, a call to which even most Kinfolk wolves seem deaf, is too strong. With no one to understand her among her pack, she leaves in search of someone who does.

As they are pulled into their tribes and septs, lupus Theurges are hailed as the greatest of mystics. Rites, Gifts, and spiritual diplomacy come naturally to them. Where the wild-born find themselves at home among the wilderness septs, the captive-born are equally at home in the city. Theurges spend a great deal of their time making peace with the spirits, especially in the wilderness septs. Anger runs deep with a number of entities as their lands are threatened and the Garou numbers dwindle. Many see humans as the cause of the problem and want to place part of the blame on homids. Lupus Theurges are the natural liaisons between such spirits and the Garou, earning their trust and assistance where homids might fail.

The biggest danger for Theurge lupus is the desire to tie themselves as tightly as they can to their spiritual existence. Just as homids can become too tightly tied to the physical world, lupus, especially Theurges, have been known to disappear into the Umbra, never to return. The Garou do not know whether they ascend to a higher state of being as a spirit or simply disappear as a separate entity. Either way, another Garou is lost, and one Garou lost is one too many.

Philodox

The half-moon blesses lupus with a sharp sense of justice, but that sense is then molded by the life of the wolf. Philodox pups are more likely to stay with their packs than they are to disperse. Littermates are also more likely

to stay with a pack if a Philodox is among their ranks. They find comfort and guidance in the Philodox's presence, especially before the First Change. Still, unless they are captive-born, Philodox pups never take over their packs. The captive-born only fight for control of their pack if alphas are too domineering and play favorites.

Upon entering Garou society, the lupus Philodox quickly learns right and wrong, and the lupus mind latches onto that with vivid clarity. They make simple judgments, not because they are incapable of complex thoughts, but because simple judgments are direct and to the point. If someone is wrong, they see no need to complicate the situation with excuses or reasons. Doing so only blurs justice and sets precedents for others to take wrong actions.

Of course, lupus Philodox find resistance to their instinctual half-moon ideals. The Litany is simple enough to learn and understand. Some things Garou do, and some things Garou don't do. It is easy for most lupus to see right versus wrong, but homids make a habit of dwelling in gray areas. Paradoxically, in dealing out justice, many homids find the lupus lacking. Lupus are less likely punish offenders harshly for a first offense unless their actions directly endangered Garou or a caern. Instead, lupus Philodox will give swift justice, usually focused in service to the pack or sept. What lupus see as apt punishment, homids see as so-called slaps on the wrist. The homids are wrong, of course. Lupus simply believe in escalating punishments until they determine that an offender is too dangerous to be kept around. If the offender proves to be a true threat, the lupus will exile or kill him with little mercy.

Galliard

Lupus Galliards show trivial difference from normal wolves when they are pups. They play, learn, and experience life with their littermates as any other would. The number of Galliards found among the dispersed compared with those who stayed with their packs are about equal. Reasons for their decision to stay or leave range from wanting to discover something new away from the pack to wanting to learn more about their family ties.

When most homids think of lupus Galliards, they instantly think of howling. To be sure, howling is the most natural form of expression for lupus. Galliards, as they learn the different howls of the Garou, test the limits of human language with essence and emotion. What they can convey with a howl is commonly lost on the human tongue. But the wolves of the gibbous moon are not limited to just their voices. They commonly express their auspice with movement and shadow-play. Watching a silent lupus tell out a story by dancing with firelight reminds everyone that sound is not always necessary.

Beyond storytelling, lupus Galliards play a very different role compared to their homid counterparts. Where homids

immerse themselves in tales of the past and keep the old ways, lupus focus on the future. Garou know that most seers are Galliards. What they do not see is that most seers among the Galliards are lupus. As a lupus born under the gibbous moon looks to the future, Luna grants her visions and prophecies. Luna understands that her wolves find little use for the far past and, instead, gives them insights into what is yet to come.

Ahroun

Pups of the full moon are usually bigger than the rest of their siblings. Early on, they earn their dominance over the litter. They greet the adults first, they eat first, and they watch over the rest. Like Galliards, future Ahrouns are split on whether they disperse or stay with their packs. Those who leave usually do so because they do not want to be part of the pack hierarchy. They know they are above it, but usurping one of their parents would serve no purpose. Those who stay accept the dominance of their parents and focus on protecting the pack.

Lupus born under the full moon know their purpose; they understand that they exist to fight and protect. There was never a time when they had to try to find their place in life, even as a wolf. Unless a higher-ranked Ahroun runs in her pack, a lupus will insist on leading any attack. If someone resists she will challenge him, and she will only relent if she loses the challenge. Lupus rarely hold personal grudges, however, especially against their own packmates. She will let the actions and consequences of her leaders speak for themselves.

When homids think of Ahroun lupus, the same picture tends to form in their minds: the rampaging, snarling, foaming at the mouth wolf tearing humans asunder with no mercy. That picture is human nonsense. The Ahrouns are the warriors of the breed, the primary hunters, the primary killers, but they are anything but mindless. They attack deliberately, striking enemies, and they have better control over their emotions than many of the other moons. Wolf Ahrouns are the masters of pack tactics. Where other breeds and auspices must learn how to merge many into one unit, the talent comes naturally to wolf-born Ahrouns. They always seem to know just where everyone needs to be and what everyone needs to do. Yet they must fight against the stereotype of the stupid attack dog; that alone is infuriating.

The Tribe

Where lupus split out evenly among the auspices, the same is not true for the tribes. Lupus are more comfortable among some tribes where others are more foreign, and they naturally gravitate to those whom they understand.

Black Furies

The Black Furies accept the lupus of their tribe as their truest connection to the Wyld. For a tribe that prides

itself on its connection to said member of the Triat, that is high praise for the wolf. The lupus from the tribe will usually only breed with wild Kinfolk, not wishing to taint that connection with Weaver-tainted captive wolves. The Black Furies allow their lupus to connect to the Wyld on their own terms. Indeed, many homid Furies will emulate their lupus tribemates to deepen their own connection to the Wyld. In their Grecian homeland, the wolf population holds steady at 700, and wolves have government protection; nearby Macedonia has a wolf population of over 1000, but no legal protection.

One area where lupus have a difficult time adapting to the Fury lifestyle, however, is the lack of male tribemates. Lupus understand the need and desire for equality. The hierarchy of a wolf pack is often in continual flux, and the alpha is whoever is best at what they are currently doing, male or female. They can even understand Pegasus' desire to lock out homid males based on human men seeking to control their female counterparts. But why this desire has expanded to include male lupus, they do not understand. Even so, they find peace as the Furies are very accepting of lupus seeking mates and leaving to raise litters of their own.

Many lupus find adapting to the lack of male lupine tribemates difficult, but once understood, it is not so strange. The number of male lupus do not decrease because of Pegasus' creed. The lack of males, but for the sterile metis, allows for a sole concentration on females and their roles as mothers and nurturers. We can only understand the deep connection to creation, the beauty of the Wyld that lies within the female womb, when standing apart from the male. Pegasus does no harm by not allowing male lupus into the tribe; He means no insult. He encourages female lupus to breed, and the Black Furies respect their mates. In return for our separation, we gain greater insight into everything feminine, including Gaia herself.

– Megaera, Black Fury Philodox

Bone Gnawers

Bone Gnawers are a tribe short of lupus and great of homids. Even so, lupus who do find their way to the Gnawers are not only welcome and encouraged to join the tribe, they find the Bone Gnawer life refreshing and like that which they have already lived. The lupus who find the Gnawers are usually from captive stock, whether it be from a zoo or the guarded Kin of the Glass Walkers. Many lupus who cannot come to understand the Glass Walkers end up finding their way to the Bone Gnawers.

The Bone Gnawer life of survival and adaptation comes easily to the lupus, especially the captive bred lupus. The loose structure of their packs and septs might be strange at first to captive-born, but the Bone Gnawers allow them the time they need to adjust with no qualms. Wild-born wolves do not typically do well with the city-dwelling Bone Gnawers simply because of air, light, and noise pollution.

URBAN WOLVES?

Despite the best attempts of Garou, cities around the world remain anathema to wolves. Outside of captivity, the only wolf population in cities are the Kinfolk of Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers. Some live pampered lives in a gilded cage, separate from the rest of the world for their own safety. Others live like prisoners, their only purpose to provide more wolf Kinfolk and lupus Garou for their septs.

But the wild-born can find homes among the Bone Gnawers with their rural tribemates. The tribe gives no more or less expectation to lupus than they do to homids or metis, something that can come as a great relief.

The best thing about the Bone Gnawers is they don't judge harshly for things that are not your fault. My First Change was strange. I still age as a wolf, and I will not be here long. Most did not want me, they eyed me with suspicion. But not the Bone Gnawers, not Rat. I am not only one of them, but I am free to challenge them, and they listen. The streets may be dirty and the air choked, but I can find no better place to attack the enemy than at its roots. I am honored that the Bone Gnawers allow me to run with them.

– Best-of-Years, Bone Gnawer Ragabash

Children of Gaia

Children of Gaia favor synergy, and that ideal draws lupus to the tribe. Wolves understand that to succeed at a task a unit must work as one. Where all wolf packs follow this ideal, the Gnosis and understanding of a lupus Garou allows him to see a larger picture with greater ease. Rather than focusing on one pack or one tribe, as is a homid tendency, lupus – especially Children of Gaia lupus – focus overall of the Garou Nation and the whole of nature beyond. They understand and accept their place within the natural order and the Garou Nation. Their fight is not for one tribe to remain supreme, but for all Garou to save Gaia. While the Children of Gaia have expanded far beyond their traditional tribal homeland, only a couple of hundred wolves remain native to the near east, and their population is dwindling.

The Children of Gaia accept their few lupus as guides to the natural world. The tribe attracts both captive and wild-born lupus to their ranks, and seems to be making an effort to increase their lupus siblings. Unicorn tasks her lupus with being emissaries to the Red Talons and the

few remaining lupus governed septs. They may also task themselves with seeking out new territories for dispersing wolves from expanding packs. The broader the range of wolves, the better chance they have to survive.

It is impossible to tie the Gaians into a neat package. The Gaians, much like the Bone Gnawers, are willing to accept almost anyone into the tribe. Lupus here are as diverse as the homids. With Unicorn's tribe, I was able to learn to channel and control my Rage. Where few would come near me, the Gaians welcomed me with open arms. Now I am the teeth and claws of Unicorn. I am the war leader of my pack, and I will tear out the throats of Unicorn's enemies and see Gaia healed, or I will die trying. Unicorn does not balk at my ferocity, she directs it.

– Little Fury, Child of Gaia Ahroun

Fianna

Fianna attract lupus through their purity of emotion. The tribe does not typically lie about what they're feeling, nor do they apologize; any lupus can respect that. Depth of emotion is a new concept to lupus, and the Fianna understand what it's like to have urges tearing through the heart. No tribe is better at guiding young lupus cubs emotionally after their First Change, and they don't teach them to repress emotions, but rather to accept them. Even homid Fianna understand howling for no reason other than pure joy. Stag's children accept, tolerate, and even encourage random outbursts of emotion. Homids commonly seek to master the howl, which lupus take as a large token of respect. Very few lupus manage the beautiful tones that come naturally to the pure-bred Fianna wolves. Apart from small captive breeding programs, the only wolves are approximately 150 in France, recent migrants from the Italian wolf population. The tribe's diaspora has allowed them to add a much larger number of lupus to their numbers.

Fianna septs are unique; lupus have to work against homids to be the Master of the Howl. Both breeds take the competition seriously, especially lupus, but they enjoy the challenge. Philodox lupus of the tribe readily accept their positions as matchmakers. The Fianna support breeding programs both public and secret, and wolves in Fianna homelands are exclusively Kinfolk. Humans exterminated the rest long ago. Stag expects the lupus of his tribe, especially the Philodox, to keep the wolf bloodline alive and well. The Fianna commonly request their lupus tribemates from other parts of the world to come and mate with their lupus Kin in hopes of keeping their numbers growing and their health stable.

Being Fianna is experiencing life to its fullest. No other tribe understands the need to just experience feeling. Everything is important, every action and every breath, because it means that you are still alive and you are still able to do something more tomorrow. That is the beauty of being Fianna. It is



difficult experiencing lasting emotions, especially as a cub, but the Fianna do not seek to temper emotions, but rather to live with them. Emotions are as natural as thinking; the tribe lives and breathes that fact. What better freedom could you find? In that freedom, a lupus learns to adapt and flow with her emotions.

– Luna's-Cry, Fianna Galliard

Get of Fenris

Fenris pulls only the strongest lupus into his tribe. The Get of Fenris prize strength of muscle and will, and any lupus who appear weak are commonly ignored by the tribal totem. Even as the numbers of wolves and lupus dwindle, Fenris holds exacting standards for his lupus followers. If the Garou believe a lupus is strong enough for the tribe, that is not necessarily enough for the spirit. Due to the grueling restrictions, the Fenrir make a point of scouring the lands for the strongest wolves. They track the dispersed, luring those whom Fenris might accept to follow them to their own territories. Fenrir prize their lupus as the closest tie to their totem. Across their territories in Scandinavia and the Germanic countries, wolves number over 600, enough to provide a stable breeding stock, but low enough to be of serious concern.

Meanwhile, the lupus who do fall in with the Get of Fenris find solace in accepting the Rage within. Where many other tribes attempt to cull and temper their fury, the lupus among the Fenrir learn to harness and control it. Rage is a natural part of being Garou. It is a gift and a curse at the same time, but it is still there; the Fenrir do not deny it. If Rage exists, so exists its purpose; that is something every wolf understands. The Get's acceptance of every part of being Garou secures many lupus to the tribe.

It is not just a matter of being strong. It is a matter of being the best at the hunt and at knowing how to take down the enemy. It's about determination to fight until your last breath. Lupus have to overcome their innate desire to run and survive to fight another day to rise within the tribe. It is difficult, but the greatest lupus Fenrir are revered as physical manifestations of Fenris himself. Fenris, in turn, speaks to the tribe through lupus whenever possible, an honor above all others.

– Shadow-of-Jupiter, Get of Fenris Philodox

Glass Walkers

Glass Walkers have a tough time understanding lupus and lupus have a challenging time understanding Glass Walkers. As it is, the few Glass Walkers who have access to lupus Kin tend to keep captive packs on large expanses of land. No matter how much land

a Glass Walker might own, however, it is not close to the range of land a wild wolf would be able to traverse. The fact that wolves in captivity are very different from their wild brethren both aids and hinders the Glass Walkers' attempt to include lupus in their tribe.

As far as I know, all lupus in the Glass Walker tribe are from captive Kinfolk. These Garou have a better innate understanding of humans, but, in turn, their connection to and understanding of nature can be strange when compared to that of a wild-born lupus. They better understand the workings of the Weaver than the workings of the Wyld, and they commonly do not understand the general laws of nature, not as wolves do. Glass Walkers prize their lupus as symbols that the tribe has not lost the wolf. Some Walkers even outfitted their lupus with mechanisms as a sign that the wolf could adapt to the workings of the Weaver; all have since been killed. Is a wolf who has lost the Wyld still a wolf?

Wolves can adapt to the ways of Cockroach; thus, Glass Walker lupus have not lost the Wyld. The Weaver does not adapt. She stagnates. If any wild-born Glass Walker lupus exist out there, however, they are very few. The captive-bred have an easier time adjusting to the equipment and ideals of the tribe. The tribe celebrates every lupus recruited, but not because we are afraid we're losing the wolf. Every Glass Walker lupus has a deep spiritual link to the Wyld with an understanding of the Weaver and yet carries the purpose of the Balance Wyrm. If we are ever to get the three in balance again, we must address all members of the Triat. Who better to do it than a Glass Walker lupus?

— Mends-the-Wyld, Glass Walker Theurge

Red Talons

Red Talons, of course, take their lupus and lupus Kinfolk very seriously. They breed exclusively with wild wolves, snubbing the captive wolves as mentally disabled and psychologically damaged. As their numbers dwindle, however, the tribe has come to accept the lupus children of captive wolves into their ranks. The greater understanding of humans that such packmates bring lends a tactical advantage the tribe didn't have before. The Talons also find it easy to stir up anger and hatred within the captive-born. They bear an innate desire to tear their once captors apart.

Even the most violent of lupus can find a place with Griffin and the Red Talons. Hatred and desperation become part of the lupus' everyday life. These emotions are just as new and strange to a lupus as the physical sensations of different forms. The Red Talons, rather than seeking to mitigate the effect these emotions have on the wolven psyche, encourage, and inflame them, directing the hatred towards humanity and its encroachment. The tribe exalts the lupus, claiming to be the purest tribe because it has not lost the wolf. Yet, simultaneously, the Red Talons revel in anger and malice. In their attempts to tear down humanity,

they separate themselves from the true nature of the wolf.

Not every Red Talon is out to destroy all of humanity. Not every pack breeds hatred, for hatred is an unnatural scourge upon a wolf's heart. To be a lupus among the Red Talons is to desire a balance. Some believe the balance can only be returned if all humans are gone, but many believe they just need to be culled. Some wish to see humanity brought back into Gaia's cycle. Most believe that it will only be possible through the Apocalypse. It would be beneficial to man, wolf, and Garou if humanity could only be forced back to their rightful place in nature. What is so wrong about desiring this outcome? Wouldn't that help balance the Triat?

— Tornado, Red Talon Ahroun

Shadow Lords

Ruthless and dominating, the Shadow Lords keep a tight grip on their lupus Kin. They limit their Kinfolk to small tracts of land where captivity and exposure to the Lords hardens pack hierarchies. The Shadow Lords seek to keep it so, and their lupus act as emissaries to the Kin-folk packs, reminding them who the true alphas are. The Lords use the direct and often cold logic of the lupus to their advantage. Where homids can get muddled with too much thinking, the lupus commonly thinks of the simplest way to be effective, which the Shadow Lords appreciate. Wolf populations in southern and eastern Europe remain strong at over 10,000, giving the tribe a strong population of Kinfolk.

Shadow Lords are as foreign to most lupus as the Glass Walkers. Their games of politics, fear, and domination are all very human. It is rare for any lupus that is not of Shadow Lord Kin to join the tribe. Occasionally other wolves from captivity will do so, but the wild-born almost always find their way to other tribes. The captive-born find the chance to undercut alphas and rise to the top refreshing. Still, the Lords use words as weapons, and any lupus has a difficult time adapting to that. They are usually quiet and let their actions speak for themselves.

To think that all natural wolf packs operate in similar ways is wrong. Some wolf packs, by nature, have rigid hierarchies, and the Shadow Lord Kinfolk are among them. The human side of the Lords is not all that has affected the nature of the tribe, and we will not apologize for being different from most other lupus. We are the silent hunters among the tribe. We leave the words and politics to the homids and metis. They are better at it, so why would we even try? Instead, we watch, we listen, and we kill from the shadows.

— Silent Claws, Shadow Lord Ahroun

Silent Striders

The children of Owl are elusive and strange when it comes to relation with lupus Kin. Wolves may travel a great deal, but litters tie them to one location for months,

something that never sets well with any Strider. Lupus Silent Striders always have children with a wolf that is part of a larger pack for the sake of the pups. Females will usually stay only until their children are weaned; males commonly leave before the pups are even born. In their place, they ask spirits to watch over the pack in hopes that one pup might breed true.

The lupus of the Silent Striders all disperse after their first year. It takes the desire to leave the pack behind and strike a new path to fit in with the tribe. The spirit left behind accompanies the dispersing pup that it believes has the greatest chance to be lupus. After joining the tribe, lupus meld in almost effortlessly. The spark for travel already lies within. Silent Striders have similar expectations for their lupus and homid Garou. The lupus are simply messengers to places where homids would be less welcome.

It is strange that lupus of the tribe naturally cling to the desire to travel. Where wolves seek home territory, even Silent Striders who are not purely bred never consider settling down for any longer than necessary. The hardest adaptation is for the female lupus, who yearns to travel but cannot for months if she is to bear pups. Males, in turn, often try to breed yearly if possible. Lupus who still linger near Egypt guard the remaining Kin of the tribe. Many believe that the secret to releasing the curse upon the tribe lies in the spiritual connection that our wolf Kinfolk still have with the land.

— Seer-of-Fire, Silent Strider Theurge

Silver Fangs

After Glass Walkers, Silver Fangs are in the worst shape regarding their lupus Kinfolk. Though the tribe takes utmost care to protect its wolf Kin, their determination to remain pure, to not allow other wolves to mate with their packs, slowly deteriorates the health of their wolves. Disease poses the greatest danger. The lupus Kin of the Silver Fangs are all prone to similar diseases, and the Silver Fangs are so intent on keeping their packs together that, if one gets it, they commonly all get it, and many succumb. To protect their last pure connection to the wolves, they are driving their Kin and lupus towards extinction. Would they be willing to bring fresh blood into the tribe, their Russian homeland has 30,000 wolves that could bolster their numbers, but the tribe's insistence on tradition prevents them making use of that resource.

Lupus born of Silver Fang Kin very rarely go to another tribe unless they are not pure enough for Falcon. Silver Fangs and their spirits keep a close watch on all pups, quickly pulling any who go through their First Change from their packs. Even in the vast expanses of Siberia, the Fangs never allow their lupus Kinfolk to disperse outside of restricted areas, all to keep bloodlines pure. The tribe expects their lupus, in turn, to quickly learn rituals and tradition. They are not allowed to go through their Rites of Passage until

they have an integral understanding of how the tribe works. The lupus quickly grow into their roles of leaders. They bear an uncanny ability to pierce through deliberations to the heart of matters at hand, and the Silver Fangs praise that talent. Many other lupus, however, see Silver Fang lupus as more human than wolf, a problem that plagues those who seek to lead their fellow wolf-born Garou.

It is not that we are more human than wolf; it is that we accept both sides of our existence. Just because lupus are so few does not mean that they should try to emulate the wolf as much as possible. Garou are supposed to be a balanced whole, neither too much wolf nor too much human, and that goes for both breeds. We Silver Fangs expect lupus to learn primarily that they are not wolves. They are Garou. They are Silver Fangs. They lead not only by blood, but by example and merit. Every Silver Fang lupus knows that she must retain her rightful place through power and dedication. Those who would see such leaders fall because they do not like the Silver Fang way are foolhardy at best.

— Falcon's-Vigil, Silver Fang Philodox

Stargazers

Stargazers attract many lupus for their small population. Their creed to adapt, to flow with existence, and to simply accept truth rings solidly with the core of the lupus' being. Stargazers also accept duties for the greater good of the tribe and the Garou Nation, even if they might be considered uncomfortable by their homid brothers and sisters. The desire to find and mate with more lupine Kinfolk, and to not so much quench the Rage within, but to flow with it and channel it into desired results are both concepts that are easy for a lupus to accept. Stargazers do not exalt their lupus brothers and sisters, nor do they condemn them. They do not even see them as different. They simply accept them as the second part to a complete whole, like the dark side of the moon to the homid light. Almost no records exist of the numbers of wolves stretching across Nepal and Tibet, though estimates put the number at 500, enough perhaps for the small numbers of the tribe that remain in their homelands.

But where lupus easily adapt to many aspects of being a Stargazer, they still face difficult hurdles. Lupus find meditation and contemplation hard to comprehend. Wolves seek to understand through physical action and experimentation, not through staring into the sky until she finds the answer within. Where patience may start to come naturally to a lupus after the First Change, it is difficult to completely shake off the notion that time is slipping away and the time to do something is now. Many lupus Stargazers disappear into the Umbra with their packs, striking out on spiritual quests. They not only answer their spiritual calling and bask in the essence of the world, but they can still take action, seeking answers without rather than within.

Why is it so difficult for lupus to let go of the wolf and be human? Why is it so hard for homids to be as wolves? Garou are the greatest aspects of both drawn into one, and we, as lupus, Garou, Stargazer, and living being seek to find that which has been lost, the balance our Mother gave to us upon creation.

The lupus is as integral to the process as the homid. The spirit is as integral as the physical. The lupus seek to become human without losing the wolf, and so we learn meditation and contemplation. If we cannot even balance ourselves, how can we hope to balance existence?

– Sheds-His-Skin, Stargazer Ragabash

Uktena

Uktena are known for treating their lupus Kinfolk as wolves, something that appeals to all packs under their care. They may watch them, but they do not restrict them, even those that live in lower North America. Few Uktena are willing to share just how they manage to keep their Kin from falling into the maw of the Wyrm while still allowing them their freedom. Perhaps they should reconsider, however. Uktena encourage dispersion and sometimes lead dispersing wolves away from their packs to other Uktena territories. The tribe's lupus often take older Kin who disperse as mates, and the nearby Garou will ensure that the pups are cared for, even if no Kinfolk pack is around for the job. Their tribal homelands in the southern United States and Mexico have wolf populations of around 2,000; though the animals are now extinct in Mexico.

Lupus who are born to the Uktena rarely leave the tribe. It is too open to the questions of the lupus and one of the most patient with their breed. At least one lupus mentor is usually available to assist their wolf-brothers and sisters learn the ways of the Garou. Uktena septs often have two den-parents, one lupus and one homid. Each mentor their own breed for better understanding between teacher and student. The tribe will also see to the tutelage of any lupus cub, not just those from their own stock. Lupus appreciate the opportunity to learn at their own pace, to ask questions, and to revel in their innate curiosity.

The Uktena have also been spreading outward into the world, seeking, and hoping for ways to expand the numbers of Garou through mystical means. The Red Talons have learned to breed true with African Wild Dogs. New Kinfolk were created from nothing. While we do not seek to tread upon the territory of the African Talons, we wish to understand how it happened. The red wolf has returned to the Southwest, and while their numbers are few, they are growing. If we could make them Kin, or other wolves for that matter, the potential population for wolf and lupus alike would increase. Gaia would stand a better chance. These are answers the Uktena lupus seeks, answers to how life and spirit work and unite as one.

– Ash-and-Thorn, Uktena Galliard

Wendigo

In stark contrast to their sibling tribe, the Wendigo have only grown more reclusive. They harbor perhaps the greatest number of lupus Kin on their lands, and they do not restrict the movement of the wolf packs or dispersing individuals, but once a wolf has left Wendigo land, they count it as gone unless it returns. Maybe they let them go due to their quiet dedication to the Gaian cause, or maybe it is because they consider those who leave tainted. Still, the wolves they do keep are some of the wildest in the world. The Wendigo do not need to protect all their lupus Kin from hunters, and they have not had to repopulate the lands they protect with foreign wolves. The Uktena are curious about the affect this has on their Kinfolk, but the Wendigo do not share their secrets. The Wendigo have perhaps the largest wolf population of all tribes in their homelands. The northern United States and Canada are home to around 75,000 wolves.

Lupus of the tribe seem to take to their roles with relative ease. They never appear to be out of place and usually bear a confident air. Historically, they have been very territorial; the lupus have stayed in their homelands, and they only ventured out when the need was dire. Oddly, compared to homids, lupus are now more likely to leave their homelands behind and venture into the septs of other Garou. We are thankful for their aid, and the Uktena are happy to see their lupus brothers, but are curious as to their motives.

I will not speak to all the actions of the tribe and why they do what they do. But to be a lupus among the Wendigo is to be tied to the last wild homelands of the wolf. Those who leave do so to protect our homelands from without rather than within. As the Corruptor encroaches on the few remaining pure lands, we have learned that it is best to defend our home from outside the borders. We know that the rest of the Garou Nation needs our assistance, and while hatred dwells deep within the heart of Wendigo, the lupus have an easier time setting it aside for the better of Gaia.

– Northern Lights, Wendigo Theurge

The Sept

Sept work for the Garou like dens work for wolf packs. The denning mother is necessary to the existence of the pack just as the caern is to the sept. It should not be surprising that lupus take especially well to the sept. Where the long speeches, politics, and traditions are human and thus strange, the base concept of the sept is very woken. The center holds everyone together. Where the denning mother and the pups are the center of the pack, the spiritual energy of the caern is the center of the sept.

As with a pack, the sept also holds a place for everyone. Often, roles go unfulfilled due to a lack of Garou. When

such a shortage exists, lupus grow restless to fill the gaps. Whether it be through breeding or scouting out potential Garou, lupus are more than happy to take up roles that homids might find demeaning or dull. Necessity demands action, and no action is too small or too insignificant for a lupus.

The tight ties that lupus have to spirits and their world heavily influence the jobs that they hold within the sept. Obviously, whenever possible, lupus hold the role of Master of the Howl. Few homids or even metis spend enough time in their Lupus forms to master the true craft of howling. While Garou in Crinos can attain great tone and volume, the subtle shifts required for perfected harmonies are lost in the war form. Try singing in Homid and then in Crinos. The same difference exists when howling in Lupus and then in Crinos.

Lupus commonly hold other positions as well, especially those tied to the land or the spirits of the area. The following holds true for most wilderness septs. In the city, the situation is obviously very different, and homids would be more likely to hold some of these roles, especially the Keeper of the Land.

Master of the Howl

The Master of the Howl does not just go to the best voice. Most homids, at least until they experience a real howling session, do not understand everything that a howl means to a wolf or a Garou. The howl can be chilling, uplifting, and sad all at the same time. A howl is a wolf's music. Where homids can pull emotion out of instruments, wolves pour that emotion into their voices.

Lupus septs respect the Master of the Howl more than homid septs. The wolf is charged not only with knowing the howls, but with teaching others how to harmonize. A solitary wolf can start a howl, but it's only when the entire chorus joins in that the full effect is unleashed. Howls are a communal activity that draws a pack, a sept, a tribe together. It is a common belief among the lupus that the secret to the unification of the Garou lies within the howl. The grand Master of the Howl will rise at the Apocalypse, and the war might ride on her capabilities.

In mostly-homid septs, lupus still usually hold the position. Except for Fianna, septs without lupus mistakenly brush the position to the side as a nice, but unnecessary luxury. Lupus strive to prove them wrong. Occasionally, a lupus will settle into a sept just to fill this role until he is satisfied that the sept understands its importance. The Master of the Howl must work harder with homids to teach them the intricacies of the howl. Few positions require so much patience on the part of the wolf-born.

Keeper of the Land

Lupus consider the Keeper of the Land to be the most sacred position within the sept. Their natural ties to the

land and spirit make lupus the best candidates, and they take to their duties with ease. A lupus Keeper spends all her time within the caern or the bawn. When an enemy breaches the bawn, she will be in its last line of defense. She does not stay back because of cowardice, but rather because of necessity. After the Garou destroy the enemy, a talented Keeper is the best Garou to mend the damage. Many spirits flee, and they will only return when they feel it is safe. Keepers who already know the spirits and the land will heal a caern faster than anyone else.

It is no surprise that, as lupus numbers have disappeared, many homid and metis Garou have placed less importance on the Keeper. Some septs don't even have an official Keeper. But any sept with a lupus has at least one, even if not by name. All lupus strive to maintain the delicate balance between the Garou and the spirit. They instinctively know that dedication to the land shows dedication to the spirit. Even in small septs, lupus will go out of their way to do little favors for the spirits, tending the lands as they see fit. No sacred sanctuary is too small.

Den Mother/Father

If possible, most multi-tribe septs strive to have a homid den mother and a lupus den father or vice-versa. Homid den parents are far more common than their lupus counterparts, which allows lupus den parents to focus on lupus cubs, and, occasionally, metis cubs as well. Lupus take quickly to the position, as it is the job of every wolf to help train the young in a pack. They always teach by example, showing cubs what to do rather than just telling. Double standards do not exist for the lupus. Experience might be necessary for the pupil to do it well, but he will only gain it through repetition.

Lupus are better than the other breeds at training lupus cubs, but they are also very talented at training metis cubs. Homids talk too much, which is frustrating even to a metis. Lupus give specific and direct orders. They sometimes lead without even speaking. When a metis steps out of line, the lupus just gives a quick nip or snap to put her back in line, and then it is done. Just as important, lupus are intent on teaching the metis to work with their deformities and not against them. Yes, lupus understand that the deformities of the metis mark the sin that brought them into the world. But the fact is that metis exist, and they are good warriors. Gaia deserves all the warriors we can give her. Better to raise the metis to believe in themselves.

Warder

It is not unusual for an Ahroun lupus to hold the Warder position in a wilderness sept. A few city septs even have lupus Warders. Being a Warder comes almost as naturally to a lupus as being the Keeper of the Land. Ahroun lupus have watched over other wolves for most of their lives. They

have directed forces and held packs together. The greatest Ahroun lupus take their knowledge and expand it from pack to sept by becoming the Warder.

Lupus Warders usually work with a few smaller packs in larger caerns. The packs patrol the bawn of the caern, watching for intruders. They show preference for lupus packs when they can, mostly because lupus travel as wolves and rely on scent and movement more than color. It is oftentimes easier to smell something wrong than it is to see something wrong. The Warder will travel with one of the packs, both monitoring his territory and the pack. Not only will he observe all packs this way, but in times of calm, he will have the packs work together to obtain objectives.

Lupus Warders focus on cooperation more than anything else. Packs must be able to work together over great areas, especially for larger caerns, to be able to ward off threats. He efficiently solves any personality problems that arise; either the Garou submits and lets his problems go or he is not allowed to patrol.

Master of the Rite

The Master of the Rite commonly falls to the highest ranking Theurge, regardless of breed. Lupus Masters are not afraid to meet the spirits on their own terms. Whether it be the form the spirit prefers or which side of the Gauntlet, lupus naturally cave to the desires of the spirits with greater ease and grace than homids. Lupus rarely force spirits to do anything, and in turn, the wild spirit's relationship with lupus is much healthier than that with homids. Spirits are more likely to trust lupus immediately where homids must work to gain their trust. This is not to say that spirits are easier on lupus than they are on homids; in fact, the opposite is commonly true. Where homids have a more challenging time earning the spirit's trust, spirits hold the lupus to higher standards than the homids. Spirits expect the homids to not understand. They expect the homids to fumble about. They also expect the lupus to be close to perfect, to answer faster, and to show more respect immediately. It is an honor to be thought of so highly, but it is also a difficult path.

In the city, however, it is often the other way around. Where lupus still have the tight spiritual connection, city spirits often feel more at ease with humans. Captive-born lupus may better understand humans than their wild-born siblings, but they are still wolves at heart. The spirits of the city sometimes balk at the Wyld within. Any lupus Master in a city sept has a great deal of work on her paws. She is constantly tested to make sure she is "city" enough to deserve the respects of the spirits.

Elder Alpha

The Elder Alpha is the lupus term for the Sept Master. Very few lupus hold this post outside of the Red Talons.

Those who do run septs deep within the wilderness where lupus are just as common, if not more so, as homids. Lupus are fair Elder Alphas, though homids find their ways harsh and abrupt. By the time a lupus is honored enough to be an Elder Alpha, she has lived within the Garou hierarchy for most of her life. Even wild-born Elder Alphas are quick to protect their authority, especially against homids and metis.

Judgments in lupus-run septs come swiftly with little in the way of a trial. They seek spiritual guidance if they cannot come to a decision, and they take the answers given by the spirits as truth. Homids might think that this is dangerous, that the spirits might lie to spite Garou they dislike, but they do not understand the relationship between the spirit and the lupus. It is one built on trust over emotion. Lupus septs are much the same. The caern comes above all. Even if two Garou hate one another, the Elder Alpha expects that they will set their hatred aside at a moment's notice and do whatever they need to fight the Wyrm and protect the caern. Trust within a lupus sept is sacred.

Farewell

Alyssa shifted against the tree behind her with her knees pulled to her chest and her lips pursed in thought.

"That is all I have to say, Seeking-Home," Lore-Seeker said as she lifted back to her feet. The wolves in the clearing flicked their ears towards one another before they started to rise as well.

"Wait, you're just leaving me like that?"

Most of the wolves passed through the trees without deigning to reply. Lore-Seeker watched them go in silence a moment before finally looking back to Alyssa. "We still have our own gathering to hold. Do not misunderstand, Seeking-Home, it is not an insult to you. Time just grows short."

With a small sigh, Alyssa pushed up to her feet and grabbed her bag. "I understand. Thank you for your time. Is there anything else you want me to pass on?"

Lore-Seeker smiled, and Alyssa felt all tension within her ease as she stared into the woman's eyes.

"Tell them," Lore-Seeker finally said, her voice soft, "tell them that we are waiting for them to accept the wolf, not as they see it, but as it really is..."

"Only then will we really be Garou," Alyssa finished.

The brief flash of happiness in Lore-Seeker's gaze was all Alyssa needed. Without a word, the homid turned to walk out without looking back. As an afterthought, she paused just long enough to shift through her forms, finally dropping into her wolf skin. Picking up her bag in her teeth, she trotted through the trees.

Behind her, she heard a single howl rise on the night air before two dozen more voices joined in a sacred chorus.



PAUL SPENCER II

Chapter Four: Closer Than Family

The pack is the heart and soul of the Garou Nation. Forged by bonds thicker than blood, bonds of trial and of totemic power, a pack becomes greater than the sum of the werewolves and the spirit that comprise it. This chapter discusses Garou packs: how they're formed, how they're organized, and how their totems shape them and are in turn shaped by the pack. It covers the territory a pack might claim and how those claims intersect with the local sept's, and finally, it gives W20 players some new tactics and mechanics to give their packs an edge in the war against the Wyrm.

The Soul of the Pack

While Garou elders are fond of pithy sayings like "every pack is as unique as the trees in the forest," the majority of packs have at least a few points of commonality. Outliers certainly exist, but it's worth knowing what most werewolves know as a "normal" pack before examining the exceptions.

Membership

Most packs have at least three members. Few totems will willingly bond with a pair of Garou, and some conservative septs view a two-member pack as an invitation to violate the

Litany, Garou Shall Not Mate With Garou, and two-member packs have a reputation for fostering bonds that are more romantic than comradely. In theory, the upper limit on pack size is anywhere up to fifty werewolves, depending on the territory the pack can claim, but these days it's rare to see a pack with more than ten members; the Garou just don't have the numbers in modern times. Five members is often seen as the ideal size: small enough to stay flexible, but large enough that any pack member in trouble can count on back-up. Many Garou consider five-member packs in which each member embodies a different auspice as especially blessed.

Defining what "membership" means is simpler: a member of a pack is one who has undergone the Rite of the Totem and been accepted by the pack's totem spirit. Some packs treat cliath or new recruits as "probationary" members before they perform the Rite, and a rare few even treat Kinfolk as members in good standing, but most Garou feel that they can't really count on a packmate until they share that bond.

Structure

Garou packs sit at the convergence point between the human impulse for hierarchy and the lupine instinct for a more holistic family group structure. Thus, while nearly

every pack has an zedakh who leads the group and makes decisions, it's a rare pack where the zedakh is an autocrat or an absolute dictator. Most listen to their packmates' advice and heed their expertise, and if a certain problem falls under another pack member's bailiwick it's not uncommon for the zedakh to delegate authority wholesale.

The Litany is very clear on when a pack can and can't challenge its zedakh for leadership: at any time during peace, and not at all during war. The trick of a zedakh declaring a state of perpetual warfare and thus eliminating challenges to her rule is so ancient that no one seriously tries it anymore unless they want to earn some very unflattering nicknames from the local Galliards. On the other hand, with the Apocalypse looming on the horizon "declaring perpetual war" isn't always a naked power grab. Particularly for packs on the forefront of the fight with the Wyrm, sometimes respite is a thing that happens to other people. Sept elders try to watch out for this and rotate packs off the front lines to give them an opportunity for internal reshuffling, but not all packs have the backing of a sept and sometimes pulling warriors out of the fight isn't an option.

In fact, though plenty of zedakhs would never admit this, packs *need* the occasional shift in roles. The constant pressures of leadership can eat away at the strongest, and Garou are no more resistant to post-traumatic stress than anyone else. Plenty of Garou tragedies feature the tale of a zedakh trapped in an endless war, unable to step down and her pack unable to challenge her without violating the Litany. Those tales usually end in one of two ways: a *Charge of the Light Brigade*-style paean to duty over survival, or a *Julius Caesar*-esque horrible crime committed to avert a greater tragedy.

In smaller packs, the hierarchy is limited to "the zedakh" and "everyone else." But just as human groups are compelled to increasingly add titles and positions the larger they get, Garou packs that get above a certain size find their members adopting some additional roles. The most common of these is the uldakh: the zedakh's strong right hand, consigliere, and party whip. A good uldakh keeps his ear out for grievances and concerns, ferrying them back to the zedakh and, in turn, making sure that the pack carries out the zedakh's intentions smoothly and efficiently.

Finally, some packs recognize one member as being the lowest in the pecking order. This "taldakh" isn't the pack's whipping boy or most useless member (though in some packs they're treated that way), but rather the member who needs the most support from his packmates. That might be due to skill set, natural temperament, or simply better suited to a supporting role. While the taldakh may come last when it's time to divide up the spoils of a hunt, he can rely on extra backup from the rest of the pack.

Wolf vs. Werewolf

A Garou pack is not a wolf pack. That much is obvious just by the nature of its members, but the two also have a

TERMINOLOGY

The Garou have their own terms for the roles that emerge in a werewolf pack. While many homids still use the Greek-defined words common in human (mis)understanding of wolves, they frequently have the Garou terms for the positions beaten into them shortly after their First Change.

To the Garou, the pack leader is called *zedakh* (pronounced ZAY-dakh), while their second is the *uldakh* (pronounced OOL-dakh), and the lowest member of the organization is the *taldakh* (pronounced TAL-dakh).

This chapter uses the Garou terms for the three roles.

fundamental psychological difference. Even a pack comprised primarily (or exclusively) of lupus Garou doesn't work the way a real wolf pack does.

A wolf pack is primarily a family unit: inasmuch as it has a "leader," the eldest breeding pair fill that role; they are often the parents of the other pack members. While individuals may squabble, it's rarely over questions of leadership or dominance.

A Garou pack, by contrast, is usually not formed along familial lines, but among relative equals in age and experience. Lacking that parental connection, the Garou pack has no avenue through which to express dominance and deference. Hence the invention of the "zedakh" role and elaborate rules for determining who should claim it. Similar structures evolve among wolves in captivity, when several animals who aren't biologically related are placed in the same enclosure. This is an echo of the Garou pack, with unrelated members forced to work together through instinct.

For more information about wolf packs and how lupus Garou fit into them (and adjust to the more regimented nature of Garou packs), see Chapter Three.

Totem

No matter how long they've fought together, how closely related by blood or ordeal they are, a pack of werewolves without a totem is never anything more than "a group of Garou." The mystical bond between pack and patron is more than a collection of useful abilities, it's the thing that unites the pack members on a soul-deep level. Without a totem, a pack can't use pack tactics, and Gifts and rites that affect "packmates" don't work. While it's acceptable for a young, newly-formed pack to wait until it has a few



missions under its belt before questing after a totem, going too long without taking a totem is seen as a mark of indecisiveness — or worse, disrespect to Gaia.

Picking it Apart

The whole is greater than the sum of its parts. This undercurrent is a mainstay truth throughout the myths and legends of the Garou. Partly, it's the wolf's instinct to stick to pack structures. Partly, it's the need of leadership and hierarchy coded into each Garou's instincts by Gaia, making them warriors who fight together in packs but who know the value of strong leadership.

Auspice

Auspice holds an interesting and powerful role in the Garou Nation; it predefines a young werewolf's role in her pack, in her Tribe, and in her society. No one Auspice bears the responsibility of being "the zedakh Auspice" however, and how a given Auspice tackles the zedakh role breeds a swath of diversity in pack dynamics.

This can also cause dissonance, strife, and grief in cases where a werewolf walks her line too hard. If an zedakh aligns too strongly with her Auspice as she makes leadership choices, her packmates will likely begin to doubt her decision-making and adaptability. After all, leadership is about making choices. Anyone can adhere lock-step with the role Luna chose

for her, but doing so ignores context and nuance. At least on the surface, anyone can make those non-choices. Ask any Garou "What would an Ahroun do here?" and she will probably answer "attack." If that's the best decision-making the zedakh can accomplish, she's not much of an zedakh. In some, more pragmatic packs, this sort of non-decision-making becomes a problem because it limits potential Renown for other Auspices; more packs, however, find themselves in scenarios where the zedakh's rigid thinking leads to dead werewolves and furthers the Wyrm's aims. Lucky packmates have a chance to challenge their zedakh before that happens, but other Garou never get that chance.

Ragabash

Ragabash tend toward subtler, more adaptive forms of leadership than the other Auspices. To an outsider, this can sometimes look lackadaisical or even dishonorable. But the truth is, a Ragabash zedakh is all about awareness, and picking the right battles. This includes battles without and within the pack. Not everything needs to be a struggle. Her astuteness frees up the pack's attention, motivation, and stamina for the fights they cannot avoid. The Ragabash zedakh emphasizes her troops' need to remain at ease whenever possible. Ragabash are sometimes seen as the court jesters of the Garou Nation, and good leadership is a lot like comedy: You must gauge your audience, and timing is everything.

Nathan-Kills-At-Croquet is the Bone Gnawer Ragabash zedakh of an up-and-coming pack from Columbus, Ohio. He runs his pack

like a mastermind executing a heist; he knows his team, he knows their strengths, he knows their weaknesses. He knows that Janie-Leaves-Scars will never back down from a threat from a man who's bigger than her, so even though she's the pack Ahroun, he keeps her on recon when the team goes in against a group of oversized thugs. He knows that Steven-Tilts-At-Windmills is the world's worst Devil's Advocate, and despite his strengths as a Philodox, Nathan will throw him into a brawl before he'll let him debate sept elders. His sense of planning makes the team look as if they could never fail, because he makes sure failure's always off the table. Sometimes the pack hurts for Honor, but as Nathan says, "the pack that lives past Tuesday can earn Honor on Wednesday."

Theurge

Theurge zedakhs tend to look toward holistic answers to their pack's problems. The Theurge can always ask another question, and can always dig one layer deeper. Ineffective Theurge zedakhs look indecisive, or even unjust; after all, if spirits are partially to blame for everything, that denies the slighted their immediate justice. Instead, the effective Theurge zedakh must balance spiritual influences with personal responsibility, and must know when to shut off the inquisition and act. The strongest Theurge leaders instead set powerful examples, and inspire their packmates to look for the deeper meanings, so they needn't bear that burden.

Rumble, a Glass Walker Theurge, takes her role as zedakh of the Edg crushers very seriously. She believes in adherence to tradition, but she also believes it's her pack's duty to make its own tradition to which it should adhere. Her most important law is a simple one: "take no action until we have a contingency plan." She uses this law to drive her pack on proactive missions. If a nest of Banes pops up in a nearby neighborhood, and they don't have a full contingency plan, they must wait. Slam, her Get of Fenris Galliard, often rails against this choice, but the rest of her pack – and indeed her sept – see the wisdom in this choice. Instead of prohibiting important missions, it means the pack members are always busy formulating extensive plans to cover every avenue. Her pack must always think about the spiritual side of an issue.

Philodox

Philodox zedakhs seek balance in all things. They want to hear all sides to the story, and they never accept an answer at face value. This tends to favor some Garou and burden others. Put-upon cliaths can find Philodox packs generally safer than others, as their zedakhs will seek fairness and eschew hazing. On the other hand, more potent Garou who believe that Rank-makes-right often find themselves at odds with a Philodox zedakh's treatment. They believe their past actions give them certain ephemeral authority, and sometimes simple concepts like "truth" don't stand up to Renown. While this is a conflict any honorable Garou can find herself in, Philodox zedakhs bear it more obviously. A wise Philodox leads her pack publicly, communicating

justifications and standing firm in her decisions. She cannot expect other werewolves to trust her if she makes all her deliberations in secret.

Pit Boss presides over the High Rollers as a powerful Shadow Lord zedakh. He's far less patient than other Philodox, and if he can't find an answer to a problem within 24 hours, he comes up with a resolution by rolling dice. He drummed old Suicide King from the pack when the latter used a Gift to break the system, so the rest of the pack knows that his system is balanced. When Joker, Snake Eyes, Full House, and Goin' For Broke run into issues, they know better than to try to hide their guilt. After all, while a liar might get away if she can conceal the truth long enough (and has the Gifts to help), in the High Rollers even the best liar only has a 50% chance of getting off. It's just not worth the risk, so problems come to a head quick, and resolve quicker. If anyone in the pack figures out Pit Boss' dice are often loaded, his time as zedakh might draw short. Then again, it might not; the more traditional Garou believe it's a Philodox's place to judge, not to give a fair shake.

Galliard

Galliard zedakhs are all about starring in their own story and living to tell the tale. In that way, Galliards can sometimes be bolder and more dangerous than Ahroun. After all, Ahroun focus on getting the best results possible; their priority is seizing the victory. Galliard focus on telling the best story, which often means taking a greater risk for greater reward, turning the tables on superior foes, and other similarly dramatic devices. This doesn't mean Galliard zedakhs are less effective on the battlefield, however. This focus on the dramatic, on the powerful, memorable moments emboldens their pack to overcome greater challenges. Conservative, prudent Garou can struggle with a Galliard zedakh, since they aren't used to flashy or boisterous plans, though they rarely complain when it comes time to recognize Renown.

Fronts-When-She's-Dead leads Detroit's Yellow Brick Roadsters. She takes her pack out for some of the most over-the-top missions a young werewolf can imagine. Even more than that, she's known for her parties. Every month, she holds a city-wide get-together where her pack invites the sept to sing its praises; a night that's one-part poetry slam, one-part rap battle, one-part traditional storytelling, and a hell of a lot of cheering and booing. Each member of her pack must tell their stories in this forum for everyone to see. When Two-Birds-With-One-Stone joined the pack, he told Fronts that he was afraid to talk about some of his lesser accomplishments publicly. He told her the greater feats were fine, but he didn't want everyone scrutinizing his day-to-day duties. This, she told him, was the entire point. If it's something you're not completely proud of, if the story's not worth hearing, then it's not worth telling. At first, he protested. After a couple of months, he joined the rest of the Roadsters in bringing his A-game always. For this reason, the Yellow Brick Roadsters' stories are always the best. They keep everyone coming back for more.

Ahroun

Ahroun zedakhs have the reputation of being the least subtle of all zedakhs. While sometimes true, a smart Ahroun focuses on her responsibilities to her pack. She owes them Renown. She owes them victory. Some think Ahroun zedakhs are the first to resort to blows, but any Ahroun worthy of leading a pack knows when and where to hit to make the most impact. All Garou are violent; the Ahroun best understand how to use that violence to best effect. A martial artist and a thug both resolve conflicts through violence, but the martial artist uses fewer, more destructive strikes to reach the same victory. The Ahroun is the martial artist in all things. Hit hard. Hit best. Sometimes, this ruthless efficiency causes dissonance within a pack. After all, wasted energy comes natural to most people. Some Garou take a moment to savor the kill. Some will wait until the problem gets big before making a move. The Ahroun zedakh takes a stand the moment she sees an opening, and strikes brutally. The wise Ahroun zedakh must always demonstrate the importance of when, where, how, and how hard she makes her pack strike.

Breaks-Glass-Ceilings is a Black Fury Ahroun known for leading her blessed pack, The Real Wolves of Wall Street, and for bringing to bear great financial and political resources in the fight against the Wyrm. Some don't assume it of her, but she's Ahroun through and through. She has a knack for finding weak points in established structures and allocating the right forces for a fast and thorough takedown or takeover. Her Glass Walker Philodox, Hannah Pained-Screaming, has a blackmail-powered lockdown on several banking executives, while her other packmates have similar holds on the police department, emergency services, and the local media. With a couple of phone calls, Breaks-Glass can cripple an entire neighborhood, removing the Wyrm's ability to use innocent bystanders as shields, and deflecting public attention to minimize collateral damage. She can turn a city block into a dead zone within an hour, so her pack can swoop in and overwhelm anything festering within.

Tribes

Tribes also add a great deal of depth to the dynamics of the pack. This runs deeper than Auspice, as there are more possible combinations, and more inherent conflicts and history between the tribes. One given Garou can interpret her Auspice's role in an unusual way, and it simply shakes up the pack's expectations. Different interpretations of tribal views and practices could mean different Garou are incapable of sharing a pack with members of other tribes.

Most packs contain a mix of tribes, at least in theory. Many packs feature a majority of one tribe with one or two members who break the tradition, while others form a balance between two tribes. Some packs, especially those made up of younger Garou, have each member from a different tribe, which provides a wide range of insight, and greater potential for conflict.

Majority Packs

The mainstay of most septs, these packs have most of their members from one tribe, even if those from other tribes outnumber them in total. This may not necessarily be a numerical majority; for example, a pack with three Get of Fenris, a Shadow Lord, a Fianna, a Silver Fang, and a Bone Gnawer is still predominantly Fenrir, even if the zedakh is not herself of the Get.

While this type of pack is markedly common, it also has the potential to have the most internal conflicts. After all, one ideology, one way of thinking dominates the political landscape, but is far from universal; and individual interpretations and tiny doctrinal differences can blow up into feuds very quickly. The loudest voice carries furthest among many Garou, so even were the zedakh not of the dominant tribe, the views of the other pack members get swept under the rug. While in a strict sense that's the way democracy often works, that's not a salve to the concerns of the ignored.

In many cases, the fractured minority stews, and lets these problems reach critical mass before exploding outward. Among werewolves, this never ends well, but peer pressure, societal duties, and a sense of futility often inspire silence until it's too late. Smart packs find avenues for encouraging open communication. In some packs, the zedakh makes time to sit and speak with each member individually to try to air concerns. Then again, just hearing about issues doesn't mean anything if he takes no action. It's very easy for him to ignore things that individual packmates raise as they'd be unpopular to the larger group. If one member's issues are elevated to affect the entire pack, the others can easily frame it as favoritism even when it's just a matter of letting a voice be heard.

Sometimes, however, the fractured minority manages to achieve dominance over the majority group. This usually only happens when the minority group includes the pack's zedakh. In these cases, a handful of strong ideas overwhelm a single way of thinking and keep it from ever elevating itself. For the majority members, their tribe almost universally demands they stay with the pack and challenge for leadership. This is partly to ensure the majority tribe aren't forced to dilute their ideals, but is also an issue of pride. The tribe cannot be perceived as condoning its members being forced to heel. This is less a problem – but still an issue – with those tribes used to working with others, like the Bone Gnawers and Children of Gaia. But if three Shadow Lords find themselves under a Silver Fang zedakh and Black Fury uldakh, many among their tribe will won't accept anything short of them challenging for leadership as soon as anyone suggests they're submissive. Worse, some tribes even encourage this sort of tense coupling as a political stunt, to inflame conflicts between tribes.

In Alaska, Shock-Rocker and two other Stargazers, Trusted Uncle, and Loud Mantis, share a pack with Goes-For-The-Throat, a Get of Fenris, and Resting Avalanche, a Wendigo. The three Stargazers' sense of harmony and balance often clashes with the others' Rage. Despite that, both Goes and Avalanche deeply respect their packmates, and know their proven track record for success. Most of the time, they work together seamlessly. However, every single member feels the utmost pressure from outside. Shock-Rocker's expected to "calm the beasts" in his charge. Trusted Uncle's told that Shock-Rocker's leadership must be challenged any time the others try to sway pack action "toward imbalance." Mantis is told she needs to set an example for the less disciplined, warlike Garou by always taking the high road. On the other side, Goes-For-The-Throat's tribal elders believe she's just waiting for the right time to strike and dominate the group. Every time she meets with them, they ask, "When are you going to take zedakh?" So far, she's managed to make an aggressive joke and changes the topic. Resting Avalanche's tribe pulls him in both directions, telling him he needs to bring the pack in to serve the Wendigo's greater causes, and that he needs to spend less time with the pack, more with tribal concerns. Fortunately, they have each other to help stand against their tribes, though that may not last...

Balanced

Balanced packs consist of werewolves each of different tribes. These packs are classically considered to be the most reasoned and versatile. Also, if you ask most Garou outside tribal pressures, they'll tell you a balanced pack is probably closest to what Gaia would want. The needs of tribal politics and of old-fashioned werewolves who long for the days when the tribes didn't need to mix so much have made balanced packs rare historically, though increasingly young werewolves see no need to hold with history.

A balanced pack is a breeding ground for ideological conflicts between the different tribes. The class differences between Glass Walkers and Bone Gnawers flare up even more when both are already on edge against the Silver Fang who spends her time claiming her superiority over both. These conflicts mean that arguments between packmates frequently tip over into fights and challenges; but the pack's Rage remains boiling, making them very effective in the war against the Wyrm.

After all, a balanced pack means a pack that has a diversity of approaches, philosophies, and tactics, providing more flexibility than other packs. The other hand holds true, however. Balanced packs can quickly run into a "too many cooks" situation, where each packmate must battle for acknowledgment. With a level-headed zedakh and a strong structure, the pack can flourish, but others quickly fall to infighting.

Sarah Kinsey is a Silver Fang among Silver Fangs. She, a Philodox, believes her tribe to be the true heirs to the throne of the Garou Nation. Where some of her tribemates reject a multicultural approach, and prefer to look only within for answers, she believes that a balanced pack with a Silver Fang at the head is the only valid

answer to what ails Gaia. She has gathered a pack with Aquinas, a Shadow Lord Theurge as her uldakh (as Gaia intended it), Tara Storm, a Child of Gaia Ragabash, Monica Vale, a Silent Strider Ahroun, and Runs-With-Scissors, a Bone Gnawer Ahroun. They initially feuded and protested Sarah's self-important rhetoric, but quickly found that if the others smiled, nodded, and ignored her more long-winded speeches they could work as an efficient unit. Now, they're a well-oiled machine, and a happy family. They let Sarah think she's unilaterally in charge, and so long as they keep patting her on the back, they can do the work they need to do without interruption. Sure, she takes credit for most of their successes, but they know the score. It's like any other pack with a strong "power behind the throne" presence, except in this case, the power behind the throne isn't just the uldakh; it's the whole of the pack.

Single Tribe

Mono-Tribe packs are exceedingly rare outside of tribal homelands. In the Nunavut territory, pure Wendigo packs are the rule, as the tribe treats all other werewolves in the region as outsiders. Mono-tribe packs have most of the same benefits and drawbacks of their respective tribes; they tend toward relative philosophical and ideological agreement, but they suffer from myopia and bravado since they have the least spread of philosophies. Each tribe has long-established enemies, feuds, and territories, so members can communicate their priorities quickly and effortlessly. These long-standing ideas can be mono-tribe packs' greatest downfall. Most tribes will turn a blind eye toward issues outside their normal wheelhouses. While packs are more capable of recognizing other threats, concerns, and challenges, they know their tribes won't recognize deviation from expectations. This strictness can be downright dangerous, as threats amass due to their status as "less preferred targets." Worse, minor differences in how each packmate interprets their tribe's legends and doctrine can cause major problems, blowing up into arguments and violence over a difference that other Garou would not even notice.

The Iron Pride, a young Get of Fenris pack, is currently "on tour," traveling all over the world, tasked by their tribe's elders to learn, and integrate with werewolves, and even the Fera, bringing their gathered wisdom back to the Black Forest. The elders believe that the Get must last until the final battle, and their current methods just won't cut it. If they keep down the same trajectory, they'll suffer the same fate as the White Howlers. Markus-Shatters-Expectations, a Philodox, leads the pack. They travel from sept to sept, mostly spending their time offering their services to build trust and goodwill. When a pack of Fenrir knocks at the door and offer to help with your battles, few septs will say no, though their offer is met with suspicion as often as open arms. His three packmates, Helga-Bonebreaker and Erik-The-Ice-Giant, both Ahroun, and the Galliard Antje-Howls-Beyond-Death do their best to represent the tribe in a more modern, reasonable light. They present themselves as having things to teach, and more things to learn. Though only time will tell whether their tribe will listen to what the pack has to tell them.

Unique Threads

Some packs differ from the majority in substantially diverse ways; these are the variables which shake up what werewolves think of as a pack. While they defy the instinct towards pack structure that comes from being Garou, they nonetheless fit into a place that their members consider “pack enough.” Pack structures are ultimately not universal constants, any more than families are. Some people think of a family with two fathers and two mothers to be out of the ordinary, but that makes it no less a family. Neither does dysfunction define a group as “not a family.”

Temporary Packs

When a group of individual Garou come together to deal with a specific task, they may bond as a temporary pack. This is exceedingly common during war. These hyper-focused packs benefit from a mission-oriented existence; they don’t have to deal with wide-ranging, long-term concerns, they can put all their organizational effort toward getting the job done. While this doesn’t breed the strong familial relationships of a long-term pack, task-oriented packs tend to get along well and forge fast bonds because of their shared specializations. Ahroun especially find wartime packs refreshing, since everyone’s on the same page as them.

In some temporary packs, individual identity becomes just as temporary as the pack at large. Members adopt specific deed names that begin and end with the pack’s stated task. This offers the members a bit more solidarity, and helps distance them from outside concerns. In some cases, a temporary pack forms such a strong bond that they cannot bring themselves to disassemble after their mission is over. They form what is essentially a new pack, needing to find a new totem since the original spirit only agreed to sponsor the pack for a limited time.

Temporary packs aren’t just a function of wartime, though. Often, Garou on pilgrimage will join or band with temporary packs, if only to stave off Harano. Silent Striders and Stargazers are the most familiar with short-term packs; some members of both tribes only join temporary packs, never settling down throughout their lives. These werewolves teach their tribemates to follow the same path, and to avoid settling down or getting too connected to one group of Garou. To the Silent Striders, temporary alliances are a means to an end, and should not risk the greater journey; though if their allies are willing to join the journey, most Silent Striders see no problem with making the pack permanent. To the Stargazers, however, temporary packs form a lesson to be learned, and staying with the pack sullies the purity of the lesson.

Tiernan is a Fianna Galliard who stumbled on an odd story of an ancient pack who crafted a series of fetishes that, when combined, can turn Kinfolk – or even normal humans – into Garou.

Interested in the implications, and faced with a community struggling with population issues, she formed a pack with the sole purpose of uncovering these fetishes from all over the world. She recruited an Uktena Theurge to help with her quest, a Silent Strider Philodox, and a Shadow Lord Ragabash. For the duration of their quest, each has taken the mythical names of one of the four artifacts. She’s Ceann, her Uktena uldkakh is Com, the Shadow Lord is Cas, and the Silent Strider is Lamh. They have leads on each artifact and are confident their quest will end eventually, but they’re prepared for a very long scavenger hunt.

Large Packs

Any pack with more than about ten members doesn’t usually last long. This isn’t to say that they break apart, but they almost always become septs, as parts of the pack group together for specific purposes. The Bone Gnawers and Children of Gaia both take radically inclusive approaches to pack composition, so they’re highly prone to heavy adoption, and dramatically increasing pack size. This approach also makes them also prone to fracturing, or growing into full septs.

Most people think of packs as containing three to six Garou, but larger packs do exist, and some last a very long time, even across generations. Not having the same degree of tight focus as smaller packs boast is both beneficial and detrimental. A small pack can fit in a single room, and every member can hear the zedakh’s voice directly. Larger packs must rely heavily on delegation, and trust. Not only are larger packs not prone to the same level of iron fistedness or micromanagement a smaller pack can have, it’s all but impossible. An effective large-scale zedakh must think like a sept zedakh or tribal zedakh, but with her own unique considerations. She not only has to lead by example, she should find and elevate others within the pack to do the same, without alienating other packmates. She must manage sub-factions without incentivizing their breaking apart into their own packs. This generally means fostering highly-specialized sub-groups that couldn’t serve well as independent packs. For example, an zedakh might heavily encourage the pack’s Theurges to form a “spiritual caucus,” giving them too narrow a focus for a full-blown pack while encouraging their independence. Finally, a large-scale zedakh must listen to advice from her packmates, as she can’t have eyes and ears everywhere.

On the other side of that equation, a smart zedakh knows when to allow the pack to split and let its component parts go their own ways. Not only does this make her job easier, but if she fosters a strong pack with a strong zedakh whom she mentored, then she’ll have a great ally in the new pack without needing to take responsibility for them.

Maria Caridad Flores is the zedakh of the Lost Children in Mexico City. They currently number twenty-three members, but this number changes frequently as they allow members to come and go

as they see fit, and often take in transients, Ronin, and whomever else is in need. Her uldakh, Miguel-Eats-Knives, is a young but very bold Bone Gnawer Ahroun. She's currently teaching him and trying to encourage him to take the more militant members of the pack into their own satellite pack, perhaps as the first step towards making the Lost Children a full sept. While she cannot deny the value of Miguel and the others' combative capabilities, she wants the Lost Children to stand as a testament to the value of nonviolence. Miguel's becoming his own zedakh would give her their strength, while letting the Lost Children stand as a purer symbol of her ideal. Also, it would allow Miguel and his compatriots to get their hands dirty without Maria being directly accountable. After all, what she doesn't know won't upset her idealism.

Tutelary Packs

Often temporary and large at the same time, tutelary packs are far from a regular occurrence, and only exist in places with a very strong, very active sept. When cubs enter the sept, they join a tutelary pack to get used to the pack instinct and hierarchy before their Rite of Passage. They learn from one or more experienced Garou, until such a time they're ready to step out on their own. This is particularly common in places with many "orphans," particularly in areas torn by war, in places where the tribes have been devastated, leaving Kinfolk with children lacking mentors and safeguards.

Many tribes see this sort of pack as coddling, raising spoiled, weak cubs. Then again, when a sept doesn't have enough Ga-

rou to train new cubs in addition to their other duties, these complaints are in passing; immediate, overwhelming need supersedes argument. Someone must take care of the young and make sure they're ready to face the Apocalypse. Active packs have their hands full, so a tutelage pack is a temporary bandage slapped on to fix one particular wound.

Thomas-Lives-Nowhere is a Child of Gaia Ragabash who leads an unnamed tutelage pack out of Columbus, Ohio. His sept stands in a strong, centralized location for travelers and runaways. He takes on young and unwanted werewolves, teaching them and helping them become productive Garou. He has one rule: a member cannot remain in his pack for more than six months. After that, they must go through the Rite of Passage or move on. His tutelage is particularly informal; he mostly spends evenings in the bawn, telling stories around a bonfire. Some of the sept call him "Doubting Thomas" because he prefers to tell stories where the Garou (and in particular, himself) have failed. He tries to get in close with every new member, he knows they come at vulnerable times and he must work to be their first new friend. If he can't do that, he instead tries to give the newcomer perspective on her new role. He's traveled the world, and met many of the other Changing Breeds – even leaving some on good terms – so the cubs who leave his pack have a relatively broad education.

Shifting Zedakhs

Some packs change zedakh depending on the task at hand; while not the rule, this is a particularly common



phenomenon in blessed packs (see below). In this type of pack, the zedakh role shifts to meet immediate needs. When dealing with spiritual issues, the resident Theurge takes the helm, while the Philodox is in charge for times of mediation and judgment and the Ahroun leads the pack in battle. Theoretically, this is an ideal situation for the Garou Nation: the pack has an expert in every major field, and the best takes charge under her own specialty. Things are never so simple, of course. Some situations emerge where two or more pack members could take charge. For example, an Ahroun might argue that the pack is at war more often than not, so he should have disproportionate amounts of leadership time. Garou are always at war with the Wyrm, are they not? Even with an optimistic outlook, dangerous forces press down on the Garou from all sides, so her argument isn't entirely without merit. Some packs push back too hard against this tendency, focusing too much on giving each potential zedakh equal time in charge. In these cases, egalitarianism can get in the way of efficient problem solving. On the other hand, it can also lead to creative solutions that other packs wouldn't come up with.

Rockinroll – a Bone Gnawer Galliard – found and established his pack, the Ruffest. He knew what he wanted, and what he wanted was the best and most varied stories the Garou Nation had to tell. So, he found diversity to support that need. He recruited Howls-For-The-Allthing, a Get of Fenris Ahroun. Then he found The-Middle-Ground-At-The-Top-Of-The-Mountain, a Black Fury Philodox. He brought in An-Inconvenient-Truth, a Child of Gaia Theurge. Then lastly, Hacks-The-Planet, a Glass Walker Ragabash, rounded out the group. He knew the five would butt heads; this just meant better drama, and more intense stories on the back end. Every pack discussion is a game of king of the mountain, and they wouldn't have it any other way. As a group, their only collective philosophical touchstone is a sort of Social Darwinism for pack dynamics. They believe that argument with passion and fervor, met with logic and tactical thinking, will guarantee the pack's best ideas will always float to the top. The frightening part is how effective they've been. In their two years, they've all risen twice or more in rank. Their pack's well-known to everyone in the Los Angeles metropolitan area, and many outside. Skeptics assume the honeymoon will end right around the time one member tears out another's throat, but for now, they're riding high.

Strange Hierarchies

When most Garou think of packs, they think of a group of werewolves serving under an zedakh and uldakh, perhaps with an taldakh to challenge the others, all bound together by the spiritual blessing of a totem. The zedakh leads, the others respect that leadership. This is not how all packs work, however. Many packs very in basic structure and expectations. Some Garou might consider different groupings odd, particularly traditionalists from certain tribes, but a pack is a pack, and werewolves respect the need to

be in a pack at an instinctive level. Some of the moralizing against nontraditional packs comes from a "kids these days" mentality, even though stories date back thousands of years about different packs with unique or nonstandard dynamics.

Wolves in Human Clothing

Usually, the zedakh acts as sole executive in the pack. She makes a declaration, and the pack follows, or challenges, if they think she's wrong. In some packs, however, all the major decisions are left to simple democracy. One Garou, one vote.

In less extreme examples, such packs still have an zedakh for breaking ties and organizing votes, as well as making split-second decisions when security is on the line. These packs tend to swing one way or another in time, though. Either the zedakh will fall out of favor, or voting becomes nothing more than a formality. Some argue that the latter is simply Garou nature asserting itself; the instinct to lead or to follow is inherent in being a werewolf. Enough packs successfully buck that trend to call this instinct into question. How much of the instinctive structure is just tradition and social pressure? Traditionalists argue that democratic packs still have zedakhs, if not in name. Individuals dominate popular opinion, and some Garou are predisposed to go along with the majority. But following the same logic, humans only play at democracy, and truly seek tyranny. Such a fact is obvious to some Shadow Lords and Silver Fangs, however most Garou recognize that maybe people – and by extension werewolves – are more complicated than any generalization can express. If following zedakhs is instinct, from where does it come? It's not any more an inherent trait in lupus werewolves; after all, wolf packs don't follow such rigid "zedakh" structures outside of captivity.

Most democratic packs work through simple majority, with every member having a single vote. This comes with all the normal concerns of a democracy. What should be up to vote, and what shouldn't be? What about the under-represented, the effectively silenced members of the group? Some democratic packs attempt to address these issues. They frequently adopt a series of basic rules, things which members can and cannot vote on, or things that require more than simple majority. A common rule is that members cannot be exiled or killed without unanimous vote by all other packmates. Allowing new members to join the pack also typically requires unanimous vote, or close to it. Other democratic packs delegate all but the most important decisions, like a pack with shifting zedakhs. One such pack might decide that the resident Theurge has purview over most spiritual decisions, bringing only the most serious to a vote. If she makes a series of bad choices, however, the pack can vote to remove her authority.

One problem with democratic packs is that they're a ripe orchard for those Garou who want power without

the attendant responsibility. In a pack with five Garou, a would-be “zedakh” only needs to convince two members to consistently vote with him, and he’s functionally in charge. When he makes a wrong decision, he can blame the vote, shifting responsibility to all the pack members rather than owning the issue himself. This all comes back to the question of instinct: Are those on his side simply following an instinctual imperative? Nobody can say for sure.

Blessed Packs

A blessed pack features one representative of each Auspice. A blessed pack stands five strong, and is called blessed because, at least in theory, they’re prepared to handle all the major problems that face the Garou Nation. Particularly if coupled with five tribes, the pack has a broad range of Gifts and tribal lore that other packs lack. But a blessed pack is no more ideal than any other.

In a blessed pack, one member is always under her Auspice moon. The pack has no breathing room, no calm time. But is this part of the “blessing,” bringing with it balance? If one member is always under her Auspice moon, that means that only one fifth — never more, never less — under Luna’s influence. While it means the pack is a little unstable, it’s a manageable, consistent instability that gives the pack an edge all its own. As the Apocalypse cracks over the horizon, a good pack wants every slight edge it can get.

Blessed packs boast the most common occurrences of shifting zedakh leadership. This makes sense, as they have all major bases covered, but this comes with its own complications. Auspice alone does not confer experience or leadership ability. Where most packs learn to work together fluidly, a blessed pack suffers based on its greatest member. The best among them sets the bar high for the others, based on her accomplishments, her experience, and her leadership. The other packmates always fall a little short. This is a problem when blessed packs are often held up as the “rock stars” of their sept. Elders direct cubs to look to them as role models. Any member of a blessed pack had better hold tight to the Litany, lest their minor infractions snowball into major scandals.

This pressure doesn’t just come from werewolves. Many times, spirits will outright refuse to impart Gifts and Rites to members of a blessed pack that would be outside of his Auspice role. After all, the pack already has a specialist, why should a lesser member waste time and energy on overlapping skills.

Los Angeles’s Crenshaw All-Stars stands as a contrast to LA’s other well-known blessed pack, The Ruffest. They exist as an example, as paragons. They hold their territory, uphold the Litany, and embody Los Angeles’s diversity when it works at its best. Celeste Runs-At-Moonlight stands as zedakh, a Philodox Silver Fang. She sometimes hands the reins to her partners, but she believes having a firm zedakh is an important traditional aspect to communicate

to the young. The city recognizes her Shadow Lord Ahroun uldakh, Andre Rolls-Hard, as the most accomplished full moon for miles. The other three members, Linh Tears-It-Up, a Bone Gnawer Galliard, Junkyard, a Red Talon Theurge, and Javier The Electric Fence, a Glass Walker Ragabash are all rather young. While held to exacting standards, they don’t get the same amount of attention as Celeste and Andre, so as long as they remain respectful and effective, they’ll ride powerful coattails to massive Renown.

The Ruffest refuse to call them the Crenshaw All-Stars. They call the pack “Celeste’s After-School Special.”

Anonymous Leadership

Throughout history, a handful of packs have led by random, anonymous leadership. It’s luck-of-the-draw, and whomever gets the gig takes charge and redefines the pack. Most werewolves think that picking an zedakh at random is reckless, and it’s a highly unpopular way to run a pack, but Garou believe in fate, destiny, and the righteousness of their role. These packs, lead as much by chance as their individual members, are often highly effective. When they work, they’re very popular. When they fail, they’re object lessons in why the traditional pack structure is best. Accepting random chance does require members to devour their own egos, but in the end, that’s a boon for the pack. Each packmate also needs to trust the others implicitly, since any of them can be in charge at any given time. Of course, some members chafe at the pack’s nature, either because they don’t feel fit to lead, or because they feel the need to challenge a weak zedakh.

In almost every example of an anonymous leadership pack, members establish traditions for selecting leaders, including both how to choose and how frequently the role changes. Most keep to regular intervals, such as every season or every year. Others use tasks to determine leadership intervals, choosing a new zedakh for each mission. Rarely, an anonymous pack struggles with unfair play to influence the results; an unscrupulous Bone Gnawer using loaded dice or dealing from the bottom of the pack. At the same time, unless the zedakh is going to be in position for a long time, it’s often not worth the effort.

On the downside, this temporary leadership can breed resentment and even nihilism, with a sense that the individual werewolves within the pack don’t matter. No one member can focus on honing leadership skills, since they might not matter at the crucial moment. When a good leader emerges, the pack can’t rally the way they might otherwise, since they know it’s not to last.

One pack out of Monaco, the Chevaliers, crafted a die out of the bones of its first zedakh. This sealed in the number of pack members to six, and gave an inherent method for determining leadership. The pack chooses an enemy to take down, then rolls the dice. Whomever gets the lucky number leads the pack to topple that prey. Then, the pack decides again, and the whole thing starts



over. In a couple of cases where the enemy fled or the zedakh took too long – more than about six months – the pack chooses again. Every time a zedakh had to step down for these reasons, he stepped down willingly. Keeping the throne just means further disgrace due to a lack of performance.

Enablers and Abusers

Packs are families. Families are by no definition required to be functional. Packs are much the same. To say that Garou have tempers would be a massive understatement, and in many cases packs enable and even foster that Rage. The traditional path to seizing and holding a zedakh role requires aggression, and often (though not always) violence. While Garou society views violence differently than humankind, that doesn't change the feeling of a loved one's boot in your face, her claws in your stomach. All the Litany and totems in the world won't make you forget that feeling when she's bleeding out and needs your help.

Abuse trickles down. From tribe, to lodge, to sept, to pack, pressure in the Garou Nation remains both constant and intense. Without time to make better judgments, or without the leeway to make mistakes, some Garou believe that they must take a firm hand. Others associate authority with harsh punishments. Sometimes they're not wrong, but their methods create tension. How many thousands of Garou have used the same excuses for harmful behavior?

"Abusive pack" isn't really a model of pack, or a variation on form. That's what makes it such an insidious phenomenon. Literally any type of pack could be abusive. It's also not just zedakhs; any member of any pack can adopt the role of abuser, in any direction. In some packs, a forceful uldakh can coerce an zedakh into things he doesn't want to do, or an taldakh uses his position to goad the others while appearing to be on the bottom of the pecking order. Pressure mounts rapidly in werewolf packs since pack members hold one another's lives in their hands. Victims of intra-pack abuse often stay silent, so as not to rock the boat.

Silence is especially common when the abuser is the pack's zedakh. After all, the Litany expects Garou to honor their betters, and an accusation of abuse can be perceived as the utmost disrespect. That's even if the victim believes anyone will listen. There's a fine, sometimes even nonexistent line between behaviors perceived as those of a "good zedakh" and abuse, and some tribes exalt those who jump right over the line. Shadow Lords, Wendigo, and the Get of Fenris all praise leadership styles that crush their pack-mates, turning them into instruments for the zedakh. It's a very fine line between an zedakh putting one of her pack members in his place, and abusing and demoralizing that werewolf until she submits.

Often, other werewolves refuse to believe a pack is abusive. After all, if the zedakh were that bad, then the victim

could challenge her and take charge, reversing the situation. That's the honorable solution, the way the Litany intended. But even if the victim is stronger or more powerful, the abuser convinces him that he is *not*, that any attempt to fix the situation is only going to make things worse.

This problem exists in wider werewolf society. Kinfolk have some of the worst chances when they're the victims of abuse. At least when Garou turn on other Garou, the victim could lose control and succumb to frenzy. When Garou abuse Kinfolk, they're essentially invulnerable. Even a silver knife when the werewolf is asleep isn't a guaranteed solution, and the repercussions to a Kinfolk who kills her abuser are swift and bloody. His pack, his sept, and his tribe aren't likely to take kindly to that murder.

The differences between breeds plays into the normalization of abuse among Garou packs. Behaviors common to homids might be abusive to their counterparts. Should homid Garou treat lupus cubs the same way they treat other homids? That's a complicated issue, and one every pack must deal with. Special treatment makes the young stand out from their peers, which could cause bullying and alienation. But then again, most teenage humans will not take kindly to the way lupus treat their young.

With all this in mind, how does an abusive pack survive? Simple: the same way they survive all the other trials, tribulations, and punishments the world has to offer. They face it together, for better or for worse — usually worse. That togetherness is both boon and bane to the Garou Nation. It forces the Garou to watch out for each other, and to fight against the common enemy, but it also makes them ignore the enemy within.

Asheigh-Come-Lately is a Fianna Ragabash. Asheigh-Come-Lately looks older than his 23 years would suggest. Asheigh-Come-Lately is a fostern. Asheigh-Come-Lately is a servant of Wild Boar. Asheigh-Come-Lately is a victim. He struggled for the zedakh position with Merida-Calls-The-Thunder; she won and won't let him forget it. She made him the pack's taldakh, and ridicules him during moots. She makes it clear that he's welcome to leave, but tells him that no other respectable pack would have him. She says that he should be grateful she allows him to stay, since it's the only place that would have him.

He's approached his tribal elders for advice on a few occasions, but they can't offer anything more than "If she's a problem, challenge her. Might makes right, and if you can't win, you're not right." He had a chance to talk to his sept's Truthkeeper, and brought a list of grievances, and asked what he could do, short of a direct challenge to Merida's authority, which he knows he can't win. The Truthkeeper's response was simple:

"If you still have claws, you can still fight the Wyrm. If you die a glorious death, they'll sing about you forever. Then she can't make fun of you anymore."

He found the advice lacking.

ABUSE IN PLAY DOESN'T MEAN ABUSIVE PLAY

Abuse is a delicate topic, and one of the quickest ways to derail a good game. It deserves a bit of specific attention.

First and foremost, *Werewolf: The Apocalypse* isn't a game about abuse. It's a game about tragic heroes fighting a war they cannot win. It's about giving a damn, putting your foot down, and not accepting "that's just the way it is" as an answer. When stories feature abuse, it becomes harder to pay attention to other topics. While many groups will be fine with the struggles for dominance and the social and physical abuse that is natural for Garou, some players don't want that level of negativity — or even that level of seriousness — in their games. The Storyteller must make sure everyone is on the same page.

Also, abuse is a real-world issue that a lot of real people face. While people in the developed world do worry about corporate conspiracies destroying their homelands, kidnapping people, and poisoning their water supplies, those conspiracies aren't sending out literal monsters to do their dirty work. In the real world, lobbyists are far more useful. Nobody at your table has lost a loved one to a fomori infestation. There's a good chance that someone at your table has suffered abuse, and isn't interested in reliving that in a game.

If you're interested in dealing with abuse in your games, bring it up beforehand. Communicate. Don't say, "I want to," instead ask if everyone is interested in trying these themes. If they're not, don't press the issue. Always favor fun for everyone.

Generational Packs

Most werewolf packs do not outlast their initial members. If they do not die in battle, they split up, join other packs, or succumb to Harano. The generational pack stands in defiance to that expectation; the pack brings in new cliaths and converts, and they develop their own internal traditions. A generational pack looks more like a fraternity than it looks like an average pack. Some packs start out as generational, while others become generational out of necessity.

Many packs have agendas that require a shifting, generational dynamic. For example, any time a pack intends on

bringing in orphans, transients, or cubs, that lends itself to a generational model. Some packs simply have a goal or mission that's beyond its membership. Often, packs will form to guard hellholes that could cause greater problems if left unchecked. These pits won't close, so the mission can't end when the pack dies. In some of these cases, the pack will appoint one member responsible with perpetuating their legacy. When the pack goes on particularly dangerous missions, this member must stay behind to recruit new members if things go south.

Other packs adopt the generational model after a great battle or tragedy. The survivors scramble to find new blood to perpetuate the pack. Sometimes it ends up like a band that lasts 35 years, with only one member from the original lineup. They might continue to churn out hits. They might fade into obscurity. It all hinges on how well that one founding member can bring back the old magic, or create new magic. For the newcomers, this is always an uphill battle; it's impossible to avoid comparisons to past members.

A unique problem that generational packs face is totem relationships. Most packs unify under a totem, and it's a done deal. They may have to induct a member or two over the years, but by and large, the totem makes an initial decision and unless members violate its ban too often, things remain uncomplicated. A new member should first understand her new potential totem, then she must impress the totem and show her worth. She must demonstrate her willingness to adhere to its ban.

Jade knew the border between Indonesia and Papua New Guinea needed someone to stand up. Its former guard, a pack called The Birds of Paradise, vanished about fifteen years ago, leaving emanations of both Wyld and Wyrm unchecked. Jade was the only member of the Birds remaining, so she decided to resurrect the pack. She put out a call to her fellow Bone Gnawers, and those outside connections she maintained. She asked for the best she could get, the brightest, and those in need of a pack. She offered aggressive, eager mentorship. She offered glory. Over the next couple of years, she had nine recruits of various ranks and origins. She'd continue to get the occasional pilgrim. Her first lesson to the nascent pack was, "The pack is bigger than me. It must outlive me. It must persist and march on." Within five years, Jade fell in battle. However, the Birds of Paradise still stand a dozen strong, with none of its original members.

Anarchist Packs

Anarchist packs — that is, packs without zedakhs — are another case of something that seems like a relatively modern advent, but has in fact occurred numerous times throughout history. Without an zedakh or other figurehead, however, most anarchist packs fail to gain the same level of recognition and historical reference as other types of pack.

Packs make the choice to go without an zedakh for any number of reasons. The rarest among them is pure

philosophy: while a Garou's pack instinct is flexible, it's very rare to find a group that all believe they do not need leaders. Most of those types would instead end up with an anonymous leadership model. The most common is that an existing pack's zedakh dies, and the pack simply decides that nobody could replace her, and that the pack's best chance for success is to not try. In these cases, the pack usually becomes an informal shifting zedakhs situation; each member leads as the pack needs, depending on their particular area of expertise. Unlike other packs with shifting zedakhs, or who work as democracies, many anarchist packs don't set out to be without a zedakh.

Most zedakhless packs work relatively well. They have to; maintaining their status as zedakh-free requires members to make a stand and oppose any effort to upset that balance. Werewolves never hear about the packs that failed in their efforts to stop a prospective zedakh from taking over, because then the pack went "back to normal." Ironically, these packs often have challenges that look very much like challenges for an zedakh position, because the members have to rise to the occasion and block attempts at seizing control.

Often, the degree of freedom and autonomy afforded by these packs is their biggest benefit and drawback. Decision-making can be difficult, even more difficult than in a democratic pack. After all, democratic packs only need majority, and likeminded individuals tend to cluster. In an anarchic pack, one straggler can mean the rest of the pack can't make a decision. Then again, in an anarchic pack, the rest of the pack can just go off and do whatever they've decided, leaving the straggler behind. In most cases, the holdout will follow along, grudgingly. In others, he will tackle the problem his own way.

Anarchist packs are among the biggest exercises in trust the Garou can commit, short of allowing one of the Changing Breeds into their midst. Without leadership, every pack member must trust every other pack member will at least nominally do the right thing. This does breed accountability, however, since making strong, selfless decisions encourages others to make similar decisions when in need. These kinds of packs rely heavily on enlightened self-interest. The one drawback here is that many Garou make poor choices not because they're selfish, per se, but because they believe in heroic sacrifice.

The Tanner Family is an anarchic pack, because their practices aren't palatable to the average Garou and leadership would make their whole dynamic fall apart. The pack formally consists of four werewolves in rural Colorado, all Fianna. Greg, Ted, Mary, and Oaklyn each carry many of the pack responsibilities. They differ, however, in that six adult Kinfolk are members of the pack, and those Kinfolk carry equal weight in pack decisions. The family is an extended web of a romantic relationship. Each member has at least two regular partners within the pack, most more. The house has twelve children currently, and members are each expected to

care for, teach, and nurture the young equally as if they were their own. The pack grew out of a darker situation; they formerly had an zedakh, Father Kyson. He abused his family, and kept them under heel. At one point, he killed three of the Kinfolk in a mad rampage. The other Garou couldn't stand by, so they stood up and collectively put him down. They knew their tribal leaders wouldn't condone their behavior against an esteemed elder, so they instead chose to withdraw and live by their own rules. For the past eleven years, they've done well for themselves.

Territory & Community

Garou are territorial creatures at heart; it's at once the source of much of their strength and the cause of many of their woes. Territory gives a pack something to fight for: a pack defending its home turf fights harder because it's defending something its members care deeply about. It gives the pack, too often torn between two worlds, a place to identify with and belong to.

On the other hand, territory — more accurately, the urge to claim the best of it, to grow and improve what is yours — has been the cause of more wars than even the greatest Galliards can recall. For all that the Garou Nation's ages-long struggle against the Wyrm has diminished its numbers, the amount of unspoiled territory in the world

has shrunk similarly. The front lines of the struggle against Weaver and Wyrm, that is, the most interesting places to set a chronicle, often do not have enough territory to adequately support all the Garou living in the area. This leads to inter-pack (and even inter-sept) conflict, and sometimes open warfare over who will control caerns or other sacred spaces.

Moving In

While sometimes packs announce their claim to a stretch of territory formally, at a sept gathering or the like, more often they just move in and start treating the territory as theirs. They patrol its boundaries for threats, hunt its grounds, and start cleaning up poisonous places in its Umbral reflection. The pack might mark the boundary with glyphs carved into trees or telephone poles, and packs with wilderness territories (or even just many lupus members) might spray scent markers. That's just the pragmatic element though. The Garou Nation recognizes several legal claims for seizing territory, and similarly recognizes certain conditions by which a pack's claim is rendered invalid.

Claiming Land

- **Right of Discovery:** All too rare today, the Right of Discovery simply means the pack expands into territory unclaimed by other Garou. That's not to say the territory isn't defended: other supernatural beings might call it home



and resent a bunch of werewolves setting up shop, or the local spirits might take exception to the pack, for example. If the pack can hold the territory for a full turn of the moon, either uncontested or driving off any challengers, other werewolves recognize their claim. Common law states that challenges by other packs must be answered by the claimants alone, but if a powerful Bane or a legion of fomori attack the territory, the pack may call on reinforcements from the sept without losing its claim. Sadly, too many of the tribes don't recognize the claims of other Fera to hold territory, and consequently make it legal to call the entire sept in to help exterminate the prior occupants.

- **Right of Conquest:** Far more common is a pack seizing territory from a neighboring pack. While this might come in the form of bloody conquest, Philodox recognize that any contest in which territory changes hands falls under this right. Riddle contests, tests of skill, even a hard-fought negotiation all count as "conquest." When both packs belong to the same sept, usually the elders mediate the terms of the conflict's resolution, but isolated packs far from their nearest neighbors sometimes end up in generations-long blood feuds over the same piece of territory: an internal squabble the Garou Nation can ill-afford.

- **Right of Cleansing:** Long tradition holds that if a pack enters a Wyrm-tainted place, drives out the Banes and other monstrosities, and cleanses the poisons from it, they may claim it as their own. In recent years, as the madness of the Weaver has become more apparent, many septs have extended this right to areas under heavy Weaver influence. This right trumps any prior claim to the territory: if a pack's territory becomes host to a nest of Banes while the pack is traveling, a neighboring pack can claim the tainted part of the territory by cleansing it. This sometimes leads to territorial "isolates:" bubbles of one pack's territory completely surrounded by another's. That's not a problem if the packs are on good terms, but if they're rivals or even enemies, it's only a matter of time before someone tries for a Right of Conquest. Claiming territory from a Black Spiral Dancer pack falls under this right rather than Conquest, as the Dancers aren't properly part of the Garou Nation.

- **Right of Grant:** In places where the local sept is especially strong or where the region is especially volatile, it's common for the sept elders to claim all the nearby land directly, then parcel out discreet plots to the packs that owe them allegiance. The upside of this is that packs are more likely to get the territory where they can do the most good. The downside is that all previous rights and claims are superseded by the sept's order, which makes gaining additional territory a highly politicized ordeal.

Losing Ground

- **Forfeiture of Extinction:** When a pack dies, its claim to its territory is void. Usually this forfeiture applies if the

pack is diminished to the point that it loses its totem (see p. 119). Silver Fangs, Shadow Lords, and some Fianna septs allow packs to appoint heirs for their territory, but even then, a slain pack's territory becomes a bloody free-for-all as others rush to claim it, or the sept takes it for their own.

- **Forfeiture of Negligence:** If a pack cannot or chooses not to adequately maintain its territory, it can lose the claim. This rule is usually only enforceable when a sept can adjudicate the claim, but many packs use it as moral justification for claiming Right of Conquest.

- **Forfeiture of Revocation:** If the territory was acquired by Right of Grant, the sept elders can revoke it, usually by a simple majority vote. In practice, this is usually a last resort, as it's a grave insult to the pack in question. Most septs would rather apply "gentle encouragement" for a pack to improve, but sometimes sept elders to use the threat of revocation to keep packs under their thumb.

Home Improvement

Few territories are paradises when a pack first claims them. The Wyrm's poison is everywhere, and not always in literal Bane-spewing Umbral badlands. Once the pack lays claim, it's a matter of molding and sculpting the land into their desired image. This can involve a range of activities:

- **Hunting Grounds:** Whether in cities or in the wilds between them, werewolves are hunters. Making sure their territory has plentiful game not only lets them indulge their instincts, it gives them a food source that hasn't been run through the Wyrm- and Weaver-saturated processed food industry. Packs monitor prey populations to keep them sustainable, cull the sick and weak, and keep human hunters from running rampant. Glass Walkers sometimes prefer to keep community gardens and urban livestock, but that agricultural mindset is off-putting to many other tribes.

- **Umbral Well-Being:** Keeping the spirits propitiated and in balance is a full-time job for any Theurge. When two Umbrood come into conflict they will look to the pack to resolve their dispute — as they will for defence when Wyrm-spawn attack. This activity often bleeds over into the physical world, as the Garou seek to nurture elements they want to see reflected in the Umbra. A Get of Fenris pack might encourage violent conflict (or, less destructively, boxing matches and MMA fights) to attract spirits of war, for example.

- **Totem Concerns:** Totems wish to see their physical representations flourish and their agendas pushed in the physical world. Children of Bear might fund a grizzly sanctuary, or if their territory isn't in the bear's natural habitat, they might instead found or support clinics and hospitals, since Bear is also a spirit of healing. In a single-tribe pack, the tribe totem might also send Umbral messages with mandates for the pack, which sometimes conflict with the desires of the pack totem.

• **Tribal Philosophy:** Every tribe in the Garou Nation has ideas about what the ideal territory should look like and what sorts of things they should encourage. Single-tribe packs embody this ideal, but even in a more egalitarian pack, individual members pursue their ideals. Black Furies lobby to preserve green spaces, fund shelters for victims of abuse, and encourage women in STEM fields. Children of Gaia foster community outreach programs, encouraging people to get to know and understand their neighbors. Shadow Lords run programs that help the disadvantaged find employment and the pride that comes with a steady income, and work to expose corrupt leadership in the human world and the sept alike.

• **Personal Comfort:** Few Garou want to live in a filthy, dangerous, or economically depressed area, and fewer still want to subject their Kinfolk to such conditions. Most every pack takes steps to ensure that its members and their families are comfortable, but "comfortable" to the Get of Fenris might mean a Spartan, walled-compound in the mountains, while to a Glass Walker it's a decent apartment with an unthrottled fiber-optic internet connection. Some packs go at this without a care for anyone but them and theirs: they might strongarm locals into paying protection or use their supernatural abilities to build a lucrative criminal career, but many others prefer to work within the human community to improve everyone's lot, furthering their tribal or totemic goals in the process.

Pillars of the Community

The Garou consider packs that claim a specific territory, whether it's part of a sept or not, more respectable and responsible than rootless packs who wander the earth looking for trouble. A territory-holding pack, no matter what else others might think of its members, has proven that it can hold a piece of land, keep it (at least reasonably) free of Wyrm taint and safe for Garou, and secure its borders against outside threats. Moreover, these packs have roots: local Kinfolk, spirits, and other packs have a sense of their reputation and how best to approach them. They know the land and its history, know where the enemy goes to ground, and where their own places of strength lie. The downside to all of this, of course, is that the pack has limited options when things go seriously bad. When a Bane that massively outclasses the pack starts tearing up the place, it's harder for a rooted pack to cut and run.

Most packs mitigate that risk by belonging to a sept. Even if the sept's headquarters is hundreds of miles away and they only see the elders once a month, werewolves find comforting the knowledge that they can send up a howl and expect backup to arrive soon. Of course, the sept will expect them to put in some work on its behalf in return.

In theory, a sept's job is to serve as meeting place, com-

munity, and counselor to its constituent packs. Sept elders must keep an eye on the packs in their territory, recognize when trouble's brewing, and marshal the sept's resources to correct the problem, whether that's rallying all the packs for a massive offensive or sitting down for a heart-to-heart with an zedakh who's getting a little too authoritarian. It's also an outlet for packs to bring up their own concerns and head off problems before they become crises.

That's the theory. The reality is that more septs are on a constant war footing, and sept elders too often have to serve as generals rather than counselors. For a lot of septs, keeping the fight going is more important than anything else, and too often they will tolerate a pack that's basically an abusive family because the right flank *must* hold for another week. Similarly, the sept might broker an agreement between two packs for one to watch the other's territory while they travel, but if the Black Spiral Dancers attack, that agreement will fall away when the sept needs reinforcements.

When a pack takes issue with how a sept runs things, it has limited recourses. It can bring its grievances to a moot and hope to rally the other packs to enforce a change, or the pack zedakh can challenge a sept elder for her position, or the pack can withdraw from the sept entirely, which, unless the pack also leaves its territory in short order, probably means reprisals. Worse still is if a single Garou, or a couple of pack members, have a problem with the sept as a whole. Most septs recognize the pack as the smallest unit of Garou society, not the individual. As such, unless they can persuade their whole pack to raise a grievance, it's hard to affect change. Lone wolves face a similar problem, and nomadic werewolves even more so.

Pulling Up Stakes

The life of a nomadic pack seems romantic, at least to young Garou on their fourth straight week of bawn patrol and clean-up duty. Roaming from sept to sept, fighting the minions of Wyrm, Weaver, and corrupt Garou alike, it's tempting to see the vagabond lifestyle as something enviable. Fantasy rarely matches up with reality, though: most nomad packs are so because they lost their territory, or because they're pursuing a powerful foe and the need for revenge. Others see their "territory" as an abstract concept not tied to geography: a Silent Strider pack in Texas claims every Texaco gas station built before 1980 as its territory and travels frequently between them, or perhaps they just never found a place that felt like home.

The chief problems facing nomadic packs are a lack of resources and a lack of support. Most septs across the world are stretched thin enough providing for their own members; when a bunch of wounded strangers show up seeking healing and Gnosis, or asking for a dozen warriors

to bring down a Nexus Crawler, the sept's instinctive response is to close down and close ranks. After all, they have their own problems, and how can they be sure these newcomers aren't criminals or fugitives?

Some packs mitigate the problem of unfamiliarity by traveling a prescribed "route" that circles through several septs on a semi-regular basis rather than going wherever the wind takes them. They're *seldom* popular, but at least they're less likely to be attacked on sight. With patterns come predictability, though, and with predictability, vulnerability. More than one pack has thought itself safe driving an empty, broken highway, only to find the Wyrm's minions lying in wait.

Hierarchy of Needs

What, exactly, does a pack of nomadic Garou need to survive and thrive on the road? What keeps body and spirit together in the long empty stretches where no sept watches over the earth?

- **Food:** Sure, the pack can hit an O'Tolley's drive thru or Sammich Blaster every ten miles on most major highways, but processed food, redolent with Wyrm-taint and packaged in neat little cellophane coffins, is neither healthy nor satisfying to most Garou. The wolf craves fresh meat, the thrill of the hunt, and at least in most of the developed world, good hunting is thin on the ground. Nomadic packs sometimes lay claim to hunting grounds along their routes, trusting rites and glyphs to deter wanderers when they aren't there to defend the territory themselves. Those with strong relationships to the spirit world sometimes convince spirits from their totem's brood to watch their turf for them. Neither will stand up to a serious encroachment, though, and unless the pack has a standing arrangement with the local sept, their neighbors don't tend to look kindly on retaliatory raids against those who claimed the empty territory.

- **Shelter:** Garou have one major advantage over itinerant humans: it's a lot easier to sleep rough in wolf-shape than it is on two legs. Still, in inclement weather or hostile ground it's better to have a sturdy, defensible shelter, not to mention most homid Garou tend to get a little twitchy living as wolves 24/7. Packs with a regular route know all the best boltholes, but even those nomads with no fixed circulation scout ahead, whether by outriders, Gifts, or spiritual assistance. Knowing about the abandoned boat dock with the sturdy concrete walls ten miles up the road can be the difference between life and death when an angry pack of Black Spiral Dancers has your scent.

- **Money:** The ugly truth is, interacting with the human world in any meaningful way requires money. Clever Garou can hunt and live in lupus form, which cuts down on expenses, but unless they're walking everywhere and living rough (not always easy in the Wyrm-blighted modern world),

they need cash for gas, clothes, the occasional place to crash, and various other sundries. Some packs pick up odd jobs along the road — Garou unsurprisingly tend to be adept at physical labor — while others rely on Kinfolk or doing work of questionable legality for people of questionable morals.

- **Gnosis:** Without a caern as a place to enact rites like the Sacred Hunt or bargain with the spirits, nomadic packs have a challenging time restoring their spiritual equilibrium. Meditation is, at best, a stopgap measure, and spirits encountered on the road tend to be less willing to negotiate than those that inhabit a caern in good standing. Most nomad packs have no choice but to bargain with septs along their way, trading services rendered for temporary access to caerns for ritual purposes: unclaimed caerns are too rare and valuable to leave unattended. Ragabash-heavy nomad packs have been known to "freeboot": lying in wait until the population of the sept are busy or distracted and slipping in to "borrow" the holy site. Getting caught at it is a sure way to earn lifelong enmity, but for some, that's part of the thrill.

- **Passage:** The shortest distance between two points might be a straight line, but if that straight line runs through another pack's territory, you'd damn well better take the long road. By long tradition, Silent Striders generally have permission (though often grudging) to pass through others' territories on their wanderings, but others aren't so lucky. The usual recourse, when traveling miles out of the way to skirt a border isn't an option, is for the pack to procure a token or a letter from an established and well-respected sept. This token is a sign that says, "these Garou can be trusted not to fuck shit up on your turf or try to take it from you." Whether a given pack honors that or not depends on how far away and how well-connected the issuing sept is: a letter of passage from the Sept of the Green will ensure safe passage in most of New York and parts of New Jersey, but in Colorado or Munich or Hokkaido it might not be worth so much. And then, of course, if the pack screws up and does fuck shit up on someone else's turf, not only do they have the pissed-off locals to deal with, they've got the sept that issued passage wondering just why the pack has gone and impugned their good name.

Totem

Spiritual mentors are fonts of otherworldly wisdom and power, totems are far more than just animistic patron saints. A totem (or at least, its totem avatar) is a full-fledged member of the pack, just one that happens to be a spirit. Werewolves must accord it all the rights and privileges pertaining to membership: up to and including challenging the zedakh for leadership. In truth most totems will more likely withhold their blessings from an unworthy zedakh



than challenge her to a duel at dawn, but Galliards tell cautionary tales of zedakhs deposed by their totem spirit. Similarly, every once in a while a pack emerges whose totem serves as zedakh directly; such packs are among the most fanatically devoted to advancing their totem's agenda.

The Totem Bond

A pack's bond with its totem is a deep, metaphysical connection, one that operates below the level of conscious thought and gels the pack into a cohesive unit. A group of Garou who knew each other for all of five minutes before undergoing the Rite of the Totem suddenly find themselves operating together as smoothly and instinctively as though they'd known each other for years. Pack members find themselves unconsciously recognizing each other's strengths and weaknesses and moving to cover those vulnerabilities. They know exactly when to take the lead and when to give ground to a packmate; with higher levels of the Totem Background, they might even catch themselves finishing each other's sentences.

For its part, a spirit's totem avatar finds itself perfectly at peace and secure in its purpose when it has a pack to look after. In many ways, the totem is the bond between the pack, and often finds itself taking on personality traits that echo the interpersonal dynamics among its children. Sometimes that bond is enough to push the totem avatar "out of sync" with its parent Incarna. One very old Fenrir

legend tells of a pack that followed Rat: over time, the pack's straightforward tactics rubbed off on Rat's avatar until it was barely recognizable as the patron of guerilla warfare. What happened next depends on the Galliard telling the tale; either the pack's totem avatar rose to Incarna rank itself as Dire Rat, or Rat killed the entire pack and ate its wayward child.

Other packs instinctively recognize the totem bond in their brothers and sisters. It's very hard for a group of werewolves to pretend they have a totem when they do not. Moreover, packs with the same or closely-related totems can usually recognize each other; a certain nobility of bearing stands out to other children of Falcon, for example, while Owl's get see in each other the same quiet, patient wisdom. This bond is especially pronounced between packs bound to totems the Garou traditionally distrust; even if one of Bear's packs never sees a Gurahl, they recognize Bear's other children and feel kinship with them.

Still, it's not all Umbral wine and spirit roses. Even when the pack perfectly adheres to its totem's ban, sometimes tensions rise between a pack and its totem.

Changing Times

Garou know that even the oldest and seemingly-immutable totems can change over time. Spirits that embody human phenomena are particularly prone to changing

with the times and the zeitgeist, but even primal spirits of the natural world aren't immune to the march of history. Holy Mother Mountain, the spirit of Mount Everest, is a very different totem in today's world of \$80,000 "guided tours" of the summit for the ultra-rich than she was a hundred and thirty years ago, when most people believed summiting Everest was impossible. Clashing Boom-Boom grows more fractious every day as everyone from politicians to online harassment campaigns adopts the trappings of "righteous warfare."

It's not always the totems that change, either. Packs grow and mature, bring in new blood and find new purpose, and sometimes they find themselves drifting out of sync with their totem. Children of Cockroach might grow sick of the cynical trappings of the modern world, while Cuckoo's packs might want to come in from the cold and live an honest life.

Sometimes it's not so much a drifting apart as it is the totem asking a pack to do something that the werewolves consider morally unconscionable. Spirits aren't people, and they don't hew to human ideals of morality. Lion sees nothing wrong with murdering the children of a vanquished rival, and he might well command one of his packs to do just that. Crow demands absolute loyalty to those his pack serves, even if those leaders grow mad or corrupt. Sometimes, especially if the act isn't part of the totem's Ban, a pack can talk its way into a compromise. Sometimes if the request is a single, isolated incident, the pack grits its teeth and does what it has to, citing wartime necessity to salve their consciences. But sometimes things go too far, and the pack finds itself in the position of resenting or even outright hating its totem.

Out of Sync

When a pack finds itself out of tune with its totem, the bond seems to sour. The pack still know each other intimately and can predict how their brothers and sisters will react in the clinch, but now that knowledge focuses on failings and annoying habits. The totem's ban feels less like an instinctive *rightness* and more like an arbitrarily enforced rule. Squabbles and petty sniping become common, and the pack starts to see its totem as a controlling parent or meddlesome authority figure rather than a respected patron. The totem avatar might start avoiding the pack, only appearing to issue commands or express the totem's wishes, which only grows the resentment.

Often a pack that reaches this stage falls to infighting or disbands altogether, but Garou who recognize these signs can take steps to improve things. Sometimes performing the Rite of Contrition (even if the pack hasn't actually violated its Ban) is enough to clear the air, but sometimes the pack must appeal to a higher authority. The Silver Fangs especially love stories about packs who undertake

grand quests into the deep Umbra to gain an audience with their totem directly. Their versions end with the totem explaining why its edicts are both just and necessary and the pack returning, humbled but wiser. Bone Gnawer versions of the same tales are more likely to end with a clever hero getting the totem into a headlock and making it apologize for being such a dick.

When a pack doesn't have the power or influence to negotiate with a totem directly, and when the problems between them don't show any sign of abating, the pack has to take drastic action. What happens next depends on the pack and the totem.

Parting of the Ways

If the change is gradual, or if the pack and spirit can still find common ground, they might separate amicably. Totems want their packs to be content in their place and free to serve Gaia in the best way possible, and all but the most prideful would rather release a pack from service than watch resentment fester. Similarly, if a pack willingly disbands for any reason, their totem bond dissipates.

While this parting of the ways may be tinged with sadness or bitterness, it is usually amicable. The same totem might be willing to "re-adopt" the pack later if circumstances change and the pack shows a renewed willingness to follow the totem's edicts.

System: If both the pack and the totem are willing, the totem bond may dissolve simply by declaring it so. The totem withdraws its avatar and the pack immediately loses all benefits of the totem. If the pack wishes to bind itself to the same totem again later, they must undertake a Rite of Contrition first.

Burning Bridges

If the totem (or, for that matter, the pack) is unwilling or unable to communicate, the simplest means of cutting ties is for the pack to willfully and repeatedly violate the totem's Ban. Done deliberately and with ritual intent, this sends a clear message to the totem that its patronage is no longer welcome. This is a drastic step, unlikely to be taken well by the totem or by the Garou Nation at large; it's the mystical equivalent of announcing a breakup with your long-term partner by changing the locks and burning all their possessions on the lawn. The pack's original totem will almost certainly never take them back, and even other totems would require a great deal of convincing.

System: Burning bridges requires the pack ritualistically break the totem's Ban. This isn't a full on rite, just an action suffused with mystical intent that makes it clear that it wasn't just an accident. Followers of Cockroach might fumigate their homes and stay inside the tent, trusting their regeneration to keep them safe from the pesticides, while Raven's children might knock over a bank and sew

THE TOTEM BACKGROUND

When a pack dissolves the Totem bond by any means other than the Rite of Excoriation, characters with the Totem Background forfeit one dot of that Trait. The players can spend this reduced pool of Totem points when the characters next perform the Rite of the Totem. If they don't have enough points for their desired spirit ally, performing the rite is an excellent opportunity to spend experience points on more dots in Totem.

their ill-gotten gains into the linings of their coats. The totem bond dissolves and the pack immediately loses all benefits of the totem. The totem avatar might very well attack its former packmates, or it might flee to bring news of the blasphemy to the rest of its brood. Finally, every member of the pack who participated loses 5 Honor and 5 Wisdom. The sole exception to this case is if the Wyrm has corrupted the totem, in which case the participants gain 3 Honor (but still lose Wisdom).

Before the characters petition a new totem spirit, they must perform a Rite of Contrition to their *new* totem before the Rite of the Totem. The pack's original totem will never accept them back barring an epic, world-shaking quest.

Renunciation

As a middle ground between the two extremes, a pack that wishes to part ways with its totem but cannot come to an accord with the spirit may formally renounce the bond by way of a rite. This is no less an insult to the spirit than burning bridges, but the Garou consider a rite to be a more respectful way to sever ties. The problem is that the rite required is little known, as it's easily confused with the Rite of Excoriation (see below).

System: The pack can break the totem bond by using a variation of the Rite of Renunciation (p. 204, W20). The variant has to be taught by a ritemaster who knows it, but it's a fairly simple affair: A character who already knows the Rite of Renunciation can learn the totem-renouncing version with just an hour or so of instruction, and it costs them experience points. The totem bond is dissolved, and the pack immediately loses all benefits of the totem. The totem's avatar is banished back to the Umbra as part of this rite. The original totem is highly unlikely to ever accept the pack back into its good graces.

Excoriation

A terrible secret held by certain Silver Fang and Shadow Lord elders (and, sadly, widely known among the Black Spiral Dancers), the Rite of Excoriation forcibly strips the totem bond from a werewolf, or even an entire pack. In the Garou Nation, it's a weapon of last resort if a totem falls to the Wyrm or takes direct control of a pack in its service. Among the Black Spiral Dancers it's used to prepare captives for brainwashing and conversion by the tribe's mad, blasphemous spirit patrons. Rumors persist that in certain staunchly traditional Garou septs, the rite is used to "re-educate" packs that chose "inappropriate" totems, like Bear, Rat, or Tiger.

System: See the Rite of Excoriation on p. 122.

Old Blood and New

W20 focuses on totem bonds formed when an entire group of Garou come together to form a new pack and forge a totem bond. That's perfectly serviceable for most troupes; most players will settle on a totem at the start of the chronicle and not mess with it too much after that, short of buying more dots of the Totem Background with experience points. It does, however, fail to address two key events that might come up in the course of a chronicle: a new member joining an existing pack, and a pack member who contributed dots to the totem dying or leaving.

New Blood

Most Garou packs form when several young werewolves undergo their Rite of Passage at or around the same time, then set out to claim a totem and a place in Garou society. That doesn't always work though. Sometimes a pack suffers losses in battle and needs to reinforce, and other times First Changes come along so rarely that it might take years for enough Garou to form a new pack to come along. Long-established and famous packs have to deal with a constant trickle of cliath petitioning to join, and certain septs — especially those dominated by the Silver Fangs — expect true-bred children of powerful Garou to succeed their parents in their packs. On a practical, out-of-game level, sometimes you want to add a new player to your gaming group and bring her character into the pack.

System: The Rite of the Totem can induct a new member into a pack as readily as it creates a whole new pack, however the requirements and the procedure are slightly different. First and foremost, the prospect must have at least one dot of the Totem Background and must not currently have a totem (whether pack or personal). Second, the prospect must spend an entire lunar month, from auspice moon to auspice moon, living and fighting alongside her new pack and adhering to the prospective

totem's ban. Any violation requires her to start the process over again on her next Auspice moon.

Once the prospect meets all of those requirements, the ritemaster (who need not be a member of the pack being joined, but at least one member of the pack must be present and participate) performs the Rite of the Totem as described on p. 213 of *W20*. Instead of a spirit hunt for a member of the totem's brood, however, the pack's totem avatar presents a challenge directly to the prospect: a hunt, a fight, a riddle contest, or something else appropriate to the spirit.

If the prospect successfully completes the challenge, the totem accepts her and she joins the pack. The players can spend the character's points in the Totem Background immediately to upgrade the totem's abilities. Moreover, as adding a new pack member is a momentous event, the other players may spend experience on more Totem Background dots if they are so inclined. Unlike when a pack performs the Rite of the Totem to gain a new totem, prospects must possess at least one dot of Totem; it takes more to bond with the spirit of an established pack than it does to bond with a new spirit.

Old Blood

Werewolves die. It's a fact of life and a fact of war, and rarely does an entire pack die all at the same time. Similarly, sometimes a Garou feels a need to leave her pack and set out on her own, or is driven out in disgrace. On an out-of-game level, sometimes real life intervenes and a player has to leave the group, or he simply gets tired of his character and wants a change.

In any case, this raises a question about the intersection between story and mechanics: namely, what happens to a pack's totem when a character dies or leaves the pack after investing points in the Totem Background?

Rather than giving a single, concrete answer, this section presents a variety of options and discusses their strengths and weaknesses. The Storyteller should talk with her players and use whichever one best fits the group's needs and the needs of the chronicle.

• **Let it Ride:** Totem points are collective property of the pack: one character dying or leaving does not impact the totem's abilities. This option works best when a character leaves the pack due to out-of-game concerns, like a player having to drop out. If the player of the departed character gets to come back in with a fresh character who will receive all the benefits of the totem his previous character contributed to *and* a new character's full allocation of Background dots, that can seem unfair. This option is also good for circumstances where a small change in the number of totem dots means the rest of the pack no longer qualifies for the totem and losing that bond would disrupt the story.

- **Pay it Back:** As above, the character's departure has no impact on the totem's abilities, but any replacement character has to make up the deficit in Totem points. This option is the least disruptive when a character's departure is part and parcel of the game, like a character dying in battle and the player bringing in a replacement. If, however, the departed character had invested a lot of experience into the Totem Background, it can be prohibitive to spend all of the new character's Background points on Totem; telling a player his new social maven character can't have Contacts or Allies because he has to buy back all the Totem points his predecessor bought is unfair and unfun. If that's the case and this is the method you want to use, consider letting the player buy off the Totem Background gradually with experience rather than paying it all at once at character creation.

- **Earn it Back:** In this model, the character's departure causes the totem to lose all but one totem points the character contributed, but only if that loss would still allow the pack to afford the totem's base cost. The totem loses abilities associated with those dots, as the spirit grieves its lost child. The remaining pack members can spend experience points to buy those Background dots back freely, without the usual restriction that totems can only increase in power after significant events. This method works best if you want the departure of a packmate to have some teeth but not totally screw the rest of the characters.

- **Lose It:** In the most extreme model, an individual character's Totem points directly represent that character's effort to honor and appease the totem. A character who spent • on Totem does the bare minimum chimirage and ritual, while one who spent • • • • is immensely devoted to honoring the totem through prayer, ritual, and song. When a character leaves the pack, the totem immediately loses *all* totem points the departed character invested. If this reduces the pack to below the totem's minimum cost, the totem bond isn't broken, but the totem withdraws its support from the pack (the pack loses all Individual and Pack Traits) until the pack buys back up to its minimum cost. Alternately, a successful performance of the Rite of Contrition restores the totem's favor, but only for a chapter.

This option works best if the totem bond and appeasing the pack's spiritual patron are major themes of the game. If you use this model, consider waiving the rule that players can only buy new dots in Totem in the wake of mystically-significant events: in this system, totem dots don't literally make the totem more powerful, they merely represent the pack pleasing its totem and the spirit investing more of its power in them.

New Rite

The Rite of Excoriation is a Mystic Rite, and requires the normal roll of Wits + Rituals. The difficulty is equal to the total number of points invested in the totem; for each point above 9, the rite requires an extra success — excoriating a pack that had spent 12 points on their totem requires three successes on a difficulty 9 roll.

Rite of Excoriation

Level Four

This dreadful rite forcibly strips the totem bond from a werewolf (or a pack). To perform this rite, the ritemaster must paint glyphs representing both the totem bond in general and the specific totem in question on the subject's body. The higher the number of totem dots the totem possesses, the more of the subject must be covered. The ritemaster then carefully fleshes the skin beneath the glyphs off and waits until the subject's regeneration heals the wounds. Finally, the bloody, painted scraps are burned to ash (in the oldest forms of this rite, they are cast into a vat of molten silver).

System: If the ritemaster performs it on an individual werewolf, it strips that werewolf from the pack. See Old Blood, above, for how to adjudicate lost totem points. If, however, the rite is performed on a pack's totem directly, it dissolves the pack bond completely. Totem points in this instance are not lost, but held "in trust" until the pack either reforms the bond or finds a new totem.

Example Packs

The following example packs are provided to give Storytellers some inspiration for populating territories around the players' pack, ready-made concepts for packs encountered on the road, or even as the seeds of a new chronicle. Any of the packs presented here are suitable for use as the protagonists of a story.

The Columbus Crew

A young pack operating out of Columbus, Ohio (or, if that's nowhere near your chronicle's setting, out of a den on Columbus Street or similar), the Columbus Crew has only been together for about two months; they haven't even chosen a proper name yet, and they only recently found and bound their totem. Their zedakh, Nathan Kills-at-Croquet, brought them together after nearly two decades as a lone wolf, and sees himself as a father figure to the others. They've already earned quite a reputation in the local sept for seemingly never failing an assigned mission. They make it look easy, but it's a lot of blood, sweat, and tears put into advance planning that does the heavy lifting.

Members

Nathan Kills-at-Croquet is the pack's zedakh, a homid Bone Gnawer Ragabash. He's one of those people who never stops working the angles: whether he's running a surgical operation against a Pentex branch or just looking for dinner, he's got at least three fallback plans, and he categorizes everyone not a member of his pack as either a target or a useful mark. He's constantly testing himself and the rest of the pack, sometimes overtly (thrice-weekly Bane attack drills and regular debates on the finer points of Garou law and custom), sometimes subtly (assigning pack members with unresolved tension to work together or putting members in situations they're not well-suited for). He catalogues all their reactions and uses them to build exacting profiles of their strengths and weaknesses, which in turn inform his planning of the pack's actions. Nathan is a middle-aged South African man who operates three small, perpetually on-the-verge-of-failing restaurants in the Columbus area. His ex-wife and their three children live in Cleveland, and Nathan has contacts within his Tribe monitoring them in case they show signs of the First Change.

Janie Leaves-Scars (homid Black Fury Ahroun) works as a medical researcher in nearby Dublin. Her preferred approach to problem solving is to eliminate all the variables, then tackle the thing head on. She recognizes that this is fundamentally in sync with how Nathan runs things, but still chafes at being treated more like a chess piece than a person. Janie is a 30-year-old Latina trans woman, and she and her husband live in an apartment above one of Nathan's restaurants. They don't have any kids yet, but they're talking to fertility specialists in the area.

Steven Tilts-at-Windmills (homid Fianna Philodox) spends his days as a poli-sci undergraduate at Ohio State University, and his nights delving into study of the Litany. He has an incredibly gifted mind for precedent and interpretation, but he's godawful when it comes to actually putting that into practice in a debate, so he more often serves the pack as backup muscle than as representative to the sept. At 19, he's the youngest member of the pack by far, and the only white guy. He lives in on-campus housing, and only contacts his family back in Kansas when he needs more money (which goes to supplying the pack as often as it does to buying Top Ramen in bulk).

Totem

Jackrabbit Jump, a totem of Cunning, binds the Crew together. Just like the crew, he keeps his options open so nobody knows which way he's going to jump, and his drumming stomps help the pack communicate over long distances.

Story Hooks

- The Redstone Book, a very old fetish believed to contain an immensely powerful Wyrm-spirit, has gone missing from a neighboring sept's care. The heist has all the



hallmarks of a Columbus Crew job, and the pack doesn't have an alibi. The elders of the aggrieved sept are howling for blood, and it's up to the Crew (or their allies) to prove their innocence.

- The Redstone Book, is in the possession of a neighboring sept thought to be infiltrated by Black Spiral Dancers. The Crew's sept tasks them with stealing it before the spies can release its prisoner, while simultaneously deflecting attention from themselves.

- The pack that couldn't fail has. Now they're trapped somewhere under Columbus, prisoners of a hive of fomori who plan to force them to walk the Black Spiral. Can the players' pack launch a rescue mission, or if the players have taken the Crew's role, can they stage a prison break?

The Edgecrushers

Claiming territory in the local tech sector, the Edgecrushers are, perhaps surprisingly, a staunchly traditional pack. It's just that they decide what "traditional" really means. The pack came together shortly after their various First Changes, born out of a frustration with the Garou Nation's refusal to try new ways of problem solving but an equal frustration with the radical elements who want to burn the whole Litany down and start from scratch. They spend much of their time delving deep into the Digital Web, studying the intersection of the ancient laws of the

Umbra and the rapid evolution of the modern world.

Members

Rumble, a metis Glass Walker Theurge, leads the pack. She's the guiding vision behind the pack's neo-traditionalism, and it's her bond with the spirits that gives the pack its wide vision. She never launches an operation, no matter how desperate the need, without a solid plan. She's so in-tune with how her actions will ripple across the Umbra that other packs often consult her on the ramifications of their own plans. In homid form, she's a 20-something, heavyset Pacific Islander. Her right arm (and right foreleg in her lupine forms) is severely atrophied and usually held close in against her body.

Slam, a homid Get of Fenris Galliard, is Rumble's trusted uldakh. He's also the one most likely to push for immediate action over careful planning, which leads to some pretty impressive blowout fights between the two. Still, without him, Rumble might spend a little too much time navel-gazing and strategizing, and without her, Slam probably would have gotten himself killed a long time ago. They're both young enough (Slam's 28) that they see themselves as older siblings to the rest of the pack rather than parents. Slam is a lanky, extremely tall man of Eastern European descent; he works security at the software company where Rumble works.

Flash and Crash (both homid Wendigo Philodox) are a rarity: fraternal twins who both underwent the First

Change. They've leaned hard into the gimmick, taking rhyming deed names, and they often dress in complementary clothes. They like to see themselves as the two halves of the Moon: Flash (the brother) representing the waxing half-moon's peacemaking and Crash (the sister) representing the waning moon's judgment. They're both Tulalip, and grew up in Quil Ceda Village, Washington. Flash is a programmer at a small local startup, while Crash is a UI designer at a larger software firm.

Totem

Legacy Code is a net spirit embodying the concept of something old being iterated on, serving as the foundation of something new. It appears as an abstract cluster of lights that starts as a single point and rapidly evolves into a complex hierarchy before collapsing back down to a single point and starting the process again.

Story Hooks

- Tellus Enterprises is sniffing around the various tech companies the pack works for, and the word is hostile takeover. One buyout might be a coincidence, but all three at once feels like targeted action. What does Tellus know that the pack don't?

- Nobody thought net spirits could get viruses, but it looks like the Wyrm has one hell of a black hat crew. Legacy Code has gone rogue, and it's spreading the infection to other pack totems, turning them (hopefully temporarily) into servants of corruption. The race is on to find a cure before the infected totems manage to convert the caern's guardian spirit.

- The Singularity is coming: a powerful but embryonic spirit deep in the Digital Web is on the verge of waking up, and Gaia only knows what will happen when it does. The only ones who seem to have a clue are the Edgecrushers, but their advice is starting to sound less like wisdom and more like a recruiting pitch....

The Lost Children

Straddling the blurry line between pack and sept, Mexico City's Lost Children is the largest pack in the city, with up to 30 members at any given time. Unusually for such a large pack, but in keeping with their zedakh's tribe, the Lost Children are firmly devoted to ideals of nonviolence. They've seen what happens to werewolves who engage the Wyrm in a multi-generation war of attrition, and have instead chosen to focus their energies on addressing the injustices that allow the Wyrm's influence to take root.

Their location, however, makes the zedakh's pacifist ways grate with many of the pack's members. Mexico City is a stronghold for leeches – and not the kind who mask their predatory nature behind a thin veneer of humanity. They further the Wyrm's work, but the Lost Children know that

the vampires' numbers are too great. Were the Garou to lash out, they would find themselves in a that they could not win.

Members

Maria Caridad Flores (homid Child of Gaia Theurge) is the zedakh and architect of the pack's social justice campaign. She's in her early forties and supremely confident in her wrangling of such a large and unruly family. She's deep in a number of charitable foundations throughout the capital and the states of Mexico and Hidalgo. In addition to working with human efforts, she uses her Gifts and Rites to help the poor maintain access to clean water, health care, and other necessities. As she's made progress, the Wyrm's spawn have begun to take notice and its agents are targeting her directly. She remains committed to nonviolence, but she's beginning to recognize the need for practical defenses.

Miguel Eats-Knives (homid Bone Gnawer Ahroun) isn't yet out of his teens, but Caridad has taken him under her wing as her uldakh and protégé. An orphan who grew up in and out of foster homes, Miguel sees the value in Caridad's nonviolent approach, but he yearns for opportunities to earn Glory and the respect of the city's other Ahroun. Caridad has given up on converting him to a life of total pacifism, and is now grooming him to split off with some of the more militant activists to form a new pack with Miguel as zedakh.

Lupita (lupus Uktena Galliard) was raised in the Chapultepec Zoo before her First Change and subsequent escape. Unusually for a lupus, she spends most of her time in homid form, exploring her new home. She's one of the first in line to follow Miguel if he splits off from the Lost Children; complex social structures and the inequality that comes with them are still difficult for her to understand, where an enemy whose throat she can rip out is a much more straightforward problem to solve.

Totem

The Lost Children follow Unicorn, and have done since Caridad founded the pack. Part of why Miguel hasn't yet formed a pack of his own is that he's not sure which totem to approach for patronage. He's leaning toward Rat, or possibly Boar.

Story Hooks

- The Mexican government launches a sweeping initiative to clean up the Tepito barrio in the northern part of the city. Despite the high crime rate (Tepito is nicknamed "Barrio Bravo" for the frequency of robberies), the area has a strong communal culture and is one of the pack's most important territories. Thus far the residents have resisted, but gentrification isn't an enemy that yields easily to Garou claws.

- Word is buzzing around the capital that the Flensed Brethren, a pack of Black Spiral assassins re-

nowned for taking out high-profile Garou targets, are in Mexico City. Problem is, they change skins the way others change clothes. With over 21 million people in the greater metropolitan area, how can the Lost Children find three bloodthirsty werewolf assassins before they find the pack?

• Miguel Eats-Knives and his militants have gone too far, falling to frenzy and killing several innocents when they attempted to take out a fomor police captain. Now Unicorn has withdrawn her patronage from the pack, leaving the Lost Children vulnerable to their enemies. The pack must figure out how to get back into her good graces, and address the situation with their radical element once and for all.

Pack as Character

W20 already features a series of questions and answers about creating your pack. It introduces the idea of giving the pack a concept, the same as any other character. For troupes that want to give their pack more definition, this optional system covers building the pack as a character. This will help everyone better understand their characters' roles within the pack. This process is abstracted to a point; the pack doesn't directly use Traits like Strength or Brawl to strike down a monster; this is simply a reflection of the resources, strengths, and weaknesses of its members.

Creating the Pack

Pack creation takes place after character creation, with all the players and the Storyteller involved. Some groups may prefer to go through step zero and step one prior to character creation to guide everyone in making characters, but that's not necessary. Make sure that all the choices and the discussions are public. Everyone should be aware, and have input. This is your first chance to build pack dynamics and establish roles and relationships. Take advantage of it.

To get started, just use a standard character sheet.

NEW PACKS VS. EXISTING PACKS

This pack creation section assumes the pack has been together for a little while, and has some history. The group can use it to make a pack that comes together in the first session of play by simply shifting their expectations, using the system to establish events that will come up during the game, rather than as established history.

Step Zero: Weakest and Strongest Links

Before defining the pack as a whole, each player should an Ability to be their strongest link, and another as their weakest link. A strongest link can be any Ability rated four dots or higher, while the weakest is rated either zero or one dots. These are places your character excels and falls flat. The strongest link is a place where your character shines within the pack, and makes the pack at large look good. The weakest link is a place where other characters have to pick up the slack for your character, and some outsiders might perceive the pack by this weakness. Each character's strength and weakness should be unique through the pack, rather than having multiple characters overlapping.

Right now, make a note of these two traits. If you're doing this step before character creation, mark them on your sheet, so you know where to allocate points.

Step One: Concept

Next, move into the pack's concept. This is briefly addressed on p. 118-119 of W20, but this section goes further. When establishing the pack concept, also determine the pack's structure from the options presented previously in this chapter. Decide why the pack has the structure it is, and why it is – or isn't – diverging from the norm. Doing so can give ideas for the pack's history. Did the characters discuss having an anarchist pack? Were they originally a blessed pack, but lost a member and didn't have the heart to replace him?

During this stage, also assign the pack's breed, tribe, and auspice.

These choices are highly subjective, describing how other werewolves perceive the pack. It may be enough to use the breed, auspice, and tribe of the pack's zedakh. She's in charge, after all.

Discuss breeds. If a pack is all homid, then it's clearly a homid pack. Same with lupus. A pack can, however, be deeply colored by even a single metis member. If a pack was shaken by two members mating, even if they didn't produce any offspring, the pack could be considered metis, since metis define important pack interactions.

With auspices, the zedakh's auspice becomes the easy choice. Alternatively, if one auspice dominates the membership, that makes sense as well. If the pack has a very specific goal in mind, you might choose auspice depending on that role rather than the pack's membership. For example, a pack with two Ahroun, a Galliard, and a Philodox who were assembled to infiltrate a given area and report back to their tribe might be a Ragabash pack, despite having no Ragabash members.

Lastly, tribe can also be tied to the zedakh, or whatever tribe dominates the membership. This should be a relatively

easy choice. The group may however decide to mix things up. If a pack is set to undermine another tribe, that tribe could be the pack's defining tribe. For example, a Shadow Lord pack that exists mainly to monkeywrench Silver Fang activity could be a Silver Fang pack. This also opens up the possibility of a pack being defined as a Black Spiral Dancer pack; this doesn't mean the members are of the Wyrm or even sympathetic to the Black Spiral Dancers. Consider this more a mission statement than anything.

Step Two: Attributes

Next, select Attributes. Rather than setting out dot ratings, assign each Attribute to one of the pack members. Use this to explain why the pack is known for that character's trait. Discuss around the table; everyone should get some input, even if it's not their character. Divide the Attributes between the characters as evenly as possible, focusing on both strengths and weaknesses. Every character should have at least one defining Attribute they contribute to the whole.

Step Three: Abilities

Define the pack's Abilities the same way you assigned Attributes. First, go with the packmates' strongest and weakest links. Write character names in the line next to the trait. Go around the group, making sure everyone contributes a couple more Abilities that matter to them. Not every Ability needs to be represented, but most should. If any end up empty, the pack has no real capacity in that field. They may need to call on allies or dedicated Kinfolk, or just deal with their lack of capability.

Step Four: Advantages

Choose the pack's favored Renown. As with the breed, auspice, and tribe, look to both the zedakh and the general mindset of the pack. The pack doesn't necessarily get more Renown in this favored type or less in the others, but the Storyteller should be more lenient when awarding the favored Renown, because it's expected of the pack.

Every character also contributes a Background. This is usually her highest rated one (except Totem). This helps define the character's role in the pack. This is mostly listed as a reminder to the pack, letting them know the resources at their collective disposal. This is both literal and abstract; a character's Ancestors or Pure Breed is less an active resource, but something that still has value for the pack at large.

Step Five: Finishing Touches

Finally, assign the pack's rank. It should be the same as the zedakh's Rank, unless most of the pack lags significantly behind her. If more than half the pack is beneath her Rank, the pack's Rank is one less than hers. This reflects

a general perception of the pack. Characters speaking on behalf of the pack can use the pack's Rank instead of their own among Garou who know of her pack's reputation.

Playing the Pack

In addition to firming up how other Garou perceive the pack and giving inspiration for story hooks, a defined pack provides other benefits. When a character takes an action she's recognized for – that is, using a trait that her name's against on the pack sheet – once per game session, her player gains take a point of temporary Renown relevant to the action. Also, when a character acts in accordance with her pack's concept traits (breed, tribe, and auspice), she receives a bonus die on her actions.

If a player plays in accordance with their weakest link and strongest link, offer an additional experience point at the end of the session. Whether she stumbles at something she is normally strong at, or overcomes her weakness, or, when her weakness makes the pack work to accommodate her, that counts for experience.

Once per session, a character can choose to take on another packmate's weakness. As long as the packmate's weakest link has fewer dots, use that rating instead of your own for a roll, and regain a point of Willpower. If you have fewer dots, you cannot benefit from this switch. Packmates can also benefit from one another's strengths. Once per story, when spending Willpower for a roll using an Ability that is your packmate's strongest link (not your own), add their dots in that Ability to your dice pool instead of gaining a free success.

Pack Tactics

The following system for pack tactics supplements those on p. 300 of *W20*. Whereas those systems focus primarily on the hunt and in combat, these help the pack in all manner of situations. After all, the pack works as a unit at all times, not just on the battlefield. For every three dots of the pack's total Totem Background, the pack can select (or create) one non-combat tactic.

These new pack tactics work similarly to teamwork actions (*W20* p. 239), but instead of simply adding successes together to establish a single action, this system adds a range of options that allow the pack to bolster one another to devastating effect.

Creating Pack Tactics

When creating a pack tactic, first consider what you want it to accomplish. This should be more complex than a normal action conducted with a single Ability; consider at least a "one-two punch" style action, where multiple characters must use separate Abilities to work toward a collective goal. For

example, the pack might have a tactic that has one character using Computer to hack and demolish a person's business reputation by leaking something to go viral through social media, while another character uses Intimidation to confront the subject with the evidence. She pulls her smartphone or tablet to show the subject what's happening to his reputation, and uses that as leverage to make him down from political action. You could complicate this tactic further by adding a Ragabash sniper to the mix, he uses his Stealth and positions himself with a laser-sighted rifle. When she makes her pitch, she simply points the red dot on the subject's chest. Because these three characters are each using a separate Ability, the tactic can be mixed up a little in execution. Maybe next time, the Computer-using packmate takes control of CCTV cameras when the subject cheats on his wife, the Stealth-based packmate pickpockets the subject's little black book full of mistresses' phone numbers, and the Intimidation specialist blackmails the subject with the information and footage.

These are all actions the characters can take without the tactic. However, practicing and working together guarantees a more fluid, cohesive action, since the characters work in league better than your average team.

When defining the tactic, establish the Abilities used. Having done that, decide which character (by the Ability used) is the "anchor" for the action. This is the person who brings it all home. In the example above, it was the Intimidation specialist. All the other Abilities can take place at any point before the anchor Ability, in any order, as long as they take place during the same scene. Even if the scene is happening in multiple places at once, the actions have to be at least vaguely concurrent.

The Abilities used in a tactic can be "doubled up." A tactic can even consist of only multiple instances of the same Ability. For example, a tactic may involve four members each using Intimidation together to bolster a fifth member's threats. When doing so, however, the precise number of participants and what Abilities each will use must be defined at the start. Characters can use combat Abilities like Brawl and Firearms in these tactics, but the anchor action cannot be a combat action. That's covered by the pack tactics in *W20*. Characters may take down a few minions with Brawl in order to further a Streetwise action to disempower and delegitimize a fomori gang leader.

When using the tactic, the players establish what their characters are doing as their own parts, and the Storyteller should assign relevant dice pools and difficulties for each. While the specifics of their actions will change each time the pack uses a tactic, the overall theme (and Ability used) should remain constant. The actions for each packmate include any modifiers that would normally apply, and characters can influence the dice pools by spending Willpower normally. Characters may normally use any relevant Gifts and other advantages when taking their actions.

SAVING AND SPENDING SUCCESSES

You don't have to use all successes immediately. In fact, in some scenes, numerous characters may contest the anchor. For example, if a character tries to sneak into a building, multiple guards could get contested rolls against the anchor's Stealth. If the anchor has to roll multiple times, all bonus dice and difficulties apply to each roll. However, penalties to opponents' difficulties and dice pools apply per opponent. In these cases, the pack "spends" successes as they see fit.

From a tactical standpoint, if the pack has enough successes to increase the anchor's dice pool by +5 dice, and gets his difficulty to 4, there's no reason to not save the remaining successes for potential opponents.

On the other hand, if the pack doesn't have many successes to spend, they should focus on getting the anchor's dice pool to six or more dice, then on dropping the difficulty, to hit the best returns on their investment.

When a pack tries to use a tactic without the core group, it's possible but tricky. A character acting outside their usual role specialty suffers +1 difficulty on their action, since they're acting out of sync. A packmate who isn't normally used in the tactic takes the difficulty increase and also increases the anchor's difficulty by 1. Characters who are not part of the pack's totem bond suffer an additional +1 difficulty, and must spend a point of Willpower to participate. If one of the positions in the tactic goes unfilled, increase the difficulty of everyone's actions by 1.

After all of the characters apart from the anchor have acted, the players take the successes on their rolls and spend them on features that boost the anchor's roll. Each of the following benefits costs one success:

- Add +1 die to the anchor's dice pool (to a maximum of 5 extra dice).
- Reduce the anchor's difficulty by 1 (minimum difficulty 4).
- In a contested roll, increase the opposing character's difficulty by 1 (maximum difficulty 9).
- In a contested roll, subtract a die from the opposing character's pool (maximum -5 dice).

Example Tactics

This section provides a number of example pack tactics. As the system for non-combat tactics is inherently flexible, they're presented as part of the methodology of the pack who developed the tactic; players and Storytellers should feel free to use them for inspiration or use them whole cloth.

- **All Angles Infiltration:** Malachi's the pack's cat burglar Ragabash. He frequently has to infiltrate enemy territory to gather intelligence for the team (Stealth, anchor). While accomplished as a thief, he's downright untouchable with his pack's support. A packmate with a few Gifts sets up rats and other area vermin as early warning systems (Animal Ken), while another with extensive connections on the street has the homeless monitor the periphery, letting her know when anyone comes in or out (Streetwise). His zedakh is a communications expert, who uses his skills to break down enemy comms technology, and keeps the team in constant contact (Computer). This way, Malachai can get to his target without anyone knowing he's there.

Pack Abilities: Animal Ken, Streetwise, Computer, Stealth (anchor)

- **Canvassing the Territory:** Papua New Guinea's Birds of Paradise have one of the largest, if not the largest territory held by a single pack of Garou. They manage a massive border, on both the physical and Umbral sides. If they stayed together, it'd take a week for each round of patrolling. Instead, they break up into three teams of three or four members each, managing organization, the Umbra, and the physical borders. The Umbra team combs the other side, looking for the symbols and the esoteric evidence of malfeasance (Occult). The physical world team looks for traces of trespassers (Survival). If anyone spots a threat, the organizers use spirits, Gifts, and messengers to bring everyone together to rapidly eliminate the concern (Leadership, anchor).

Pack Abilities: Occult, Survival, Leadership (anchor)

- **Dedication to Research:** Dexter's pack all came from academic backgrounds. Dexter reviews molecular biology term papers at the local college; he guides his pack's research efforts (Leadership). Janey runs an occult bookstore as her "day job" (Occult). Danger Dan does freelance private investigation to pay the bills (Investigation). Courtney-Just-Fucking-Google-It is a master of trolling forums and search engines for esoteric answers (Computer). When everyone in the pack gets together to figure out the truth behind whatever topic, Cass brings it all together with liberal application of logic to give a holistic answer (Science, anchor).

Pack Abilities: Leadership, Computer, Investigation, Occult, Science (anchor)

- **Keeping Him Down:** Not all pack tactics are positive, productive actions. With this tactic, the pack collectively belittles, berates, and abuses a pack member to keep him

from rising up and succeeding. This establishes and maintains one werewolf as the pack's talakkh, often against his will. First, one of the members asserts dominance in an unnecessary, petty circumstance (Primal Urge). Then, another member tells him incorrectly about the futility of his situation and his role (Subterfuge). Then, his zedakh uses him as an example of weakness, offering him up as a contrast, as an object lesson (Leadership). Lastly, one packmate – an enabler – acts as a shoulder to cry on, and keeps him from leaving because: "They really need you, they just don't know how to show it." (Empathy, anchor).

Pack Abilities: Primal Urge, Subterfuge, Leadership, Empathy (anchor)

- **Motor City Shakedown:** Hot Rod is a Glass Walker Philodox. His pack, Supercharger Heaven, doesn't bring a knife to a gunfight: They bring motorcycles and cars to a fistfight. Hot Rod parleys with enemies, shaking them down to kill morale before the pack moves in for the kill (Intimidation, anchor). When he shows up, his pack is already there, revving their engines and making it very clear that they're willing to run over anyone that gets in Hot Rod's way (Drive).

Pack Abilities: Drive (x4), Intimidation (anchor)

- **No Golden Parachute:** The Real Wolves of Wall Street are masters of character assassination. They can take a powerful man, a magnate, a shark, and destroy his reputation, his finances, and his future in a matter of hours. First, Hannah-Pained-Screaming digs up dirt on the victim's past. Liaisons, illicit deals, affairs, whatever (Investigation). Then, Broke-As-Fuck has local vagrants, junkies, and migrant workers bed down near his businesses and houses, dropping property value, making valuable clients flee, and inviting police attention (Leadership). Totally-Not-Shelly summons spirits to influence and harangue the victim's clients, souring all their relationships (Rituals). Lastly, Breaks-Glass-Ceilings-And-Faces makes the "killing blow" by getting drugs and weapons planted at the victim's house (Streetwise, anchor). Without his normal financial and political protections, the victim goes away to prison for a long, long time.

Pack Abilities: Investigation, Leadership, Rituals, Streetwise (anchor)

- **Oceans Five:** The High Rollers gamble to fund their pack enterprises. Except "gamble" is the wrong word: they cheat the house. One, rotating member plays a casino game (Larceny). Their zedakh, Dice, makes sure every member is a cog in a well-oiled machine (Leadership, anchor). Goin' For Broke is an expert at causing a mess and distracting security (Brawl). Full House knows the loopholes in all the machines, from automated card shufflers to slot machines (Technology). Joker is the team grifter, she finds the perfect part to play to fleece the house (Subterfuge). Snake Eyes



picks pockets and steals chips, leaving dealers none the wiser (Larceny). Each time, one of the pack except Dice has to play a table in order to maintain their cover

Note that because one member has to play the game, all pack members are at +1 difficulty; the player is at +2 in total.

Pack Abilities: Brawl, Larceny (x2), Subterfuge, Technology, Leadership (anchor)

• **Shotgun Diplomacy:** To say that the Tanner Family has trouble with other Garou is an understatement. Outsiders often come in and challenge the pack, trying to assert dominance and force them to change their zedakh-free lifestyle. They've adopted a tactic to deal with this sort of thing. It's not subtle, but it's effective. Oaklyn marches out with a shotgun full of silver buckshot. She stands in

front of a few kin, carrying similar arms (Firearms). Greg carries his father's klawie sledgehammer out from the shed (Melee). Ted marches the perimeter, warding the gates and fences to lock in anyone running, screaming, or trying to contact the outside (Rituals). Mary greets the "diplomats" and lays out in no uncertain terms that their house stands on a powderkeg of dynamite, military surplus weaponry, and bullion from the family's days in the silver rush (Intimidation, anchor). Usually, this diffuses the situation, and the trespassers leave. Sometimes, the pack has to take out one or more of the invading force. But even in those cases, the pack can shake them up enough to reduce the threat.

Pack Abilities: Firearms, Melee, Rituals, Intimidation (anchor)



BRIAN
LEBLANC



Chapter Five: Spirit Magic

Gifts In Desperation, Flight

Grass-on-the-Savannah, Ragabash Silent Strider

I don't know how long I ran. Weeks, maybe, or months. Coerced by the smoke and pain, the Umbra opened its arms to me, and I gladly accepted its embrace, with flames and death nipping at my heels and invading my dreams. I didn't want to go back there, back to a caern blackened with ashes, smelling sour like blood and burnt flesh and chemicals. If I had, something would have shattered inside me and I didn't know if I could put it back together. No, staying behind to fight alone wouldn't bring back the sept I'd come to love, or dry my eyes.

I'd heard an old Fianna tale once, of great Garou heroes who slumbered in times of peace until Gaia needed them once more. I was clearly no hero and this wasn't a time of peace, but I scoured the Umbra for a spirit that could teach me anyway. Between peaks that stretched into the sky I ran, and stole through Luna's shadow like a whisper whenever the stench of oil threatened my path. And whenever I slept, I could hear the voices of the fallen, growling at me.

Coward, they said, and deserter. All you ever do is run away. Run. Run. Run. And they were right. So that's what I did. I wondered if I would find them somewhere, newly born ancestors. I wondered if they would hate me.

But I didn't find them. In time, I came instead to a vast yawning cavern under purple skies. The moon and stars were milky and distant. A faint whiff of honeysuckle floated across the twilit mountains. As soon as my paws touched the smooth, packed earth of the cave, I knew my search had ended. Bright eyes pierced the darkness inside to measure me. "New Moon warrior," came the low rumble from the den's depths, in the language of the Wild. "You have traveled far to reach me."

"I have."

"I see the dust of many roads under your claws. I see the signs of sleepless nights. Have you come to hide here, werewolf? Or to beg a favor?"

I swallowed my pride and stilled my desperate thoughts, putting on a nonchalant tone. "In fact, I've come to do one for you." A massive, furry black shape rose out of the murk then, with thundering footsteps. Bear's avatar was at least twice my size, so I grinned with my teeth to show him I was neither cowed nor humbled.

"Is that so." His black fur smelled of sweet fermented berries and dust, and his eyes spoke of quiet suspicion. He moved his enormous head down closer to mine.

"You doubt me?" I didn't back off, instead pacing back and forth right under his nose. "Tell me, then. Would you deny that long years of solitude weary you? Of course, you wouldn't." I barely took a breath between thoughts, giving him no opportunity to reply. "You're a loner, I understand, but no one — spirit or otherwise — thrives on boredom. Right? Right. The salmon-spirits you hunt day by day are hardly much for witty conversation, after all, so it's a good thing I came along, isn't it!" I paused, coming closer to him as though I had some private secret to divulge. "I can tell you're out of practice, you know. But don't worry! I'm willing to help out," I assured him with a slight wag of my tail.

He finally opened his toothy muzzle at that point, blinking, so I carried on quickly. I almost had him. "No, there's no need to thank me, I'm only too happy to provide company and a bit of repartee. Well, if you insist, I could accept a small token in return. Oh! Here's an idea: we'll play at riddles to keep you sharp, and if I win, you can teach me the secret of long slumber. What do you say?"

He grunted in the sudden silence where my deluge of words had been. "I suppose—"

I sat down in a small puff of dust, gesturing with a paw, and dipping my head. "I accept! That's very generous of you. Shall we begin?"

Chiminage

Mastering the Gifts of the spirit world begins with a desire. A young Galliard wants to impress his elders by recalling every detail of an hours-long epic poem. A weathered Stargazer warrior prepares to infiltrate a neighboring sept to expose the Wyrm's corruption, and wants a leg up on their hidden evidence in the Umbra. But desire is not enough. The spirits do not give up their secrets freely, or out of the goodness of their hearts. Ancient laws govern their dealings with Gaia's chosen champions, mimicking the primal forces that govern the natural world. Something does not come from nothing, and nothing is taken without reciprocity one way or another. To keep as many allies as they can, the Garou prefer to show respect and offer chiminage for the spirits' help in their war against the Wyrm. Of course, one werewolf's idea of respect is not necessarily the same as another's, and sometimes one must coerce or even trick recalcitrant spirits into upholding their end of the bargain.

Tracking down the right spirit can be an adventure in and of itself. If the Galliard's sept elders are to summon one of the wise elephant-spirits from its Penumbbral home for his benefit, he must prove himself worthy of their time. The Stargazer veteran must undertake a quest into an Epiph to hunt for an evasive Truth spirit willing to deal before

she can negotiate for its aid. Not all spirits of the same type are approachable as though they're identical, either; where one Wyldling is perfectly willing to imbue a werewolf with its magic for a pittance, another goes on the attack at the mere suggestion, and yet another makes nigh-impossible demands for its own amusement.

Those Garou who entreat spirits of the Weaver to learn Gifts do so at their own peril. While the Glass Walkers see the Weaver as a tool they can use against the Wyrm, most other Garou recognize that the spinner is just as great a threat. As such, those who do learn from the Weaver take it upon themselves to fight against it; a Garou who uses the Weaver's tools redoubles her efforts to tear down the webs that calcify the world, as she is in part responsible for its actions.

Once a werewolf finds the right spirit, the real challenge starts. Some do their homework and present their trades up front. The Stargazer learns that a particular Epiphling is known to covet fetishes in the form of rare books, and decides to bring such a fetish along into the Penumbra to offer in exchange for knowledge. She first tries to bargain with septmates, but no one has the kind of fetish she needs. She travels to a faraway caern to barter with its elders, but they place little value on what she offers to trade and turn her down. Finally, frustrated and growing impatient, she goes tomb raiding in ancient subterranean battlegrounds to find a suitable tome. One of her packmates suffers injuries along the way, and she questions whether all this was worth it. But when the chips are down and she manages to evade death at the hands of the enemy by slipping into the Umbra where the Gauntlet should not yield, she and her pack agree: it was worth it.

Another takes part in a sacred hunt. Spirits cross the Gauntlet to possess exemplary spirits or powerful people in the physical world. By sniffing out such a creature, the werewolf drives her pack to hunt it down so that she may kill it and consume its power. A Gaffling may only provide a gift of Gnosis, while a more powerful spirit may grant a Gift in return. The hunt itself is chiminage: proving that the werewolf is a skilled enough hunter to track down creatures from the spirit world in the physical. Though they do not take place in the Umbra, such hunts often see the pack faced with symbols and challenges related to the spirit's nature.

Sometimes, trades are not so simple; Griffin's avatars, for instance, have been known to demand werewolves offer the bones of humans who they have hunted and sacrificed before they consent to pass on their talents. Most Red Talons care nothing for these sacrifices, but Garou of other tribes may weigh the bloodshed that would result from giving the spirit what it wants against their need for the secrets it possesses. Cat spirits are notoriously unwilling to take a werewolf's need at face value, and often insist on offerings

with sentimental value to the petitioner as proof that he is serious about his request. Werewolves have given away the last tokens of their pre-Change lives, treasured favors from lovers, and beloved trophies of battle to skeptical felines in exchange for Gifts. Animal sacrifices to honor a spirit's name are common as well, which can be as simple as hunting a rabbit in the nearby woods, or as complicated as traveling halfway across the world to find a nearly-extinct species of monkey.

Not all offerings are material things. Esoteric beings of the Near Realms and spirits of concepts may demand that the Garou give up memories, or allow them to temporarily inhabit the werewolf's mind to experience her life and emotions firsthand. Some spirits want — or can be convinced to want — simple services like companionship, a sparring match, a hunting partner, or a liaison to the material world. Others ride the werewolf's body to carry out their own agenda, slaughtering humans responsible for defiling the material world. One legendary Galliard persuaded a servant of Raven to accept one full day and night of nonstop storytelling in exchange for its most jealously guarded Gift.

Some spirits are more difficult to shop for and not as easily predictable. The broods of spirits such as Sphinx, Boar, and Chimera are fond of forcing a petitioner to pass a test or face a challenge before they will lend their aid, ranging from solving riddles to defeating champions in battle or navigating mind-bending labyrinths to fetch prizes. Others take it a step further and demand that the Garou embark on a quest or perform a favor for them. Still others refuse to teach a werewolf anything until she convinces them she can defeat them in battle; and the consequences for proving unworthy are, at times, dire.

In Change, Understanding

Autumn Rain, Theurge Stargazer

I've been called a wolf of few words. That's fine with me. Some say I'd run into less trouble if I would just ask questions now and then, but I trust what my senses tell me more than I trust words. Words can be false, but smells are true.

Sometimes, though, even words and smells together can't prepare you for what comes.

"Who?" the snowy owl spirit asks of me. That homid Weaver-lover would find this funny, I think, but I just respond.

"Autumn Rain." I give my name with a slight bow of the head, though I don't take my eyes off the owl. We've made a deal already, but birds are strange allies.

"Autumn Rain. Come." Its hollow voice rings out over the still lake, where the crescent moon is mirrored in silver. It flaps into the trees, and I follow. My breath puffs out into mist in rhythm with my paws tossing up snow that smells

like buried things. I weave through trunks as large around as two wolves. A chill wind picks up, howling like a friend across the forest and gathering under my...

...wings?

I try to bark in surprise and instead a screeching call emerges from my curved beak. "Silence," says the spirit. "Do as I do, and understand."

We sweep soundlessly through the darkness under the canopy, alight on branches to watch for prey, become the stillness of the raptor. The smallest details of the forest carpet are as clear to my eyes as the ringing of bells or the songs of distant robins should be. At any moment, I expect the chase to begin, the exhilarating rush of motion, but with an alien patience, Autumn Rain the owl just waits. Around me the forest moves and lives, passing me by with fleeting scents I can't parse. I feel like a tiny boulder, a dead weight, with trees five times their usual size looming around me like specters.

Finally, we dive dreamlike into the snow, ever silent. No calls to the pack, no bounding pursuit. One merciless strike is all we need. The spirit banks aside at the last moment to make room for me and my snatching talons. I sink them into the grey fur of the unsuspecting mouse and warm blood follows my flight like raindrops, staining the flawless winter. My prey struggles helplessly in my iron grasp. Colors and shapes define the swiftly-passing landscape, new and bright even where the moonlight doesn't reach.

Then I open my true eyes, heavy with a sleep I never took. The forest looks muted, but smells alive again. I have four paws as I should.

"Now," says the spirit, "you have a little owl in you. Hunt not as the wolf but as I do, and you will snare your prey."

Dawning

If mastering Gifts begins with a desire, it ends with a revelation. No training montage is needed to show long weeks of arduous work or hours of painstaking practice — "learning" power from a spirit is more akin to a blind man suddenly being granted sight. Merely-human understanding might compare it to the mind forming subconscious connections after stepping away from a frustrating problem, such that the next day it presents no challenge. But even this is inadequate to describe the instantaneous expansion of horizons a werewolf enjoys when a spirit bestows its power upon him.

The experience of learning a Gift is different for everyone, and different each time. The type of Gift, the nature of the spirit and even the werewolf's own preconceptions and expectations color the encounter. A Stargazer who seeks the arcane mysteries of spirit-hunting in the frozen north meets an owl-spirit who values insight over words. The result is a vivid hallucination that puts the Garou in

the mindset of the bird-of-prey, translating the concept of “being an owl that hunts by snaring its food in its talons” into the concept of “trapping spirits in a mystical net” through direct understanding. The same Gift might be taught to a Get of Fenris by forcing her to actually hunt down the owl-spirit itself, gaining the same experience through a more familiar lens. Or, if a spirit likes to show werewolves what it’s like to step outside their comfort zones, it might reverse those tactics, making the Stargazer get her paws dirty and giving the Get a new perspective.

Another age-old favorite is the symbolic vision. A homid looking to protect himself from the dangers of raging fire might experience a waking dream in which everywhere he turns, his enemies fling bitter insults at him, tearing him down and pissing on everything he loves. Before he can end the vision and learn the Gift, he must overcome his urge to fly into a Rage and instead feel the insults roll off his back as he laughs in the faces of those who would hurt him.

But many spirits don't bother walking the werewolf through the experience this way, preferring to simply get the job done without catering to her human side by giving her little narratives to latch onto. In the spirit world, things can be simple. The strong survive, the weak perish, and power is power regardless of the shape it takes. In cases like this, the spirit temporarily possesses the Garou and writes the Gift directly into her mind, searing it into the recipient like a brand. From the werewolf's perspective, she is shunted to the back of her own mind and feels the change happening second by second. Some describe this as pain, as though a hot poker were scrawling the power into her flesh. Others describe it as a shapeshifting of the soul, mimicking the feeling of the First Change. Still others say stranger things: the impression that they grow larger than their own skin, a high akin to an adrenaline rush or being stoned, ecstasy not unlike a spiritual orgasm, or the sensation of things crawling around inside them. Again, it all depends on the spirit and the Gift. The Wendigo temporarily possessed by an avatar of her tribe's bloody patron is unlikely to have a pleasant experience, but the Child of Gaia who gives herself to a servant of Helios to learn how to shine like the sun feels warm and fulfilled, like a baking cookie.

To some spirits, the Garou who can dish it out but can't take it isn't worth their time. Teaching the Gift itself is as much a test as the demand for chiminage was. These spirits insist that the werewolf bear the full brunt of the Gift's effects as a brute force transfer of power. Many an Ahroun bears the scars of learning to transform her claws into silver, and many a Shadow Lord knows the sting of shame at being spooked into complacency. Some Garou who learn this way occasionally express sympathy, or at least empathy, for their prey. Others use these Gifts with even more ferocity and ruthlessness than their fellows do, lashing out in retribution against the memory every time.

In Remembrance, Rage

Connor, Galliard Child of Gaia

A whoosh of air and a bright light came up from under me, and I felt floaty. Um, what's the word? Weightless. Then I couldn't feel the ground under my feet anymore, and I really *was* floating! I reached out my hand to steady myself, and I saw that the light was coming from me! I couldn't see Angelica anymore down there. I heard her voice inside my head. It said, “In here, birdbrain.”

“What? Hey! I'm not a birdbrain!”

“Of course, you're not. Just hold still, will ya? Inscribing my fury into your soul ain't exactly a walk in the park.”

I tried to stop moving, but it felt so weird. I didn't like floating, it was too much like being helpless. And the light was too bright. What if something came for me and I couldn't run or fight? The shadows looked dark and wild. Anything could come out of there. I imagined a big oily sludge oozing out and rising like a tidal wave, eating me, and spitting out my bones. Ptoo!

“Stop fidgeting, I'm almost done!”

“Sorry.”

Finally, she put me down and the light went out. I jumped up and down a couple of times, just to make sure the ground was solid. She rolled her eyes. “Is that it?” I asked.

“Course that's it. What did you want, a medal?”

“Well, I thought... um.” I shrugged. “Never mind.”

“Listen, Connor.” Angelica put her good hand on my shoulder. “I want you to think real hard about all the misery they put you through. I know you don't like it, but do that for me. All right?”

“Huh? Okay.” I felt my stomach flop around like a fish. Her voice sounded tight like a rubber band when she said that. Why? But then she was just gone. She didn't even say goodbye.

Think about the misery? What did she mean? Sure, the others at the caern weren't always so nice, but that wasn't really misery, was it? And before that, my human family loved me just like I was their own. I mean, they didn't let me go outside, but that was because I'd scare people. And before that...before that...

Suddenly I was growling. It vibrated deep in my chest and my skin felt like it was on fire. Then everything looked a little smaller and I realized I was in my real form, the one for fighting. I remembered dark places and pain and the backs of werewolves as they walked away, over and over. I remembered laughter that sounded like snarling, underneath. I heard a musical, angry sound and listened to it for a while before I noticed it was me, howling.

My heart thumped against my chest. I knew what the Rage was like, of course, but this was different. Everything



I'd remembered felt like claws slicing me open, and all I wanted was to slice them all back. I thought, if only I had them here in front of me, they would draw blood but I would draw twice as much. Everybody: my real parents, my human parents, the elders, those fomori, everybody. I lifted up my claws and they felt powerful and mean. If anybody hurt me, ever again, I knew I would hurt them back, and it would feel good. No, better than good. It would feel *right*. I just knew it.

Then it was over. I changed back to homid form and dropped to my hands and knees, panting for breath. I felt myself crying and didn't try to stop, because nobody was there to make fun of me. I'd never wanted to hurt anyone, but I knew I would. I had to. And now, it didn't seem so scary anymore. Now a part of me *did* want to do it. Maybe that meant I was finally, really Garou.

Becoming

When humans or wolves learn a new skill, they remember having earned it. It feels natural for a human to sail a boat when he recalls weeks of frustrating sailing lessons and little moments of incremental understanding. He looks back on the times when he screwed up tying that knot, and knows now how to tie it correctly. It feels natural for a young wolf to hunt and kill, after watching his packmates do it for months and playing with other wolves to sharpen his reflexes. He recognizes that when the bison got away, it was because his sister went for a different bison on her own, and learns that teamwork leads to food. Cause and effect lead to greater skill.

From this perspective, it's anything *but* natural to look into the Umbra an ignorant cub, suddenly able to understand everything spirits say to each other. The Theurge doesn't know any catchy mnemonics for remembering the various verb tenses of the spirit language, and he doesn't need them. He just opens his mouth and spirit words fall out in the right order for the Wyldling guarding the gate to understand.

Learning a new Gift opens doors that didn't even exist yesterday. Humans who become aware of something they've never heard of before think they understand this notion, but in reality, they've been soaking up the cultures and information of their world for their entire lives, preparing themselves for new experiences with relatively similar ones. The closest most humans come to the sensation of gaining a new Gift is in learning that there really *are* monsters lurking in the darkness: A fundamental, lurching shift of worldview they can never unlearn once it's done. Nothing is ever the same again. Not the world, and not the way one sees oneself in it. This is how a werewolf feels each and every time she learns a Gift.

Some Gifts are more of a shift than others, of course. Leaping higher and farther than before is certainly a new experience, but it's built on something the werewolf already knew how to do: leap. Even shifting into animals who aren't wolves, while novel and rife with opportunities to explore separate ways of life, is still just shapeshifting, and that's second nature for the Garou. On the other hand, mind-to-mind speech or walking in someone else's dreams is so far removed from most werewolves' previous experience that it can be jarring or even overwhelming at first to suddenly have the ability and know how to use it. Combat Gifts, especially more powerful or brutal ones, can frighten a werewolf with her own deadly force.

When werewolves describe these changes to each other, their stories can sound very different even if they learned the same Gift. Like the actual experience of receiving it, the feeling of possessing it varies wildly from one Garou to another. One says that she feels the same as she always did, while another says that he feels impossibly refreshed, as though he's woken from a deep, lifelong dream. One exults in her swell of newfound self-confidence, while another wrestles with uncertainty, unable to reconcile who he was yesterday with who he is today.

More often than not, having a new Gift is an extraordinary rush. Who wouldn't celebrate suddenly knowing how to grow wings and fly, or cow her enemies into fleeing her indomitable prowess? Many Garou, especially young ones, take to flaunting new Gifts at every opportunity. Some even turn learning Gifts into a contest, one-upping rivals by seeking out Gifts that trump theirs. This is particularly common among Shadow Lords and Get of Fenris. Galliards are well-known for organizing opportunities for septmates to get together and show off their newfound talents, not only to sound their own horns but also to keep a running record of any new Gifts brought to the sept by those who have traveled far or found rare spirits to teach them. Those who have impressive enough Gifts to boast can earn Renown this way. (And those who *think* they do can earn the heckling of Ragabash eager for their own brand of Renown.)

On the other hand, more than one Philodox has taken on the responsibility of helping others deal with the less-rosy aftermath of obtaining new Gifts, especially when doing so was a necessity born of need, rather than an adventure. The Silver Fang cliath who grew up in human cities learns to sense the presence of Wyrm taint at his pack's insistence, and despairs to see with his own eyes just how much of the human world chokes with corruption. A Red Talon Theurge is forced to learn to traverse the Pattern Web so she can lead her pack home, and later can't shake furious disgust with herself, feeling as though she's defiled herself in Gaia's eyes by touching her paws to those noxious strands. Since one cannot unlearn a Gift, Garou who find themselves suffering crises of conscience, identity, or faith after learning one must find some way to adjust.

Perspective

"What do you mean, it's dangerous? Don't be silly! Watch, I'll show you. See? It's not that cold. I feel fine. Come on, we don't have all day... whoops, did I forget to mention that ice water can't touch me? It must have slipped my mind. I guess you Wyrmspawn freaks might end up with hypothermia, huh? That's too bad. Oh yes, I know what you are. And you're a long way from help. No, you stay down there like good fomori and freeze to death."

"Just take my word for it. I can't explain how I know. I just know. It'll happen. My instincts are never wrong. Yes, okay, I'm crazy. Like I haven't heard that one a million times. Fine, go ahead. I'll say, 'I told you so' later."

"I used to be afraid to go off by myself. They kept telling me to scout ahead, and I hated it. But now that I can howl and they'll come running even if they're far away, I feel okay about scouting. It makes me the pack canary sometimes, but I don't even mind... mostly."

"You think you're paranoid? You ain't seen nothing. Not 'til you can be anyone, at any time. Walk among them and wear their faces. You start realizing anybody could be doing what you do, anybody could be the enemy. You start seeing shadows in broad daylight. Plus, the more you walk around as anybody and everybody, the easier it is to forget who you're supposed to be. But hey, if not me, then who's gonna do it? Nobody, that's who."

Once the Garou adjusts to his new talents, for good or for ill, they become an innate part of him, and eventually even the most conflicted werewolf gets used to what he can do as though he'd always been able to do it. In much the same way that a rocket scientist can forget how to explain complex ideas in a way that laypeople can understand, or that an Olympic swimmer thinks nothing of venturing far from shore, knowing a Gift changes the way a werewolf thinks. It opens new avenues of thought, provides new options for solving problems, and can ultimately shape the course of the Garou's life. Even the weakest Gift can make a significant difference.

In some ways, low-level Gifts affect the way a werewolf approaches his everyday life more than the mighty Gifts of the elders do. They become the lens through which the Garou views everything from herself to her enemies to the Umbra. The Red Talon who learns the Gift: Eye of the Hunter never doubts her instincts. She knows the strongest and weakest member of every group she encounters, and even if she does not desire violence she knows the dynamic of the group. A leader cannot hide behind a strong-looking subordinate, and no matter how much the weakest member tries to hide their infirmity the Garou can single them out as the right one to threaten, cajole, or slaughter to prove her might. She may well forget that others don't have the same insight into group dynamics that she does, and will become frustrated when her packmates pick on the wrong person.

Meanwhile, to the homid who learns the Gift: Master of Fire, arson is his hammer and eventually, everything starts to look like a nail. A nest of vampires needs cleaning out? Burn it down! Who cares that he might need to slip inside and ensure that none of them escape? He stops thinking twice before leaping in through a window to rescue a child from a burning building, or dragging that Black Spiral Dancer bodily into the campfire until she burns to ashes. One of the greatest fears of almost every species on Earth — including supernatural predators — becomes a mere inconvenience to the Garou who masters it.

Higher-level Gifts can provide specialized solutions to problems that make their wielders the go-to people when certain kinds of threats rear their ugly heads or some specific talent is needed. When the Kinfolk parent of a packmate is dragged to a Bane camp and possessed against his will, the Theurge who has mastered the Gift: Exorcism is the only one who can save him without having to kill him before he completes his transformation into a fomor. If she earns Renown doing it and word gets out, she may receive calls from other packs or even other septs asking for her help. Some Garou thrive on these kinds of requests, either because they can get something out of them or because they feel good about aiding fellow warriors of Gaia. Others just want to tend to their own packs' problems, and grow resentful of those who make demands on their time. Either way, certain Gifts can shine a spotlight (or paint a target) on those who learn them, and they need to deal with that one way or another.

Some higher-level Gifts are weapons in the grand arsenal arrayed against the Wyrm's hordes, and the Garou who learn them become certain kinds of weapons themselves. The Fenrir who learns the Gift: Redirect Pain gains a reputation as a kamikaze fighter, throwing herself headlong into battle heedless of the threat, knowing that any suffering her enemies bring to her will come right back to them. Her pack can't deny she's effective, but they worry about her. She herself comes to revel in the amalgam of pain and retribution every combat brings, her greatest satisfaction the look on a foe's face when he first realizes his mistake. To her, seeing her own blood flow spells victory.

Potent Gifts can even shape habitual behavior and prompt the Garou to adopt new lifestyles. In many cases, the werewolf isn't likely to learn a Gift like Riot or The Living Wood if he doesn't already have a penchant for sticking it to the man or spending time in wooded areas. On the other hand, learning such a Gift often creates a much stronger leaning toward such activities or environments, conscious or not, to the point where thinking outside that box becomes very difficult. The Child of Gaia elder who lives in a forest caern so that he will always have trees to animate for protection may never leave his bawn at all after he has spent enough time with the Gift. Likewise, the

Bone Gnawer who started off wanting to become better at rousing the masses is likely to develop an urge to do so whenever the opportunity arises once the Gift becomes part of him, seeing oppression everywhere and feeling his hackles rise every time.

A werewolf may also learn a Gift that *doesn't* conform to his previous personality or behaviors. Gifts learned out of necessity or desperation, at someone else's insistence, or even by request from a spirit could end up fundamentally changing the Garou forever. The metis who endures pressure from his pack to become stronger and more effective on the battlefield, or who succumbs in a moment of despair to the desire to lash out at others and seeks a spirit's help, may come to learn Gifts that unleash his Rage and suffering in ways he never imagined were possible, such as Madness or Lash of Rage. When he does, he may need to unlock hidden reserves of fury or bitterness that until now he has never allowed himself to feel, and they cannot put such genies back into their bottles.

Some Gifts are so powerful that those who master them must learn to keep them in check until they are absolutely necessary, or risk abusing them and drawing the ire of both the Garou Nation and the spirit world. The homid who learns to Part the Veil and allow humans to see the true nature of the werewolf walks a dangerous line. If she gives in to the temptation too often, her disregard for the Litany will earn her profound consequences, so she must develop enough self-control and good judgment to know when and where to apply her power, and when to hold it back. Likewise, the Theurge who uses Malleable Spirit to reshape the Umbra's denizens at her merest whim is a prime target for other spirits who see her as a threat to the natural order, so she must keep her temper and refrain from rewriting every spirit who gets in her way or disagrees with her point of view. Many high-ranking Garou in good standing with the spirits and their septs have reputations for being cautious or highly disciplined for this reason.

In Farewell, Revelation

Naomi Lee, Ahroun Glass Walker

"You're late."

I walk into the spacious loft apartment and toss my backpack onto the couch. Warm golden sunlight floods the place through floor-to-ceiling windows all along the west wall, and chilly air blows in from the open door that leads up to the roof. Can't accuse the old coot of being a shut-in, that's for damn sure.

"You're lying," I reply with a grin, draping myself over the rest of the couch and putting my feet up on the backpack. "Just trying to piss me off, aren't you? I get how this works now, y'know. We've been at it for months, it ain't working anymore."

"Well, that's the problem, isn't it? Shoes off the couch." Grey-haired Tully comes in from the kitchen like fucking Mufasa surveying his kingdom and pushes my feet onto the floor with one hand as he passes by. He needs a beard trim, like always, but I know better than to tease him about it. Not that I always did. Live and learn.

"What problem? I don't see a problem." I sit up and lean forward, resting my forearms on my knees. "You were supposed to teach me not to give in to Rage, and here I am. Not giving in to Rage."

He waves his hand like he's waving away some rotten odor. "What are you, an idiot cub? Have you learned nothing?"

"Enlighten me, gramps."

He rounds on me, abrupt and fierce, clenching one fist. "You insufferable fool! You fail to rise to the feeblest bait and think you know something about Rage?" The last word comes out like a growl.

I slowly straighten up, hearing my pulse in my ears over the distant memory of half-remembered screams. "Say that again," I dare him, my voice low and sharp.

"I should have known you couldn't hack it," he spat back. "Your pride knows no bounds, rivaled only by your lust for blood. You never intended to learn a damn thing here, did you?"

My heart rate goes through the roof and I feel my nails digging into my thighs. Every muscle in my body is like an iron catapult ready to launch me. *Pride?* After what I did, after everything? After I crawled back to him on my belly like a goddamn worm and begged him to fix what was wrong with me? He *knows* what hell I go through every day, keeping my claws from tearing a bloody swath through every Wyrm-tainted piece of scum I pass on the streets, he *knows!*

I snarl at him. "What is this, Tully?"

"You have only yourself to blame for your dismal failure, and you know it. And that's the part that really eats you up inside, isn't it? You'll never learn."

And he turns away.

I erase the space between us without even knowing I've done it. All I know is I'm seeing the world through a haze of red and turning him to face me before I slam him up against the wall with my clawed hand clamped around his throat. "Don't you fucking turn your back on me!"

For a second his eyes bulge with a fury he saves for the enemy, but I can't even register the wrongness of it before it fades, replaced with an intensity that drives straight into my gut. All that bile in his voice from a second ago is gone. He doesn't fight me. Instead his hands come up to grab my collar and pull me closer. Inches away, so close and vehement I can feel his spittle on my face, he hisses, "Stay with me, Naomi. Don't lose yourself. Stay right here with me. You can do it. You can do it! Come on!"

But he's wrong.

When I come to, furniture and glass lay scattered around me like confetti and the full moon glares down at me from outside. Stuffing from the couch cushions is all over the place, all over the glossy hardwood floor that's gouged all to hell with jagged claw marks. Shit, what did I do? No, no no no... I scramble to my feet like a kid caught with her hand in the cookie jar and look around, wild. Room's trashed, but where's Tully?

I hear noise coming from up on the roof. Singing? No, howling. Howling, oh Jesus Christ, no. Still in Glabro, I tear through the ruined apartment to the stairs and charge up them, through the open door into the night.

Werewolves. All over the roof. The whole damn sept is up here, howling up at Luna's full face like a bunch of walking stereotypes. I search the gathering with mounting desperation until I see him. At first all the tension slides out of me and I slump with relief, 'til I notice what he's doing.

Tully's there, in Homid, walking through the howling wolves. I incongruously think of cartoon lions again, because I swear to God he looks like nothing more than Simba climbing fucking Pride Rock with all the animals bowing to him. A glint of moonlight on something bright pulls my attention to what he's carrying. His *klaive*.

"What the fuck, Tully?" It sounds more like a plea than an accusation, cutting through the solemn dirge.

He stops mid-step to turn halfway toward me. The rest of the sept doesn't even bat an eye. "Goodbye, Naomi," he says, and the bastard has the gall to smile. He *smiles*. With a sudden lurch of my stomach that feels like it's giving up on gravity, I realize the truth.

"This was your *plan*? You son of a bitch."

He doesn't answer me. The fury, howling mass swallows him up as he changes form, grasping the *klaive*'s hilt between his teeth. He leaps across the gap between rooftops and disappears into the dark. Off to be alone with his sword.

I'm shaking, as the song finally stops and the sept turns to look at me as one. Their eyes look eerie in the full moon's brilliance. "You all knew." My voice sounds like fangs ripping at flesh. "You all fucking *knew*. But no, it had to be one last lesson." I feel like my insides are about to boil out through every orifice in my body, but I wrap my arms around myself and struggle to stay lucid. I remember those screams, faint in my memory like a nightmare that was real. Waking up to the wrecked remains of Tully's loft. In retrospect, he must have knocked me out after I totaled his apartment. Losing it in the middle of my first fight against Wyrmspawn, my packmate having to drag me out of the room. Enough is enough.

Hindsight is 20 fucking 20, isn't it? With more clarity now I can recognize the sadness behind all that bullshit he was hurling at me earlier. None of it was real. I failed

the test, but don't get me wrong, Tully, he was gonna do this whether I learned the lesson or not. He decided his time was up and he was done. He just wanted to give me one last chance. Or maybe two.

So, like he's showed me so many times before, I forge steel in my heart and I bottle up the Rage. I shove it down into the steadily-growing, gnawing black hole inside me and slam the vault door shut. It'll open again, but now's not the time. I finally get my breathing under control, and when I look up at the sept again, I feel regal. I'm goddamn Mufasa now. "Leave me alone," I tell them. And they do.

The city might've had its fill of howling wolves already tonight, but fuck it. It'll have to deal with one more for a while.

The Hard Way

Receiving Gifts directly from spirits isn't the only way a werewolf can expand his horizons. It's possible to learn them from another werewolf, though the two processes differ greatly. Where obtaining a Gift from a spirit is a revelatory experience that's over in a few hours at most, learning one from another Garou is a lot like learning to ride a bicycle or juggle, except that instead of being able to watch and mimic movements, the student must commune with the teacher's soul, and mimic *that*. Fortunately, since Garou are as much creatures of spirit as they are creatures of flesh, it's not as impossible a feat as it sounds.

It takes at least one full lunar month to learn a Gift from another werewolf. Even the most precocious cub or mystically-inclined Theurge can't take shortcuts, because the reshaping of a soul to match the spiritual flavor of a Gift just takes time. Some say it's because the moon must go through one entire cycle of phases before the soul is malleable enough to emulate another. Others think it's just a matter of wearing down the barriers between individuals, one step at a time. Whatever the case, lessons usually take the form of patient repetition, careful observation, finding the right stimulus to draw out the desired response, and discussions (or debates, or shouting matches) about the nature of the Gift and the spirit who originally granted it. The student must learn not only to think like a werewolf who knows the Gift, but like the spirit it came from.

From the student's perspective, the lessons are often frustrating. No one can see the nature of her soul shifting to accommodate a way of thinking and using power that was previously alien to her, so progress can be difficult to track. Depending on the Gift and the student, progress may be completely invisible until something clicks for her and the Gift blossoms, fully-mastered, within her. Other times, she finds that over time she can use it partially, sporadically, or unreliably, with just enough rope to hang herself if she gets cocky. The former is usually more vexing

since she tends to assume she's learning nothing, but most teachers prefer it because it's less dangerous.

Even a Gift as simple as Infectious Laughter can have disastrous results if used before the student has fully mastered it. She practices on her friends and rivals, slowly growing more confident in her ability to slide criticism into conversation without suffering backlash. One day, she tries it out and is horrified to find that the person she was talking to can't stop laughing. The next day, the imbalance of her Gnosis interacting with the incomplete Gift tips the other way and she ends up on the wrong end of an Ahroun's fist, having stoked the fires of Rage instead of diminishing them. Hopefully at this point the chagrined Ragabash stops experimenting until she's ready, but as the Apocalypse draws nearer, the pressure to master more Gifts and gain more strength pushes many werewolves—especially the young or prideful—to reach farther than their grasp in their attempts to prove themselves.

Another student works diligently to master the Gift: Petal Float (see p. 152) under her mentor's tutelage, only to be called to battle before she's ready to put it into practice. The pack has stumbled across a Black Spiral Dancer and his Bane minions, and they must fight for their lives. The Garou finds herself retreating toward the edge of a cliff, trapped between a fall and the enemy's snapping fangs. In desperation, she chooses to rely on her training and tips backward, floating gracefully toward the ground hundreds of feet below. It's not until she's halfway there that her concentration on the half-understood Gift sputters and gives out, sending her plunging toward a painful conclusion to the fight. The harsh reality is that as the war progresses, the Wyrm's forces are unlikely to wait until a Garou has finished her studies before they move in to devour everything in their path.

But the dangers of Gift misuse are not the only reason that many elders try to dissuade werewolves from teaching Gifts to each other. These lessons between Garou require an intimate connection, a deep understanding of each other's perspectives. The student must learn to walk in his teacher's footsteps, train his mind to follow the pathways of another, feel out the same emotional and spiritual journey that his teacher once took toward enlightenment piece by piece. Such closely shared experience inevitably leads to intense relationships, one way or another, and if the circumstances are right, it's hard for a couple of instinct-driven werewolves to exercise restraint. With the Litany hanging overhead and the Wyrm lurking around every corner, finding a teacher for Gifts among fellow Garou is a complex dance of politics, promises, and calculated risk.

That said, some among the higher ranks actively look for students with potential, particularly when the Gifts they want to pass on are rare or important to complete a necessary job. Occasionally, an elder will select a pupil from among

OPTIONAL RULE: GETTING INTO TROUBLE

During the period that a character works to learn a Gift from another Garou, if the player allows the character's unfinished understanding of the Gift to get her into significant trouble - through experimentation, hubris, desperation, etc. - the Storyteller may allow her to purchase the Gift at a discounted price. Reduce the multiplier of the Gift's cost by 1, such that the usual cost becomes Level of Gift x 2 and the cost for a Gift from another breed/auspice/tribe becomes Level of Gift x 4. This doesn't reduce the time it takes for the character to complete her training, though.

a pool of competing candidates, or quietly pull a younger werewolf aside and make the offer based on a solid track record or specific achievement. The fortunate Garou given this opportunity will gain Renown quickly if he does well, but the spotlight of expectation has its downsides too. If he fails, word spreads rapidly and his relationship with the elder he's shamed with his blunders suffers badly. Despite

the risks, being chosen as the apprentice to an elder willing to share her unique secrets is an honor few would pass up.

Rites The Paths We Forge Ourselves

Autumn Rain returns from the Umbra

The air congeals around me, like an invisible weight settling in. But that isn't the least pleasant result of stepping back into the physical world. Naomi is.

"You find anything?" she says in her noisy human speech, instead of using the High Tongue. Just to annoy me, I think. Her hair messily piled up on top of her head, like a bird's nest, and she wears no sleeves and tight jeans. I grunt and pass by her, leaving my tail hanging listlessly. Courtesy repaid. Let her speak her tongue, and I will speak mine. She follows me. "Can I take that to mean 'no'?"

The dim corridor widens into a long half-dug, half-built space, where thick curtains hang between workspaces and bookshelves, ritual circles, and meditation alcoves. A smell of dust and old herbs lives here. I pass them all by, heading toward the far end where another curtain is pulled closed. I nose it aside and go through. She follows me again.



"Rain, are you seriously gonna make me guess with a bunch of wolf charades?" she says, leaning against the wall, and folding her arms. I look at her over my shoulder. It isn't my fault she refuses to learn how to speak like a wolf properly. But I sigh and change until my fangs will only slightly get in the way of her garish language, to stop her complaining. For her benefit, I pull on one of the loose robes that hang on a hook nearby. She raises an eyebrow, seeing my Glabro form. "Would it kill you to be human for five minutes?"

"I have my pride," I tell her. "And my name is Autumn Rain."

"Fine. What'd you find?"

"Nothing." I approach the makeshift bed made of feathers and leaves, and crouch beside it. On it sleeps a wolf, although he's more than just a wolf. He's like us. I like to think he is, more specifically, like me. Why else would he sleep in Lupus form? He's been sleeping for a long time. I don't know how long. Since before the sept moved into this caern, at least. "None of the spirits knew any rite or Gift to do it. They just said it must have been Bear."

"Bear, huh? Great, because we're on such great terms with him." She snorts. "Poor slob's gonna just keep sleeping 'til the Apocalypse has us all for lunch, I guess."

"It won't," I snap. My almost-human ears try to push forward. "And he won't."

"Damn, you are just the queen of wishful thinking, ain't you?" She comes over to crouch too, across from me on the other side of the bed, to watch the sleeper. Her arms drape casually over her knees, but she furrows her brow.

"Mock me if you want. I don't need your help."

She meets my gaze. "Need it or not, you got it anyway. We found him, he's our responsibility. What'd you have in mind?"

I stand, looking down at him and going still. What has he seen? What does he know? Maybe he's slept for a hundred years, or a thousand, and comes to us with hope and secrets. Maybe he brings a message from a people long lost. Maybe he was sent to us as an ultimate weapon. I must know.

My decision resolves before me like ice crystals in a freezing pond. "If no one knows any rite, then I'll have to forge my own."

A Universe of Laws

When a human performs an action proven to result in a specific effect, such as dropping something from a height to make it fall, he expects that it will fall every time barring strange circumstances. Wolves, likewise, expect the rules of the natural world to uphold themselves: when you chase the elk, it runs. When you bite the elk, it dies. When you mate with another, you get cubs. So why should this be any different for the Garou?

Natural law and spirit law may seem like separate concepts, but in the end, they are one and the same. The entire universe is *made* of spirits. The mechanical laws that govern the physical world, like gravity or energy conservation, come from contracts and edicts among the spirits written before time even began, or simply from the fact that a given spirit with a given nature exists. The sun rises in the east and sets in the west because Helios agreed to pilot his chariot thus every day. Species evolve over time because the forces of the Triat dictated long ago that it would be so. Even the various Realms of the Umbra each have rules that govern them, based on the spirits that live there and the purpose to which they were created. That beings from Earth can't necessarily recognize them as rules is irrelevant: spirits have natures, and they make pacts. This keeps reality rolling along.

It shouldn't seem so strange, then, that the Garou have their own sets of spirit pacts which ensure cause and effect. These pacts manifest for the Garou as rites: prescribed interactions, either with each other or with the spirit world, that prompt prescribed responses. A cub who undergoes the Rite of Passage is recognized not only by his sept but by the universe itself as a newly made cliah. Enacting the Rite of the Loyal Pack enforces the pack leader as the representative of the pack, and ensures that the pack will always be better prepared than those who have not — as long as the leader acts in his packmates' best interests. Even the collective unconscious of humanity remembers seeing shapeshifters perform rites and get results before the Veil fell over its eyes; human cultures are filled with rituals and ceremonies that mimic what the Garou and other Fera have done for millennia. They may not yield supernatural results, but the social and psychological effects work on humans just as well.

The Pact

Rites came to be long ago, when the shapeshifters first took their place as the stewards of Gaia's Earth. As beings of both flesh and spirit, they made a great Pact with the spirit world that would help them marry the two. In exchange for performing rituals that would in some way honor or recognize the spirits, those spirits would lend the Changing Breeds their aid. This differs from the deals an individual werewolf makes with a spirit to learn a Gift in its scope and magnitude. The original Pact made between Garou long-dead and the denizens of the Umbra still holds true today. Even a werewolf who has never spoken directly to a spirit in her life can enact the rites that have been passed down through the centuries, agreed upon so long ago that perhaps even the spirits who made the agreement no longer remember who was there or what was said. What they do remember — and what every spirit that has come into existence since then knows — are the laws the Pact laid

down. The power of that covenant resonates throughout the Realms so strongly that a rite enacted correctly cannot be ignored, even those rites that most spirits and Garou alike would rather didn't exist. Somewhere along the line, enough spirits made a pact to write the ritual into reality, and no one can gainsay it, not even to prevent Skin Dancers from rising.

If a ritemaster fails to achieve the proper result, it's not because the spirits are feeling fickle that day. It's because she or her sept has missed a step somewhere, got the timing wrong, prepared the materials poorly or failed to catch the attention of the spirits at all with her lackluster performance. Occasionally, a rite may seem to have no result because some higher power has deemed it not yet meant to be. If a Rite of Renown fails, it could be an indication that the honored Garou hasn't been truthful, or that this step on her journey toward Glory isn't yet finished in the eyes of the spirits. If the Rite of the Winter Wolf fails, it's usually taken as a sign that Gaia still has work for the werewolf to do. Corruption can also get in the way, even if the Garou in question doesn't know it. If a human Kinfolk has unwittingly handled a scepter reserved for Rites of Accord without the ritemaster's knowledge, or a sacrifice made in a spirit's name was unknowingly touched by the Wyrm's taint, a rite can backfire spectacularly in the wake of an offended spirit's wrath.

The Pact even powers rites that don't call upon the spirits directly. It's easy to see how a mystic rite involves the spirit world, but some young Garou wonder how a Rite of Contrition or Gathering for the Departed has anything to do with the spirits anymore. Glass Walker elders sometimes respond by comparing the rituals to computer code. The first time the spirits agree upon a rite, those involved in its affirmation "write a program" to make a change to the world itself, such that each time a werewolf enacts these behaviors in just this way, the "program" runs — spiritual power kicks in automatically and gives the rite supernatural potency. If the werewolf performs a rite in a way that would anger the spirits, it triggers an exception in the "program" to return spiritual feedback. Most other tribes loathe this explanation and accuse the Walkers of defiling the sacred heritage of the People, but the metaphor tends to make plenty of sense to modern cubs.

The Pact even resonates beyond the original rites devised by the first shapeshifters. It governs all rites that did ever, do now, and will ever exist. If a Garou makes a proper case for a new pact to the spirit world and enough spirits agree, the new rite joins the recognized canon and they uphold it just like any other. Therefore, the breadth of possible rites is theoretically infinite, although in practice bound by the ability of the Garou Nation to finagle them into being. Questing werewolves can also rediscover rites lost to time, and the spirits recognize those too as legitimate, unable to

ignore them when performed well. Strangely, perhaps, a werewolf can also discover new rites for the first time out among the Realms of the Umbra. Spiritualists disagree on why this is possible. Some surmise that the Weaver's time is a massive loop, and that reality is repeating the same cycle over and over again. Thus, rites created in a previous iteration remain in the Deep Umbra as faint echoes of what was, and the Garou can rediscover them like anything lost to history. Others theorize that no rite begins as a thought in a werewolf's head, but rather that some spirit somewhere in the cosmos devises it instead, and that anytime a werewolf makes a case to recognize a new rite, she's really just catching wind of ideas already floating around in the Umbra. Some even believe that there might be other kinds of Garou on other worlds, devising rites that are later found by Earth's own werewolves and brought back. The spirits have never confirmed nor denied any of these theories; they simply abide by the Pact and do their parts.

Where We Belong

Connor sets out on a journey

It sounded so easy when the ritemaster first said it. Just 'survive.' I thought it wouldn't be a big deal. But that was a stupid thing to think. As the weeks dragged by, I wondered whether they sent me alone on purpose. Not because I was the only cub of age, but because they wanted me to fail. The thought eventually drowned out any pride I took in finally getting the chance to prove myself. I felt the Rage building up in me little by little, telling me the whole thing was pointless.

That night, I was so hungry. I didn't know how long I'd been out there, it felt like forever. I ran across some human men in the park in the middle of the night and couldn't control myself. All the spirals I'd been thinking myself into just exploded into mindless fury. It was a good thing something else was there to stop me. It came flying out of the shadows, slammed into me, and bowled me over while the men ran away.

It wasn't until I sank my teeth into one of its limbs and it snarled at me that I came to my senses. In my mind's eye right then it had vicious blood-red eyes and knifelike fangs as big as my head, and that snarl sounded like death. I whimpered and cringed back from it. I was sure that was it for me, it was going to bite my face right off. I squeezed my eyes shut and waited for the end.

Instead, after a moment the weight lifted and a voice said, "You picked a hell of a place for your Rite of Passage, kid. Also, *ow*."

I blinked and looked up. The slavering nightmare monster was gone, replaced with a Garou woman dressed all in dark colors. She smirked at me. "Come on, it's over. You did it. You passed. We're going home." I'd thought I would be happy, but it just filled me with dread. In some ways, being

out here on my own was easier. But she said to wait and see. She said things would be different now, and if it turned out they weren't, I was welcome to go back out and eat as many humans as I wanted. I'm pretty sure she was joking.

Her name was Naomi. She took me back to the caern and told me she'd been tailing me for a week, watching me. She didn't explain why. She was there when the sept came together to recognize me as cliath. Everybody was there, even people who hated me. I was shaking the whole time. I kept expecting the truth to come out, that it was all just a big joke, they just wanted to watch me make a fool of myself out there all alone and now I had to pack up my bags and go. I could hear them laughing and laughing. I couldn't decide whether it was fear or outrage that was pumping my blood so fast. Before the rite had even started, I'd already decided it wouldn't happen. I'd starved and bled and almost killed someone for them! It wasn't fair!

But I was wrong. Everyone was quiet and serious — no, what's that word? Solemn — when I came through the gathering to the shrine where the ritemaster was waiting. They all just watched when the ritemaster told me to take my breed form, even though I felt exposed up there, like admitting that this really *was* my breed form, and I couldn't pretend it wasn't. When she marked me with the Garou sigil they cheered, instead of jumping up to stop the rite like I'd seen in my imagination. Remembering how I'd suffered and survived against all odds just like any werewolf hero in the stories made that dark spiral in my mind go away, at least for a while. Fighting against the Wyrm didn't seem so much like *their* war anymore, but more like *ours*. I thought of the ritemaster herself standing where I was standing now, listening to the same words and maybe being just as nervous, too. I thought, maybe I could be a ritemaster myself someday. I couldn't stop myself from smiling.

Afterward, they threw a party, and even though I knew it was mostly just an excuse to have one, it still felt like it was for me. For the first time, I belonged there. I even learned a new dance from another Galliard and got invited to a prayer circle with the Children of Gaia. I was one of them. Maybe they did hate me, but at least I was one of them.

Harmony

Many believe that changing from human to wolf and wielding the Gifts of the spirit world isn't enough to make someone Garou. Those are what a Garou *does*, but not what a Garou *is*. They say that without the People's tradition of rites to keep a connection alive among all werewolves across the world, there would be no Garou, only monsters. They point to the Black Spiral Dancers' heinous mockeries of ritual and say that even these fallen beasts remember the trappings, because without them, they would not maintain any purpose at all. The form and even specific function of a given rite might vary from tribe to tribe, but every true

Garou goes through a Rite of Passage one way or the other. Those who subscribe to this belief say that this commonality, participation in the terms of the great Pact, creates a deep-seated spiritual link that hums like a spark between all Garou, spiritually marking them as "the same" in at least this one way, if in no other. They say that this is what makes spirits recognize a werewolf as Garou, what keeps the pacts in place so that they don't rot away with the passage of time.

Some think that if the Garou performed no rites, the spirits would get restless and angry. They consider a rite to be a handshake between the werewolves and the spirits, a confirmation that "yes, we are still allies." Many spirits consider rites a sort of nod or celebration that affirms their power and greatness, their importance in the grand scheme of things. Acknowledgment of the Pact means acknowledgment that the Garou are not alone in their fight and that they need the spirits — that the Garou are not all-powerful on their own, and require the spirits' goodwill. This appeases the pride of spirits who see themselves as gods, rightful inheritors of the Earth, or even just those who came first. Even a rite that forces a spirit into submission is an admission that the spirit's power is in some way superior, and even spirits who are offended by the servitude may take a sort of perverse pride in knowing that the werewolf needs its help.

Ritual behavior also serves to open a ritemaster and the participants up to the spirit world, keeping them in touch with their spiritual side and with Gaia in a time when such connections can be hard to come by. The rites themselves are not just another way to gain power; they are somewhat akin to meditation or prayer. Some might speak of unlocking chakras or feeling more one with the world after a rite; others just notice a slight buzz or a prickling of the skin, especially in places where the Gauntlet is thin. Many Philodox encourage their septmates to participate in rites even when they aren't obliged to, believing that the ceremony of it helps keep a werewolf's several natures in balance with each other.

Putting aside spiritual connections and supernatural balance, no one questions that rites form an important backbone for Garou society. Group ritual behavior is a reminder of all that the Garou Nation once was, is now and ever will be. It connects young and old, brings different tribes together, and gives everyone the opportunity to reflect upon the rich history of the People, to feel like part of a legacy that stretches back to when the world itself was new. When a ritemaster learns how to perform a new ritual, it drives home the knowledge that countless others have learned the same dance or used the same fetish in just this way. Even learning the proper chant or howl to be a participant in a rite makes the werewolf aware that the Garou of today don't exist in a vacuum, and that the song she sings was once heard across the world by species that no longer grace the Earth with their presence.

Rites also present an opportunity for the Garou to fully be themselves in a world that fears them, a world where expressing their true nature is usually a prelude to disaster. Rage and Gnosis, human and wolf, flesh, and spirit, can all be expressed as one and in full in ceremonies that celebrate and support who they are. The Veil and the Litany impose strict limits on when and where changing shape is acceptable, so few werewolves have the luxury of taking Crinos form whenever they please. Giving them an excuse to come together in one place where only werewolves and Kinfolk tread can be a freeing experience for many, as well as a welcome change of pace from their otherwise adventure-filled lives, a kind of stress reliever where they can let their hair down. Group rituals are also a channel into which the Garou can funnel all the frustration, fury, and despair that build up as they encounter tragedy after tragedy day by day. Twenty Get of Fenris gathering to collectively howl at the moon and spill each other's blood in a caern is a much better outlet for pent-up emotions than waiting until they explode into Rage in the middle of a crowded street.

Second Chances

Grass-on-the-Savannah prepares for battle

I guess I should have made up a story about what had happened back then, but when I woke up everything was so strange and out of focus that I just said the first things that came to mind. So, for the next few weeks, while I learned all about this new time and the sept and the state of the war (spoilers: pretty much the same as always), I just pretended none of it had ever happened. It was a new world, and I was a new person, and that was how I left it. But I could tell that eyes were on me always, and the sting of shame tasted like dust in my mouth. I heard the whispers every day – don't bother talking to the anruth, he'll be gone by the next moot anyway.

So, when the call came that warriors were gathering for a strike against a Hive encroaching too near a wolf Kinfolk haven and they wanted volunteers, I mustered with the others, igniting a slow burn in my heart. The Master of the Rite, a Galliard woman with wild hair, wild eyes, and a pair of mammoth war drums, spoke of victory and duty. She spoke of pulling corruption up by the roots, of sending those bastards back to Hell where they belonged. Her words and the answering howls fanned the embers inside me, until I dashed forward to snatch the caern's flag with its sky-blue sigil out of its sconce and hold it high, as though keeping it away from the smaller children on the playground of war.

"A dare for any with the courage to take it!" I shouted. "Tell me how many of those traitorous dogs will bear the mark of your wrath!"

A blanket of faces stared silently at me. If I'd dropped a pebble, the burly one with the enormous klawie way in

the back would have heard it. My grip on the flagpole felt like white heat searing into my palms. I was too proud or too flummoxed (or both) to move a muscle.

But then someone else came out of the crowd to face me, with a grin on her face and her feet spread to shoulder-width, her chin lifted in challenge. "I'll bite," she said, and it almost looked like she was being literal. "Ten."

"Pff," I scoffed, holding the flag out of her reach, though she hadn't gone for it. "Is that all?"

Her stance shifted subtly as she put more weight onto the balls of her feet. "Nah, that's just the warm-up," she said. "Call it fifteen and throw in a beheading or two."

"Passable," I said, shrugging.

A noise like a growl came out of her throat, but she was still grinning as she lunged forward to wrench the flag from my grasp. I danced away, spinning back, and keeping my distance. The banner flitted about above our heads briefly like an excited Lune. "Fine," she barked, "then let's hear it out of you, Strider. How many?"

I leaned forward, the flag behind me, my hand cupped near my mouth as though I were going to divulge a hidden truth. When I spoke, though, it carried to every corner. "Every. Last. One."

Her eyebrows went up, and then she was laughing. Then they were all laughing. I let their laughter fuel the fire that was swiftly building from the embers the Galliard's speech had sparked at my core. I turned and gestured to the Master of the Rite. With a wide, feral smile, she lifted her mallets and brought them crashing down on the drumheads. Once, twice, three times, until a steady beat rang throughout the bawn. The sound vibrated through my bones as though I were a harp and my ribs were the strings.

I brought the flagpole up and buried six inches of it in the ground at my feet. I pointed a finger over the gathering and declared, "Hear me! I am Grass-on-the-Savannah, Silent Strider of the First Lands. I am the wind that passed through the ears of the Dancers and crumbled their resolve. I am the shadow that stole back what once had been ours from the black, bleeding heart of the enemy's lair." My voice turned to diamond and steel. "I am the claw that spilled the blood of the traitor in our midst. Too late once, but *never again*. Mine is the voice that will still their battle cries! How many of them will bear the mark of my wrath? *Every last one!*"

The drums pounded to a driving crescendo, sending my words into the Umbra and writing them on the page of promise. A cheer went up from the horde, bloodthirsty and chomping at the bit to see that promise fulfilled. The Master of the Rite bowed her head to me once, letting me know that it was done. I rejoined the crowd, leaving the banner flying where it stood.

The one who'd taken me up on my challenge found me as the others organized into teams by pack. "Not bad," she said. "Savannah, right? Naomi."



I grinned up at her. "Good, I have a name to put to my second-in-command."

She snorted, shaking her head. "So how do you *really* intend to live up to that boast? I mean, it's not like you're the only Ragabash around here, y'know."

"Ah, ah," I told her, wagging my finger, and giving her a wink. "That would be telling."

As we moved out from the bawn like a rumbling storm, I let those drums resound in my head, over and over. This time it would be different. I had no intention of letting that boast go unmet. Clever wording was no excuse to let vengeance pass me by.

Dissonance

For every rite that reaffirms a werewolf's spiritual connection to Gaia, another reaffirms his life as a warrior in a raging conflict that spans countless generations. Even the most pacifist Children of Gaia and the most isolationist Uktena are soldiers in a global army. The great Pact was not simply a way for the spirits and Garou to forge an alliance. It was assurance that the Garou Nation would never grow soft, would never leave its post, would never back down. It was another tool in the box of Garou leaders to ensure that the People would always be ready no matter what bared its fangs to threaten Gaia's creation. At heart, whatever else he may be, a werewolf is a weapon.

In many ways, the warrior culture of the Garou is like human warrior cultures throughout history. Maintaining a warlike frame of mind, every day until victory or death claims the pack, can be absurdly difficult. Constant violence, vigilance, and paranoia take their toll on even the most hardened Ahroun veteran. The werewolf who relies solely on Rage to keep her going burns out fast, developing a death wish and throwing herself into the fight with no grounding to keep her sane. Rites that renew dedication, revive faith, and remind a werewolf what she's fighting for are crucial to thrive as a nation at war.

Harmony among the Garou is important not just to maintain spiritual balance and feel accepted, but to foster cooperation and unity. Rites encourage both unity in group identity and unity of purpose. Soldiers who fight amongst themselves or feel adrift in a meaningless vista of bloodshed are ill-suited to take on a foe of the Wyrm's magnitude. The enemy's numbers are staggering and its minions are utterly subservient. Even if two heads of the hydra work at cross-purposes, the result is still devastating. The Garou need to feel like a part of something larger than themselves to put them in the mindset for widespread resistance. Participating in rites teaches them to work together and prompts them to identify more strongly with the group, which itself identifies with an even larger legacy through rites passed down through millennia of werewolves. Rites that keep the

relationship strong between the Garou and their ancestors are especially effective, since ancestor-spirits are eminently real and present proof that the sept is not alone in its fight.

Pavlov's Rite

Like humans, Garou are prone to social conditioning through ritual. The Rite of Passage and various rites of punishment, particularly minor ones that only the most straitlaced werewolf avoids, are a form of positive shared hardship. Common sacrifice through enacting rites that ask much of their participants: a test of wills, hunting down a former friend, or giving up something of personal importance, for instance, are similar experiences. Those who emerge stronger for it forge a bond with others who have done the same, ill-understood by anyone who hasn't.

The concept of cognitive dissonance breeding loyalty is not foreign to werewolves, either, particularly when Garou pride takes hold. If, the subconscious reasons, I have put myself through these ritual ordeals for the sake of the tribe, then I must have done so for a damn good reason. Therefore, membership in the tribe must be valuable. This isn't to say that Garou society is deliberately manipulating its members; it's just a side effect of ritual tradition that happens to contribute to the fierce dedication most werewolves have to their cause.

Rites encourage unity in much more straightforward ways, as well. A sept that mourns together in the Gathering for the Departed feels the kinship of shared loss. A sept that toils together in the Rite of Caern Building shares the exhilaration of having risked everything to build a home for everyone, and they can all now benefit from the group's efforts. A sept that embarks together on the Great Hunt practices cooperation in the field and learns how to fight alongside each other more seamlessly.

Group ritual also encourages other attitudes that are beneficial for a people at war. Rites force werewolves to get used to doing as they're told and having someone else clearly in charge. Garou learn discipline by conforming to the precise timing and practiced behaviors, and they learn to respect the chain of command by deferring to elders and those who hold specific positions of authority during the rites. Formal ceremonies also invest their participants more fully in the activities they represent; the Uktena obliged to fast for three entire days before enacting the Rite of the Shrouded Glen is more likely to stand by the defense of the now-hidden caern, having put so much time and effort into its protection already. Certain rites help draw a clear line between "us" and "them," such as the Rite of Cleansing and Gaia's Vengeful Teeth, making it obvious that one who is not with the sept is *against* the sept, and no one wishes to be against the sept, especially the sept that just finished chasing down and murdering a traitor. Participating in these rites helps young Garou put Wyrm-spawn, fomori, turncoats, and others like them firmly in a

category that is both "other" and "evil," fueling their thirst for battle against these villains.

Each type of rite provides its own unique benefits to a society of warriors. Rites of accord are clear candidates for rituals that promote unity among the tribes and righteous dedication to the cause via a sense of belonging and a visible stand against corruption. Caern rites give the army a home base it can protect and find solace in between battles, and one that gives them a tangible connection to their long legacy. Rites of death help the Garou adjust to the realities of the war: that friends will die, kin will die, and ultimately the werewolf himself will die, in pursuit of the cause. These rites help him express grief alongside his comrades in a healthy fashion, and realize that though individuals fall in the final stand, the spirit of the Garou Nation fights on. Mystic rites serve to put the power of the spirit world directly into the hands of those who use it to stave off the Apocalypse, and make firmer allies of those denizens of the Umbra willing to lend aid. Punishment rites keep the Garou accountable for their behavior, emphasizing that the enemy is not within but without, and that taking actions against fellow werewolves is unacceptable. They ensure that Garou society remains stable and strong, to avoid giving the Wyrm any inroads through selfishness or destructive behaviors. Rites of Renown, on the other hand, give the People something to work toward and heroes to look up to. By recognizing champions, these rites inspire emulation of their heroism, and healthy competition in those who work to surpass it. Seasonal rites help to frame the long days and nights of conflict with natural structure, and remind the Garou that they fight not only for themselves and for humanity, but for all of creation. These rites show warriors steeped in bloodshed that beauty still exists and that life is still precious, renewing their faith and perspective. Finally, minor rites are the personal side of the war, the little things every werewolf can do to maintain his individuality in a heavily pack-oriented society, and forge a private connection with Gaia that is his alone.

Far from Home

Naomi's pack

"Dammit, get down!"

I tackle the kid to the ground, hoping the rest of them got the memo in time. Half a second later, the smoking, rattling engine explodes in a hail of twisted steel pieces and flame. Pretty sure that piece of shit wasn't even hooked up to anything. This Realm sucks.

Rain shoves aside a dented metal sheet covered in rust with her paw and growls. Her fur's all matted with dried blood and grime. The sheet clangs loudly on the busted concrete and I roll my eyes. "Gee, thanks, we really needed every fucking Bane from here to the moon to know exactly where we are."

She grunts at me and bares her teeth, but only for a moment, more concerned with digging a coughing Savannah out of a pile of rubble than with showing me her game

face. I pull myself to my feet, wipe sweat off my face, and offer the kid a hand up. "You okay?"

"Sure, I'm fine," he says, but his lie's transparent as hell. He goes on ahead and I can see him favoring his left ankle. It'll heal fast, but not if he's dodging explosions all fucking day. Not hard to see he's exhausted on top of it. We've been at this for days now, with precious little time for luxuries like food or sleep. The Strider and I are fine, and Rain'd bite off her own leg before she'd admit defeat, but Connor ain't gonna last much longer.

"This way," I gesture, and they follow me around the block where a half-collapsed warehouse juts like a rotten tooth out of the sooty landscape. Savannah checks around for trouble, and when he doesn't find any we hunker down inside for a breather.

"No, really!" the kid insists. "I'm okay! I can keep going!"

"Well I'm beat, so siddown," I tell him, dropping down onto my ass myself and sending up a cloud of what's probably asbestos or something. I see Rain watching me from her spot under the low window, catching what passes for half-assed rays of sunlight. "What's the matter?" I ask her. "You hungry enough that I'm starting to look like food?"

I wait through her changing to Glabro and settling into a cross-legged position before she gives me an answer. "Do we intend to succeed here?"

"What the hell kind of bullshit question is that? We got this." I feel my hackles rise and grit my teeth, tamping down the urge to punch her. Not now, Naomi.

"If we intend to succeed," she goes on quietly, "then we must be more than we are now."

"I don't get it," Connor says, frowning.

"Look at us," she says, her teeth baring slightly in vague disgust. "Skulking in a broken Weaver-hole like insects while our quarry gains ground." The kid's face falls and I know what he's thinking. I open my mouth to defend him, but Rain cuts me off. "It's not because we're tired and hungry. It's because we don't have true conviction."

Savannah, lying down near the crooked doorway, raises his head at that and stands. His tail arches in a challenge against her words, his ears fully perked. "Listen," says Rain, without the sharp tone I'd expected. "We're all dedicated to this hunt. We all want that bastard dead. I feel it in my bones just like the rest of you. But it's not enough. We fight as four. We need to fight as one."

"...what'd you have in mind?" I ask, seeing those gears turning behind her eyes.

"A rite. Naomi, you have to lead us in spirit as well as in name. The Rite of the Loyal Pack."

Somewhere, something more viscous than water drips from the ruined ceiling. It's the only sound for a good ten seconds. "You don't even like me," is the first dumbass thing that comes out of my mouth.

"No, I don't," she agrees.

"Damn, points for honesty," I grumble.

"But," she continues, "you're the alpha, and I don't have to like you as long as you do your job. And you do. You brought us together, and since then you've done nothing but take responsibility for that."

I nod, accepting that. "What about you guys?" I turn to the others.

Savannah pads over to me and looks me in the eye for a moment, his furry head at my seated level. Then he lowers it, laying his ears flat, and tucking his tail under. No arguing with that, I guess.

"I think it's a great idea," Connor puts in, "but I thought you had to do that rite at home."

"Son of a bitch," I sigh, leaning my head back. I'd actually gotten into the whole thing. "We're a hell of a long way from there."

"In body, yes," Rain admits. "But at heart, we're always there. In the end, it's just semantics."

An edge lurks behind that mild statement. I can see it in her face, it's a cover for steely defiance; she's not about to let a thing like "how it's always been done" get in her way. Wow, she ain't fucking around about this. I can't help grinning to hide my affection for this bunch of misfit goons. I guess if this was Rain's idea, I must've been doing something right. "Every time you get that look, shit gets real. Where are you going with this?"

She stands and throws her head back, basking in what little sunshine this pathetic asscrack of the Umbra has left to give. She speaks, but I don't understand the words. She's done talking to us; it's all down to her and the spirits now. What's she gonna do, just tell them she's changing up the rite whether they like it or not, and they better suck it up and deal?

Hell, if anybody could...

Changing Ways and Means

While some elders would like to believe that every sacred detail of a Pact forged at the beginning of meaningful time on Earth is still relevant and untouchable in the twenty-first century, the fact is that things change. Things fall apart. The world turns, and the Garou turn with it. If the People couldn't evolve with the times, they would already be nothing but a footnote in the Apocalypse's *pièce de résistance*. The rites they use to stabilize their society are no exception; while the specific form of a rite is how it draws power from the spirit world, it isn't written in stone.

Exceptions to the Rule

At times, a ritemaster may find that the special conditions required for her rite to work just don't exist. A ritual that requires burying personal items at the pack's home

caern needs performed while the pack is busy fighting for their lives in the middle of the Scar. The werewolf needs to get to the Underworld post-haste, but no animals are in sight for sacrifice and she refuses to murder an innocent human being for her cause. No vines grow in the wasteland the pack finds itself in on the doorstep of the Deep Umbra, needing to cross the threshold to achieve its goals. What then? A ritemaster with enough clout in the spirit world and a silver tongue can persuade the spirits to let him change up the form of a rite he already knows, just this once. By praying, singing, or pleading to the spirit world as a sort of mini-ritual prior to attempting the actual rite, a mystic can get permission to perform a rite in a slightly different way than usual, perhaps using unconventional materials, or at a different time or location than is customary. Wise werewolves are wary of trying this too often or making too drastic a change, however, as the spirits become impatient with those who flout tradition too much.

If the Garou presents a good enough case, he can also make these temporary changes in desperate situations. He may alter rites that normally require an entire sept's presence to allow fewer participants if, for instance, half the sept is trapped elsewhere or the pack has no way of reaching its caern. Likewise, if a ritual normally takes hours but the vampire and its minions are coming *right now*, the spirits may accept a more abbreviated version. The spirits are also occasionally flexible in matters of Renown, when a ritemaster wants to perform a modified rite to honor a fallen comrade or celebrate the deeds of a hero; he could adjust the Rite of Boasting to provide extra Glory to a pack that speaks well of its departed brother's accomplishments in battle and then goes on to emulate them, for example.

Making New Rules

Just as a werewolf can create new rites, she can rewrite existing rites to create new canonical versions of them as well. Unlike a temporary change granted in the heat of the moment, changes that create new versions of rites are permanent, and allow others to perform the rite the same way later. To do this, a ritemaster must walk the spirit world through the process of shifting the old way to the new way, performing the original rite and then gradually stepping through each change one by one until she has demonstrated the alternate form completely. It takes great concentration, a focused will, and staying power to accomplish such a task. If successful, the mystic introduces the new form of the rite into the oeuvre of recognized rituals that can then be passed on just like any other rite.

Werewolves find myriad reasons for creating an updated version of an existing rite. Rites that vary from tribe to tribe or even sept to sept, such as the Rite of Wounding or the Rite of the Winter Winds, are common examples. Tribes have strong cultural identities and long traditions that align with the human societies from which they originated, and

each tribe expresses its connections to the spirit world in different ways. If a sept of Bone Gnawers borrowed a rite from a nearby group of Red Talons, but the original version called for human sacrifice, few would question the decision to petition the spirit world for a variant! In a less drastic example, the funereal traditions of a tribe's originating culture inform how they observe the Gathering for the Departed. Rituals that shape a group's way of life are the perfect avenue for expressions of individuality and rich diversity.

Sometimes, a tribe or sept runs into the problem of special conditions being unavailable on a grander scale. If a werewolf discovers a rite that requires the sacrifice of an extinct species of animal, she clearly needs to develop an alternate version to succeed. Likewise, a sept whose caern sits in a desert is likely to engineer a variant of any rite that requires a significant body of water. Other reasons are more personal in scope. A metis ritemaster who cannot speak or howl due to disfigurements is arguably in the wrong line of work, but may create alternate versions of those rites that require vocal utterance if she's determined to do it anyway. Some ritemasters have specialized skills that lend themselves better to one expression of ritual than another, prompting creative reworking of rites to suit their strengths.

Often, recasting a rite represents a desire for uniqueness or keeping up with cultural progress. An individual pack can assert its identity as a group by claiming a new form of a rite as its signature form, and may become incensed if another pack "steals" it. For instance, a pack that really hates cats might develop an alternative to the Voice of the Jackal that makes its target sound like a yowling feline instead. Some Garou, particularly younger ones, believe that rites should evolve with civilization and seek to update ancient rites to suit more modern sensibilities. The werewolf who performs the Rite of the Questing Stone with a GPS instead of a needle may piss off some elders, but the updated version works just as well: as Glass Walkers are fond of pointing out, spirits of the global positioning system could use a little love too. Some altered rites appease local spirits who prefer one set of trappings over another; for instance, spirits who know and respect the use of tarot might receive a divination rite that originally relied on casting bones better if the werewolf deals cards instead.

Systems

A character can modify the ritualized actions of a rite in two ways. One is the one-time act of need: temporarily changing the rite's form. To attempt this, the mystic must have performed the original rite successfully at least once before. Before the rite in question begins, the character spends a few minutes making her case to the spirits as to how her proposed changes still serve to honor them properly and to draw similarities between the original rite and the altered version to keep its symbolism intact. The player spends one

Gnosis point and rolls (Charisma or Manipulation) + Rituals. The difficulty of this roll starts at (3 + rite's level), and is then modified by how drastic or related to the core function of the rite the proposed changes are, at the Storyteller's discretion. As a guideline, using a GPS instead of a needle for the Rite of the Questing Stone adds one to the difficulty of this roll, since the basic form of the rite remains the same and the materials still express "navigation," but performing the Descent into the Underworld by replacing the sacrifice with the burning of a straw representation of a mammal or a symbolic slumber adds three to the difficulty, since the "death" that pulls the participants through the Gauntlet into the Dark Umbra has become so metaphorical that the ritual has a hard time latching on to the action. If the Storyteller deems that the proposed changes to the rite are so far from the original form as to make it unrecognizable, or that the difficulty would be 10 or higher, this roll automatically fails. A botch on this roll prevents the character from performing the rite at all for one full day, as the spirits become offended by the proposal. If the roll succeeds, the character may go on to perform the altered rite with a dice penalty on the roll equal to the difficulty modifier that was applied to the alteration roll based on the extent of the changes. If a character modifies a given rite more than once or twice, she must create a new canonical form if she wishes to modify it again (see below). If she keeps trying anyway, she risks retribution from the spirits, the exact form of which is decided by the Storyteller.

Alternatively, a character can submit a permanent new form of a rite as a repeatable ritual that anyone can subsequently perform. Again, to do so the character must have successfully performed the original rite at least once before, and the Storyteller is the final arbiter of whether changes are too extensive for this to succeed. She must wait until the moon is in a phase that corresponds to the traditional auspice(s) associated with the type of rite; for instance, mystic rites can be revised while the crescent moon is visible, while rites closely associated with battle can be revised during the full moon. She must perform the rite first in its original form, but instead of completing it properly, she instead segues into the altered form bit by bit, repeating the rite over and over with minor changes each time until the full variant is performed in its entirety. If the rite's nature is such that this is impossible, such as the Great Hunt or Gaia's Vengeful Teeth, a symbolic version may replace the true rite for this purpose, but all Garou necessary to perform the actual rite must still be present and the difficulty of the alteration roll increases by 1. The player spends one Willpower point and makes an extended and resisted Stamina + Rituals roll, difficulty 7, resisted by a pool of (local Gauntlet + rite's level) at the same difficulty. This pool is the same even if the roll is performed in the Umbra, as the changes must reverberate throughout the physical world as well to take hold. The player must accu-

mulate total successes equal to 15 + a modifier based on the extent of the proposed changes (one success for minor changes, three for medium changes, five for drastic ones). If the player accumulates the required successes before the Storyteller does, the new form of the rite enters the common canon recognized by the spirit world.

For the Storyteller: Creative License

Creating, discovering, and rediscovering rites strengthens the entire Garou Nation by bringing new blood into an ancient system of give and take. Doing so almost always earns a werewolf Renown, and a reputation as a potent mystic. Below are some story hooks that Storytellers who wish to bring this aspect of spirit magic into their games can use to give them ideas and jumpstart chapters or even whole stories.

- **Bringing History Alive:** While exploring an abandoned caern that has lain dormant for decades, the pack stumbles across a sleeping werewolf that they cannot wake, no matter what they try. He's clearly not dead, and an examination by someone with the right expertise can confirm that his health is perfect, but he remains in a deep slumber. Sufficient research or knowledge of ancient lore can reveal that the most likely suspect is the rare Gift: Hibernation (p. 151). To wake the Garou out of his time, the pack sets out on a quest to recast the Rite of Spirit Awakening as a new ritual that acts as a rallying cry (Call to Arms, p. 157). This can also be used to introduce a new player's character to the group.

- **Restless Souls Epidemic:** The caern has been troubled by a staggering number of attacks from beyond the grave over the past few weeks, and the pack discovers that a corrupt shaman with a grudge has been forcing the souls of the dead into servitude to harass the werewolves. Going after the shaman head-on while his army of wraith flunkies protects him is a suicide mission, but preparing a plan takes time and in the meantime, every death only increases his power. The pack ventures into the Umbra to petition the spirits for a way to ensure that anyone who dies stays dead.

- **Wandering Hero:** The sept elders call a moot and announce that, to their dismay, one among the pack's septmates stepped sideways some time ago and never returned to the physical world. They suspect she has become lost or unaware of time passing, and fear that if she is not found soon, she will disconnect from the world and become an ancestor-spirit before her time. The pack volunteers or is asked to find her. Whether by hunting down a wise but secluded Garou mystic and bargaining for the knowledge, questing after a legendary archive of lost scrolls, or going into the Umbra themselves for clues, the pack discovers a rite that can call wandering souls home, but will they reach their missing septmate in time?

- **Risking It All:** A breeding ground for Banes has expanded out of control, and fomori have been popping up

in unprecedented numbers around the area. Not only that, but their power seems to be increasing with each wave that shows their ugly faces. The usual tactics aren't working, and someone decides that only by fighting fire with fire can the Garou emerge victorious. It's up to the pack now to figure out a way to merge a werewolf with a spirit, without creating a monstrosity that violates every natural law Gaia holds dear, and then convince that spirit to cooperate.

• **Blood Brothers:** The pack attends a wild revel, at which the guest of honor is a famous Galliard storyteller who brings tales from every nook and cranny of the world. The highlight of the evening is her mind-blowing rendition of the Epic of Gilgamesh, in which she reveals that the ancient figures of Gilgamesh and Enkidu were in fact Garou warriors, according to her sources. She describes how they took ritual oaths to cement their boundless dedication to each other as battle mates in blood and magic, enjoying the blessings of the spirit world as reward for their loyalty. She drops hints that the ritual they used was no metaphor but a true Garou rite, prompting the pack to undertake a quest to find the lost rite and claim its blessings for their own.

New Gifts

Breed Gifts

Homid

• **Weaver's Eyes (Level Two)** – Humanity has a knack for finding patterns everywhere, steeped as it is in the Weaver's influence. The homid can read the patterns in her enemies' behavior and the battlefield's dynamics to predict what will happen next. A Weaver-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. For the rest of the scene, she may wait to declare her character's action for the current turn until everyone else has done so, regardless of her initiative. She still acts according to the result of her initiative roll, but she has the advantage of knowing what her foes and allies will do before she decides herself.

• **Rally the Troops (Level Three)** – Being more than human, the homid can gather people quickly with a single command, bending them to a common task. She can rally a small army to hunt her enemies, preside over a heroic rescue effort during a crisis, or rouse a crowd to heckling a speaker. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The werewolf makes a short rallying cry, command, or speech to a group of non-supernatural humans, and then the player rolls Charisma + Leadership (difficulty 6). The group can range from a few people lingering on a street corner to an audience of up to several hundred; all they need is to hear her. Each success adds one die to all rolls the player makes in that scene toward accomplishing one

task with which the group could conceivably aid her. The difficulty of all these rolls is reduced by one if most of the group are Kinfolk. Individual characters with importance to the story may decline to help, at the Storyteller's discretion, but even they feel the authority in the Garou's directive.

• **Web of Knowledge (Level Four)** – In the Digital Age of humanity, tiny spirits of information and knowledge spring into being every second, flitting between objects of curiosity and carrying with them the answers to all manner of questions. The homid can attune herself to these streams of consciousness, circumventing the need for books or special training during an investigation. A Pattern Spider teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point. Once during the current scene, she may roll to perform research or an investigation as an instant action instead of an extended one, and without any forensic skills or tools, gleaning answers directly from the interconnectedness of the spirit world. The roll suffers no penalties if she has no dots in the required Ability. She must begin with a general idea of her topic, and can only learn what she could have learned with an appropriate source of information. She could build a profile of a killer with just the corpse or murder weapon, but she still must know the basic facts of the murder and won't learn the killer's identity; likewise, she could research an ancient symbol without poring over dusty tomes, but she still must have seen the symbol in a relevant context and won't automatically deduce its importance. Rolls of difficulty higher than 7 cannot be made with this Gift, as the information is too obscure.

Metis

• **Stoat's Guise (Level Two)** – In a world where he must fight fang and claw to fit in, the metis can use all the help he can get. This Gift allows him to change superficial aspects of his appearance, blending in or standing out as he wishes. The spirit of any animal that changes its color seasonally can teach this Gift, such as the stoat or ptarmigan.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 6). Each success allows the werewolf to alter one aspect of his appearance for the scene. Examples include: hair/fur color or length, skin tone, eye color, and height or size by about a fifth in either direction. This Gift can alter or hide tribal markings and lesser scars, but it's never potent enough to hide metis deformities completely.

• **Rage of the Underdog (Level Three)** – Among the Garou, the metis are the ultimate underdogs, born to a stigma they never asked for. Reminders of this can fuel their Rage in battle. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: Whenever the werewolf suffers wound penalties and makes a successful attack against a less-wounded opponent, he may spend one point of Rage to add dice of damage equal to the difference between his wound penalties and those of his target. If he deals enough damage to cause wounds at least as serious as his own, he regains the point of Rage he spent. This Gift's effects are permanent.



- **Tenacious Fury (Level Four)** — Survival at any cost and victory at any price; these are the tenets that keep the Garou fighting in the face of overwhelming adversity, and the metis understands them well. He can pour his Rage into the single-minded pursuit of his goal, keeping himself going when many others would have fallen. Spirits of fury or servants of Boar teach this Gift.

System: When making a Rage roll to remain active after falling below Incapacitated, the player may spend up to a number of Rage points equal to his Willpower. Each point spent adds one success to the roll's result. The metis cannot spend Willpower to avoid frenzying as a result of this roll, and it only requires three successes to frenzy, rather than four.

Lupus

- **Go for the Jugular (Level Two)** — Wolves have an uncanny ability to spot vulnerability. The lupus follows suit, sinking her teeth into the softest and most unprotected part of her foe that she can find. A wolf- or coyote-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point when the werewolf makes a successful bite attack. Increase the difficulty to soak the damage by +3.

- **Shattering Howl (Level Three)** — Unleashing a deafening howl that resonates powerfully, the lupus smashes the paltry fruits of mankind's labor. Storm-and wind-spirits teach this Gift.

System: The werewolf spends a turn howling, and then the player spends a Rage point and rolls Charisma + Primal-Urges (difficulty 7). The resultant ear-piercing sound shatters all glass and anything brittle or fragile within a radius of (20 x successes) yards. It also knocks over anything precariously stacked or top-heavy, and shoddily-made things fall apart.

- **Hibernation (Level Four)** — As the time of the Apocalypse draws near, some Garou turn their thoughts to preserving their greatest heroes for the final battle. This Gift is rare, for only Bear himself or one of his avatars can teach it, and he's reluctant to share his secret. The few werewolves who have impressed him enough to learn it can assume a dormancy that not only staves off the needs of the body, but stops the lupus from aging. Normally, the latter never comes into play, but in desperate times the Garou do what they must.

System: The werewolf must find a quiet, dark spot to sleep and remain undisturbed for at least eight hours while her body enters a state of metabolic suppression. The player rolls Stamina + Survival (difficulty 7) and spends at least one point of both Gnosis and Willpower, which don't recover during hibernation. A botch on this roll sends the Garou into immediate frenzy, as her body rejects the process. After the first eight hours have passed, the lupus sinks into a

state of deep sleep. She needs no food or water, all bodily functions cease, and she doesn't age. This hibernation lasts one week per success on the roll, though each pair of Gnosis and Willpower points spent in excess of the first increases the interval from weeks to months, years or even decades. No more than three Gnosis and Willpower can be spent to increase the interval, although Galliard tales abound of ancient Garou sleeping under mountains or in the frozen north, waiting for the call to rouse and take up arms against the Wyrm again. The werewolf can be woken prematurely if she takes enough damage to become Wounded or worse, if her player succeeds at a Willpower roll (difficulty 8), or if the rite Call to Arms is performed (see p. 157). She can attempt a Willpower roll to wake once per day. As soon as she wakes, whether prematurely or after the full hibernation period has passed, she must roll Rage at -1 difficulty to see if she frenzies, or -2 difficulty if her injuries woke her.

Auspice Gifts

Ragabash

- **Disguise Fetish (Level One)** – Werewolves covet one another's treasures as much as anyone else. The clever Ragabash can hide the true nature of his fetishes to deflect curious eyes. A raven-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 6) to create the illusion that one fetish or talen carried or touched by the character is just a mundane object. Klaives look like ordinary steel daggers, Jarlhammers seem much smaller than they are, and any glyphs or precious stones that ornament the fetish appear as cheap decorations. Gifts and other supernatural powers that could sense the nature of the fetish must overcome the number of successes rolled by the Ragabash's player to accurately identify the object as something extraordinary. The illusion ends if the fetish is used in its intended fashion. Otherwise, the effect lasts for the scene.

- **Petal Float (Level Two)** – The Ragabash becomes light as a flower petal when falling long distances, spinning, and drifting in the breeze. A Glade Child or flower-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6). Each success reduces the effective distance of the werewolf's fall by 10 feet (3 meters). If high wind is a factor, it can blow him off course, at the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Play Dead (Level Two)** – The Garou are loath to let a foe claim victory, but in these fallen times, living to fight another day can trump the satisfaction of refusing to surrender. The Ragabash can "play possum" and appear dead to all witnesses. Unsurprisingly, an opossum-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Stamina + Subterfuge (difficulty 5) and the Garou spends an action shutting down his body. He appears completely dead for one minute per success. He

has no discernible pulse, doesn't appear to breathe, and smells like a corpse that has been rotting for several days. His muscles stiffen and he may, if he chooses, revert to breed form as part of this action. If the player spends a point of Gnosis when activating this Gift, the Ragabash can instead use it reflexively when hit with an attack to produce the illusion that it has killed him. In this case, he appears as a fresh corpse instead.

- **Terrain Shift (Level Three)** – Nature accepts the Ragabash as an ally, and views his pursuers as enemies. Earth and stone move aside to create tunnels or footholds to climb, foliage gathers behind him impassably, and rivers create dry spots for him to cross. A Glade Child or earth elemental teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point, and one feature of the terrain in the werewolf's immediate vicinity shifts to either allow him passage where there should be none, or deny passage to anyone pursuing him. These shifts are minor and localized, limited to an area of up to ; he couldn't build a bridge to cross the Grand Canyon this way. If he wishes to create a feature where one didn't exist, such as an earth bridge or tunnel, and then make it vanish behind him, he must activate the Gift twice.

- **Misdirection (Level Four)** – Like a stage magician, the Ragabash combines a steady stream of words with expert sleight of hand to capture his target's attention fully. He can perform the most egregious acts of larceny or violence right under the nose of the unwitting witness. An avatar of Coyote teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point when making a roll to Fast-Talk a target (W20, p. 279). For each success, the Garou may take one action that goes completely unnoticed by the target if successful, such as stealing the glasses right off the target's face, or even killing someone behind his back. Any evidence he doesn't manage to hide before the effect wears off remains, though. The Ragabash may also use this Gift to turn a botch on a Fast-Talk roll into a mere failure, buying himself the chance to try some other underhanded tactic.

Theurge

- **Hear the Silence (Level One)** – In tune with all things hidden, the Theurge can hear the tell-tale whispers of secret-spirits whenever someone nearby bears the burden of hidden knowledge. A crow- or raven-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point, and the werewolf becomes aware of anyone in her immediate vicinity with an important secret weighing on his mind, hidden either from her specifically or from the world at large. The importance of the secret depends on how it's perceived by the one who keeps it. The Theurge gains no insight into the nature of the secrets; she only knows who keeps them.

- **Eyes of the Lynx (Level Two)** – Lynx-spirits, embodying the Umbral ideal of their earthly counterparts' powerful eyesight, can see even beyond physical obstacles. Theurges who learn this Gift can peer through walls or beneath the earth. A lynx-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Perception + Alertness (difficulty 6). For the rest of the scene, the Garou can see through solid objects, up to a number of yards of material equal to the successes on the roll.

- **Blood Life (Level Two)** — Many things reside in the blood, both mundane and mystical. Heritage, power, magical connections, and life-giving nutrients all pulse through the veins of living creatures, encompassing their life experiences. The Theurge can gain insight from these experiences by tasting the blood of her prey. An insect-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point when the werewolf succeeds at a bite attack against a target that has blood running through its veins, and deals at least one level of damage. She experiences a brief vision that replays a memory from the target's past. It could be one of great mystical import or significant relevance to the current situation, or one that had a marked personal effect on the target. The Storyteller or the target's player chooses the memory, but it should be one that gives the Theurge some insight into her foe (or ally). At the Storyteller's discretion, the Garou gains between one and five bonus dice on the next roll her player makes for an action that's relevant to the experience, depending on its intensity and pertinence. This Gift only works on living creatures, although the Theurge may pick up fragments of distant memory from a vampire's victims if she uses this Gift to bite it.

- **Watchful Eyes (Level Three)** — As a mouthpiece for the spirit world, the Theurge may invite its denizens to witness the wrongs of her enemies and render silent judgment. She appears mysterious and terrible as a force of nature to those who would stand against her, whether they are consciously aware of the spiritual audience at her side or not. Any feline spirit can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis as the Garou's presence becomes an invitation for spirits in the area, on either side of the Gauntlet, to gather and watch the proceedings. The spirits need not act, and the target need not know they even exist; their mere gaze adds an air of awe-inspiring mysticism to the Theurge's actions. If using this Gift in the material world, the difficulty of any roll she makes to intimidate, persuade, or impress for the rest of the scene is reduced by (7 - local Gauntlet rating), to a minimum difficulty of 3. If it's used in the Umbra, reduce the difficulty to 3 instead. If the watching spirits have an avenue to interact with the scene, they are generally more inclined to support the Garou than not, unless they're aligned with the Wyrm.

- **Spirit Blossom (Level Four)** — The Theurge plants a part of herself as a seed of spiritual puissance that blooms into power she can harvest. She must protect her offshoot, though; as a part of her, its pain is hers. A Glade Child teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends two Gnosis points as the werewolf plants some detached part of her body, such as

blood, a tuft of fur, or clipped fingernails, in soil in a place that gets significant sunlight. Within one week's time, a plant of the player's choice will grow in that spot, spiritually tied to the Garou. Once per day, the player may roll her Gnosis to wake the spirit of the plant. If successful, the spirit donates a number of Gnosis points equal to successes on the roll to the werewolf before going back to its slumber inside the plant. If the plant is plucked from its roots or otherwise destroyed, the Theurge suffers dice of unspeakable lethal damage equal to her permanent Gnosis. She may only have one Spirit Blossom at a time, but if one is destroyed, she may plant a new one.

Philodox

- **Sense Trauma (Level One)** — As the counselors of the Garou Nation, the Philodox have a keen nose for those whose minds have been shattered by trauma or supernatural forces. A Lune teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 6) and the werewolf spends an action concentrating. If successful, he can sense that a target suffers from a Derangement and can identify the type by scent. This Gift can also sense those under the influence of Delirium, and at what stage.

- **Firm Stance (Level Two)** — With the affirmation of his fellow Garou behind him, the Philodox has no ear for paltry attempts to sway him from his path. His Honor acts as a shield against the subversive words of the Wyrm's minions and the misguided arguments of less righteous werewolves. A falcon-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls the character's Honor as a dice pool, subtracting a number of successes from a Social roll made against him equal to the successes scored on this roll. This Gift doesn't work against Garou with higher Honor than the Philodox.

- **Building a Legend (Level Two)** — The Philodox are the natural leaders of the Garou in times of peace, bolstered by the faith and trust given to them by their charges. Each time the werewolf is accorded Renown by his fellows, he experiences a surge of confidence. A lion-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: Whenever the character gains a point of permanent Renown, he regains Willpower points up to his permanent rating. The effects of this Gift are permanent.

- **Flow Like Water (Level Three)** — As the river changes course to flow past the rock, so does the Philodox flow past his foe's attack to bring the pain. He learns to balance his offense and defense in perfect harmony. A water elemental teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Willpower point. For the rest of the scene, whenever he splits his dice pool or spends Rage to take both a defensive and an attack action in the same turn, he reduces the difficulty of both actions by one.

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- A detailed illustration of a werewolf with multiple heads, each showing different expressions of agony or death. In the foreground, a woman with glasses and a determined expression is shouting or howling. She is wearing a red turtleneck sweater and has her hands clenched in a fist. The background is dark and smoky.
- **Rebirth (Level Four)** – From death can come hope. From the ashes of ruin can come renewed fighting spirit. The Philodox sheds his blood over the bones of the fallen to briefly return a creature to life, as it's said that the great feathered serpent Incarna Quetzalcoatl once did. An avatar of Quetzalcoatl teaches this Gift.

System: The werewolf must touch the bones of an animal corpse that has been dead no longer than (Gnosis) months and carries no Wyrm taint. The player spends a Gnosis point and the werewolf inflicts a number of lethal health levels upon himself, depending on the size of the corpse. Small creatures such as small birds or rodents require one level; medium sized creatures such as wolves, falcons, and iguanas require two; large creatures such as horses, alligators, and dolphins require three; and enormous creatures such as elephants or giraffes require four or more at the Storyteller's discretion. The player makes an extended Charisma + Primal-Urge roll with a difficulty of (5 + health levels inflicted), rolling once every turn until she has accumulated 12 successes. If successful, her blood forms into new muscle and flesh, filling in the gaps in the body until it is whole again. The revived creature is loyal to the Philodox for the duration of its existence, but returns to its original state at the end of the scene. The werewolf cannot use this Gift on the same corpse a second time.

Galliard

- **Canine Call (Level One)** – Ever since the Impergium and the War of Rage, everything else on the planet has lived in awe and terror of the sound of wolves howling. Pitching her voice just so, the Galliard produces a call that only canines can hear (including homid werewolves). Humans and other creatures automatically ignore the sound, feeling safe in their ignorance. City Garou and those infiltrating enemy bases find this particularly useful. A wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: This Gift is used in conjunction with one of the Garou howls (W20, p. 58), or a howl performed as part of another Gift. The player spends one Gnosis point to achieve the effect. This Gift doesn't work with rites, since the spirit world must hear any howls performed as part of a rite.

- **Battle Cry (Level Two)** – Imbuing her battle cry with a sharp and rousing edge, the Galliard readies her packmates for a fight, stirring their blood and warning them of danger. A lion- or wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The werewolf shouts or howls to alert all Garou who can hear her, and the player rolls Charisma + Expression (difficulty 6). Any allied

werewolf who hears the call gains bonus dice to initiative rolls in the same scene equal to the Galliard's successes. This Gift can be used in conjunction with Garou howls such as the Call to Succor, Call to Hunt or Warning of the Wyrm's Approach. It can also be used together with the Gift: Call of the Wyld to extend its range.

- **Ritual Tuning (Level Two)** – The Galliard sets the stage for a rite, performing a prelude before it begins that helps to catch the attention of the spirit world and put the attending Garou in the right frame of mind for the ritual. Any kind of performance can accompany this Gift, including dance, music, and song, howling, a rousing story or the recitation of a grand epic. Any others who wish to join in may do so; in fact, multiple Galliards using this Gift together can boost the rite even further.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point, and the werewolf spends anywhere from a few minutes to an hour or more on a performance for the attendees of a rite that's about to begin. The performance should be appropriate to the rite; the Gift won't work if she plays a soft lullaby as a prelude to the Rite of Boasting. So long as the rite commences immediately after the performance ends, the ritemaster gains a number of bonus dice on the rite's roll equal to the Galliard's dots of Performance, plus any specialty relevant to the performance given. For each Galliard after the first who participates in the same performance and uses this Gift at the same time, the ritemaster adds another bonus die. The ritemaster cannot gain more than ten dice through use of this Gift.

- **Social Butterfly (Level Three)** – Flitting from one conversation to another, the Galliard makes herself associate to many but friend to none. Once she's spent time schmoozing with the crowd, she and her pack can get information out of them as though they knew her from somewhere they can't quite place, but that has positive associations. An insect-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The character spends between a few minutes and an hour socializing with a group of people, and then the player rolls Charisma + Etiquette or Streetwise, depending on the situation. The difficulty depends on the size of the group; an intimate party with only 20-30 people would be difficulty 5, while a large gathering of hundreds at a performance or rally might be difficulty 8. For the next week, the Galliard and her packmates may treat the group as a temporary Contacts Background consisting only of minor contacts in an area related to the gathering, at a rating equal to the successes on the activation roll (to a maximum of five). For example, if the werewolf used this Gift to socialize with the attendees of a gay pride parade, the pack would gain temporary Contacts in the LGBTQ community.

- **Words Like Wind (Level Four)** – Music, poetry and catchphrases are contagious, sweeping across cultures

and communities like a breeze through trees. The Galliard knows how to take advantage of this habit of social creatures, sending her messages across the world one ear at a time. Wind-spirits and Net-Spiders can teach this Gift.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point when the werewolf gives a short performance or passes on a catchy message. She may make a Social roll as part of the message, or she may simply transmit it with no ulterior motive other than to spread it. For a number of days equal to her Gnosis, the snippet of communication spreads from listener to listener like a virus, reaching as far as any given listener travels. It can be transmitted digitally or over the phone, as long as it's audible (or visible, in the case of a dance or gesture). If the player included a Social roll with the message, the result of that roll applies to every listener who becomes part of the trend. Individual listeners with Willpower higher than the successes on the roll are unaffected by the influence, but they do not stop the spread of the message. While it circulates, the Galliard gains the effects of the Reputation Merit within ten miles of the point of origin.

Ahroun

- **Rhythm of War (Level One)** – So long as the Ahroun keeps fighting to the rhythm of his inner war drum, he can't be stopped. Blows that would fell a lesser combatant are as mere wasp stings to the Garou's mightiest warriors. A bear-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point. For the rest of the scene, as long as the werewolf makes an attack on every turn, he's immune to stunning via massive damage and knockdown. The Gift's effects end if a turn goes by in which he doesn't attack.

- **Pack Shield (Level Two)** – The Garou were chosen as Gaia's protectors, but even protectors need protecting occasionally. That's where the Ahroun come in. With a fierce snarl and a show of might, the werewolf convinces the enemy that he's the greatest threat on the battlefield (they're probably right!) and needs to be taken down first. An ancestor-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player rolls Charisma + Intimidation with a difficulty equal to the lowest Willpower among the enemies, and the Ahroun spends an action drawing their attention. For the rest of the scene, opponents take a dice penalty equal to the number of successes on the activation roll to any attacks that don't include the Garou as a target. Opponents who have lower Willpower than the activation roll result are *unable* to attack any target but the Ahroun.

- **Loyal Defender (Level Two)** – Dark forces conspire to turn the Garou against one another in these fallen days. Between the mind-bending powers of the Leeches, the meddling of mages, and the Thrall of the Wyrm, every pack fears the day when its Ahroun defender turns his claws on them instead of the enemy. The werewolf who learns this

Gift pledges a vow of loyalty to his sisters and brothers in arms, as proof against anything that could tear open a rift between them. A wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: Once learned, the effects of this Gift are permanent. The difficulty of any attack the character makes against his packmates, whether due to mind-control, uncontrolled frenzy, or even his own will, is raised by one. If he deals damage to a packmate while under supernatural influence or the Thrall of the Wyrm, he may immediately roll Willpower with a difficulty equal to the number of successes scored on the original roll that caused the influence. If successful, the supernatural effect or frenzy ends, and the Ahroun gains a point of Rage.

- **Home Turf (Level Three)** – When an Ahroun claims an area for his pack, he makes a challenge to all comers, daring them to invade at their peril. In this place, no packmate fears outside dangers, while those dangers have every reason to fear the united Garou. A wolf-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The character howls his claim on an area around him with a radius of ($10 \times$ his Rage rating) yards, and the player rolls Charisma + Intimidation with a difficulty of ($8 - \text{number of packmates present, not counting himself}$). If he succeeds, rolls made to intimidate or cow the Ahroun's packmates suffer a dice penalty equal to his Rage. Rolls his packmates make to intimidate or cow others gain the same as a dice bonus. This effect lasts for a number of hours equal to successes on the activation roll. The Ahroun himself only benefits from this Gift if he has at least one other packmate with him.

- **Black Mamba Strike (Level Four)** – Between one blink and the next, the Ahroun is there to bury his claws in his unsuspecting prey. He can dash across the battlefield with astonishing speed when he's ready to strike. A snake-spirit teaches this Gift.

System: The player spends one Rage point. For the rest of the scene, the Garou doesn't need to split his dice pool or spend more Rage to move up to her running speed before making an attack on the same turn.

New Rites

Rites of Accord

Pledge of the Battle Mate

Level Three

Galliard epics from around the world tell of the mighty deeds accomplished by pairs of Garou that fought side by side always, to the bitter or glorious end, known to the Garou Nation as battle mates. This rite allows two warriors who have fought together for some time to dedicate themselves

to each other as sisters or brothers in arms, forging a bond in blood and strife that can only be broken by death or betrayal. Ritemasters are careful to assess the relationship between the two petitioners before consenting to perform this rite, ever mindful of the Litany. While most tales involving battle mates are inspirational, a few are tragedies that teach would-be mates not to grow too close to each other.

The ritemaster performs a chant that details the battles the two werewolves have fought together, both victories they achieved and defeats they survived. The participants cut themselves, and mix their blood with a hallucinogenic brew. When the drugs take effect, the ritemaster appears as a monster that the two petitioners must fight, trying to restrain their Rage enough not to kill her. At the culmination of the rite, recite a blood oath: never shall one leave the other behind on the battlefield; never shall one fail to come to the other's aid in a time of need; never shall one betray the other to the enemy.

System: If the rite succeeds, the ancestor-spirits recognize the two warriors as true battle mates and give their blessing. As long as neither mate goes back on her word, the characters each gain one Willpower point and one Rage point per scene in which they fight together against a common foe, and they each gain one point of temporary Glory Renown when they emerge victorious over that foe. If at any time the blood oath is violated, both Garou instantly know it, and lose five points of Honor Renown and one dot of Willpower each. The mate who was betrayed, left behind, or abandoned must make a Rage roll to see if she frenzies.

Rites of Death

Rite of Memorial

Level One

While the Gathering for the Departed is performed for most deceased Garou, the Rite of Memorial is reserved only for a sept's greatest heroes. When a memorial or shrine is built in a caern to honor such a hero, this rite dedicates it to the ancestor-spirit in question. Like the Gathering for the Departed, this rite's form varies from tribe to tribe and from caern type to caern type. Children of Gaia in a caern dedicated to healing might croon a lullaby while standing in a circle around the shrine to ask the hero to bring blessings of peace, while Get of Fenris in a caern full of Rage might sacrifice an animal or person symbolic of one of the hero's victories, leaving its entrails to tie the ancestor to its still-living kin.

System: This rite is generally considered offensive to perform for a slain Garou of Rank less than 4, unless his deeds were unquestionably heroic on a scale that affected the entire sept or tribe. If successful, the hero's accomplishments reflect favorably on his comrades. Each of the deceased's septmates present gains one temporary point of Glory Renown, and each of his packmates present gains one additional point.

Rite of Soul Sending

Level Two

In an ideal world, the soul of every being would pass on to wherever it should go when its body dies, whether that's an afterlife, sweet oblivion, or something even stranger. But this is not an ideal world. This is a world of darkness, and here the Dark Umbra manifests the ghosts of the restless dead in their obsessive agony. To protect a soul from this unnatural fate, a Garou mystic can perform this rite to help ensure that whatever business the dead soul may wish to resolve is less appealing than the call of the world's natural cycle of life. Since it's extremely rare, if not unheard of, for a werewolf's soul to become trapped as a ghost, this rite is usually performed to send off the spirits of humans (or, occasionally, animals) who died of violent or supernatural causes, or may have compelling reasons to linger. It's common for tribes to perform this rite for deceased Kinfolk. Some Garou perform this rite for slain enemies, not wishing to be the objects of otherworldly vengeance, although Wyrm-tainted corpses reject it out of hand.

The ritemaster bathes the corpse in clean, cool water to calm any wrath the spirit might feel. Then he dances around the body in a circle while all those in attendance drum or stamp their feet and recite the name of the deceased over and over. They begin loudly, to attract the spirit's attention, and gradually get softer and softer over the course of the ritual until they whisper the name away into the wind, never to be spoken among them again.

System: This rite will not work on a corpse that has been dead for longer than a number of hours equal to the ritemaster's Gnosis, or on the corpse of any being touched by the Wyrm. The difficulty of the roll is $(5 + \text{number of hours dead})$, to a maximum of 9. The spirit of the deceased does not linger as a ghost or appear in the Dark Umbra. Should the ritemaster botch the roll, the dead spirit instead immediately rushes in and becomes a wraith right then and there.

Mystic Rites

Call to the Lost

Level Two

Traveling from the material world into the Umbra and back is not only a werewolf's birthright, but a necessity for maintaining the balance of self that Gaia intended for her defenders. Doing so can be dangerous, though, especially in times such as these. Sometimes things go wrong. A packmate becomes caught in the Gauntlet itself, trapped between worlds. A werewolf is injured and alone in a Realm far from home, unable to return on her own. A comrade suffers the burden of Harano and walks among the spirits for too long, becoming disconnected from the physical

world, forgetting who she is. A pack strays too far from the path given to them by their spirit guide and can't find their way back. In cases like these, this rite can be used to call the wandering soul back to where it belongs.

The ritemaster builds a fire scattered with fragrant herbs, burns incense, smokes a large pipe of tobacco and herbs, or otherwise creates a great amount of strong-smelling smoke. Once the fire is lit, he drums and howls, beating the mother rhythm and calling out long and loud. The searching call echoes out across the Umbra, seeking the wandering one by name. In time, if she doesn't fight the call, the lost soul will arrive at the site of the rite, though she may need the ritemaster's help to cross over the Gauntlet. This rite can also be used to return a Stargazer's mind to her body if she becomes lost while traveling the Astral Umbra; in this case, it must be performed over her body, which is painted with glyphs in a combination of ochre and blood.

System: The difficulty of the roll is equal to the target's Gnosis rating; the stronger her connection to the spirit world, the harder it is to call her away from it. This rite can be performed on either side of the Gauntlet, but if it's done from the physical world, the ritemaster must make the roll to pierce the Gauntlet and let the target through. It takes a number of hours equal to the target's Gnosis rating to complete the rite, so if the character is trying to call back a highly spiritual Garou, he should settle in for a test of endurance. The werewolf being called experiences a series of visions that symbolize the call and the journey, perhaps encountering dream-beings that resemble those performing the ritual.

Call to Arms

Level Two

This rite is performed in identical fashion to the Rite of Spirit Awakening. Rather than waking the inactive spirit of an object or plant, though, this version of the rite calls to the spiritual half of a werewolf slumbering under the effects of the lupus Gift: Hibernation (p. 151). It wakes the sleeping Garou prematurely, which prompts a Rage roll at +1 difficulty from the target.

Rite of the Shadow Play

Level Three

While most Garou are familiar with the friendly spirits known as Lunes, fewer know their more secretive cousins. This rite calls on the Blood Lunes, spirits of lunar eclipses and the far side of the moon. These elusive Jagglings see all but say little, lurking just beyond sight wherever moonlight shines. A werewolf who coaxes them out properly can draw on their abundance of ancient observations from unseen corners of the world, asking questions about the history of an elusive subject and receiving a cryptic shadow play in answer. Blood Lunes don't usually care about knowledge that's known by many, and they tend to forget it. They only



retain secrets, and so only secrets can be learned from them. This rite doesn't actually summon the Blood Lunes into the material world, if performed there; it only draws them close to the Gauntlet to pass on their hints.

This rite must be performed during the full moon, when its light shines fully on a surface. The Garou must have some physical representation of the subject of her inquiry on hand. This could include a lock of hair or a severed finger, a carved bone resembling a spirit, sand from a particular beach, or even a photograph. She sacrifices a nocturnal animal – usually a bat – then takes awakened psilocybin or peyote. Having done so, she places the token on the ground, lets her shadow fall upon the bright surface, and dances. As she does, her shadow acts out her questions in symbolic gestures. She must repeat these motions until her shadow separates from her and acts out its own story. Other shadows join it, presenting an enigmatic tale that she must interpret for clues that answer the questions. The tale may not even obviously reference the subject of the query, but with the proper interpretation, she can still glean.

System: The player rolls Wits + Enigmas with a difficulty based on the obscurity or specificity of her subject. Well-known or broad subjects such as the Garou Nation, World War I, or the Weaver are difficulty (7 - Rituals). Slightly narrower or more obscure subjects such as a particular mountain range, the Silver Fangs' tribal lore, or a

corporate merger are difficulty (8 - Rituals). Coaxing out Blood Lunes who know about very narrow or arcane subjects such as a particular lost tome of wisdom, an individual not widely-known, or an agreement made between two spirits is difficulty (9 - Rituals). For each success on the roll, the werewolf learns one secret about the subject's past, couched in mystery and symbolism. The more successes the player rolls, the easier to interpret these hints should be.

Rite of Spirit Union

Level Five

This ancient rite was lost to time for centuries before it was rediscovered recently by a pack that ventured far into the Deep Umbra on a quest to find allies in their fight. Once, long ago, brave Garou heroes ready to risk everything to uphold their sacred duty to Gaia made pacts with spirits to merge with them, creating divine warrior beings with a werewolf's mind and prowess, and a spirit's power and nature. The union represents a serious imbalance, however, and is not sustainable. If the Garou becomes drunk on the power, or his need is so great that he cannot afford to let the spirit go before his task is done, he courts disaster.

The petitioner must fast for one day and one night before the rite begins, readying his body to be filled with spiritual energy. He scribes glyphs on his body with his own claws, symbols of his dedication drawn in blood, and opened flesh

that offers a gateway to the spirit. Then, he must go to the spirit he wishes to petition and make his case. The Rite of Spirit Union doesn't work if the spirit was summoned or commanded with Gifts; it must agree to the union of its own free will. Alternatively, the petitioner can bring along a ritemaster to perform the ritual *for* him, acting as a mediator. If the Garou (or his ritemaster) persuades the spirit to accede, the pact is made: the spirit agrees to inhabit the body of the petitioner and lend its strength to his cause, and in return the werewolf agrees to take no actions that would go against the spirit's own nature. Once the rite is complete, the two beings merge to become one. The werewolf retains full autonomy, and can only faintly sense the spirit's thoughts and emotions. The merged being takes on the appearance of a fantastical mix between the two.

System: To petition a spirit at all for this rite, the Garou must have a Rank that corresponds to the relative importance of the spirit. At Rank 1 or 2, he could only merge with Gafflings, while at Rank 3 or 4 he could merge with Jagglings and at Rank 5 he could petition even the Incarnae.

At the time of the rite, the petitioner takes aggravated damage appropriate to the spirit: 1 level for a Gaffling, 3 for a Jaggling, and 5 for an Incarna. The ritemaster's player makes an extended and resisted roll of Charisma + Rituals (difficulty 7) against the spirit's Gnosis (difficulty equal to the werewolf's Gnosis rating). If the player accumulates successes equal to the spirit's Willpower before the spirit accumulates successes equal to the werewolf's Willpower, the rite is successful and the two beings merge.

The werewolf's player distributes the spirit's Gnosis rating as dots among his Attributes in any combination, though no Attribute can be increased to more than double its Homid-form rating. The Garou gains access to all the spirit's Charms, spending Gnosis in place of Essence where appropriate. The player can spend the spirit's Gnosis, Rage, and Willpower points as though they were the Garou's own. The Storyteller chooses an appropriate Ban, similar to those imposed by totem spirits, by which the werewolf must abide; if he violates the Ban, the spirit immediately rips free of the union, deeply offended, and the werewolf suffers unsoakable dice of aggravated damage equal to the spirit's Rage. The werewolf can end the union safely at any time by spending one Willpower point and taking a level of lethal damage.

The instability of the union means that the werewolf risks burning himself out from the inside if he keeps it going for too long. For every scene after the first that the rite is in effect, the player rolls Rage, with a cumulative +1 difficulty each time. If the Garou frenzies as a result, then after the frenzy ends, he suffers unsoakable dice of aggravated damage equal to his own Rage and expels the spirit forcibly. If this happens, he's likely to lose Renown and the goodwill of the spirit both.

Rites of Renown

Rite of Succession

Level Three

This rite is performed whenever a Garou takes up a position of authority or responsibility within the sept. The sept gathers to witness the succession, and the ritemaster recites a list of the werewolf's credentials and accomplishments that qualify her for the position. The successor must bring a human or animal sacrifice, appropriate for her new position, killing it in front of the ritemaster. Everyone present eats a piece of the sacrifice, then the ritemaster takes a bone from the carcass and carves a glyph into it with her claws as a signifier of the new werewolf's position. In conclusion of this rite, the sept howls honor of the successor to the sky.

System: If the predecessor is present and performs the proper role, the ritemaster gains bonus dice equal to that werewolf's Rank. The successor gains one point of temporary Honor Renown for every two successes (round up) on this roll.

Minor Rites

Calling the Directions

A mystic uses this ritual to reorient himself spiritually, affirming that he is in balance with all of Gaia. Beginning with the East, the Garou howls or sings in the language of the Wild to each of the four cardinal directions.

System: If the werewolf performs this rite every morning when he wakes for one lunar month, he gains one bonus die to rolls to perform rites as long as he continues to Call the Directions each morning.

Honoring the Ancestors

By paying respects to a beloved tribe ancestor at a caern shrine or memorial with a ritual howl and a few drops of her own blood, a werewolf gains the favor of that ancestor.

System: Performing this rite for five nights in a row, during which the moon's phase that corresponds to the ancestor's auspice must be visible at least once, grants the character an additional die to the next roll she makes for social interaction with other members of her tribe.

Greet the North Star

This rite is similar to Greet the Moon, but is performed when the North Star first appears in the sky after sunset.

System: The werewolf must howl a greeting to the North Star each night for eight consecutive nights. If he does so, he gains one bonus die to all rolls for navigation until he lapses in his nightly greeting.

CHANGING WAYS

The Garou Nature

The Garou are warriors of Gaia. Part human, part wolf, and part spirit they look like what humans think of as werewolves but are so much more. Though most come into the world as humans or wolves, that state does not last. Wolf-born gain a spark of human intelligence after their Change, while those born to humans must cope with the instincts of a hunter, and the burning need to be part of a pack. Those poor wretches born to two werewolves grow up never knowing any different, and that leaves them with a unique outlook on the world. Beyond their fluid bodies and warrior's minds, each Garou has the blessings of the spirit world that empowers their fight for Gaia.

Red in Tooth and Claw

Changing Ways is an in-depth look at what it means to be a werewolf, both on a personal level and as part of a pack. It digs deep into what it feels like to have bones re-knit after breaking, the range of senses available across all forms, and the sudden heady rush of the Gifts and Rites bestowed by spirits. It also provides a look at what life is like for lupus and metis werewolves, characters who have had experiences alien to any person. It shows the many ways that werewolves organize in packs, and how those packs are designed as groups of warriors, rather than aligned to the behavior of wolves.

Changing Ways contains:

- A detailed look at what it means to grow up as a lupus or metis werewolf, and how that colors a character's perspective.
- More information on what it feels like to be a werewolf, a creature that changes in both body and mind.
- Frameworks and organizations for packs, along with new tactics and systems for forging the pack as part of play.

