

THE LIVE-ACTION GAMING MAGAZINE

# Mind's Eye Theatre<sup>TM</sup> JOURNAL

BECAUSE THE MIND'S EYE NEVER BLINKS



ISSUE NO.7

# Mind's Eye Theatre™ JOURNAL

BECAUSE THE MIND'S EYE NEVER BLINKS

Welcome to the  
Mind's Eye Theatre Journal,  
The magazine that picks up where  
other Mind's Eye publications leave off.

This issue presents:

- A guide to acting in live-action play
- Dharmas heretical to all self-respecting Kuei-jin
- A look at the hideous fomori
- Motivation to torch my effigy
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Mind's Eye Theatre™

THE LIVE-ACTION GAMING MAGAZINE



# Mind's Eye Theatre JOURNAL

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## WHAT YOU'VE MISSED

### Issue #4

- The secrets of the wraiths of the Jade Empire.
- The conclusion of the *Mayday!* Chronicle.
- Live-Action Mage rules... sort of.

### Issue #5

- The first part of MET's look at *Wraith: The Great War*.
- A look at the Bunyip for *Laws of the Wyld West*.
- The *einherjar* of the Dark Ages.

### Issue #6

- The second part of MET's look at *Wraith: The Great War*
- Werewolves in the Dark Ages
- Yulan-Jin and Dhampyrs



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## WELCOME!

Hello again, everybody, and welcome to the seventh issue of the **MET Journal**! For those of you who are new to the publication, let me take a second to acquaint you with just what you've got here. (For those of you who already know, you may skip ahead to Cynthia's article on staying in character.)

The **Journal** is a quarterly publication dedicated to filling in the gaps in your White Wolf LARP environment. We offer rules for new character types, original story lines to work into your chronicles, guides for keeping your games under control and running smoothly and rules updates you won't find in any other **Mind's Eye** release. Plus, you'll find answers to the questions that have plagued you, original World of Darkness fiction and columns from people who've been LARPing or working here at White Wolf (or both) for years.

In this issue, we delve into the acting side of live-action roleplaying. Cynthia Summers and Matthew Hooper provide insight on how to truly make your character come to life on the mobile stage of roleplaying. On the other end of the spectrum, I offer rules for fomori and slip in the heretical Dharma rules that didn't make it into **Laws of the East**. And that's just a sample of what's in store for you here. We'll also take a look at what you've missed in previous issues (if you're joining us late) and what to expect in the future of **Mind's Eye Theatre** and White Wolf in general.

In the next issue of the **Journal**, we'll finish up Laura Hanson's series on costuming, I'll say a few words about running a LARP chronicle, and I'll make an unrelated revelation you might not expect.

Until then, you can help make the **Journal** even better. Send us letters on your opinions about the state of live-action roleplaying today. Send us questions about the features and rules you see here, as well as notes about the broken rules you come across in different **MET** publications. Send us horror stories about games gone wrong and how your player characters fixed them. We're interested in all aspects of live-action roleplaying, and we want to know what you think.

Stick around. The **Journal** is on the cutting edge of the live-action genre; we've got something for everybody. And if we don't have it yet, let us know. We'll get it for you.

Carl Bowen

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## STAYING IN CHARACTER

by Cynthia Summers

Cynthia knows things. She's been developing *Mind's Eye Theatre* for more than a year now, and she's been playing *Mind's Eye Theatre* since she started working for White Wolf in 1994. She's one of the resident LARPing experts in house. As an observer of the dynamics of live-action roleplaying society, she is without peer.

When you go to a *Mind's Eye Theatre* game, or any LARP for that matter, one of the game's greatest charms is the total immersion in the scene. For the next several hours, you're not who you are at home. You're the dread prince of the city or the brave knight questing for the treasure or the ghost that's been terrorizing the kids on Lovers' Lane. When you're at the game, you have a character. Unfortunately, there are numerous distractions that can make maintaining that character challenging at best, impossible at worst. This is the challenge of every actor and every roleplayer — how to maintain character. There are a number of reasons why you may have trouble in the first place, but for every reason, there is certainly a solution.

### BEING AROUND OTHERS WHO ARE OUT OF PLAY

Sometimes, you get a couple of folks who just saw the latest *Star Wars* and simply must discuss it right there in the middle of the game (and they sure don't sound like the Red Talons they're supposed to be...). Or you have to deal with some fool who insists on quoting you the entirety of Monty Python's *The Life of Brian* to prove he can. Then you have the two who haven't seen each other since the panty raid at Gropecon '97, and they just reunited in the middle of the game.

Ask your Storyteller about designating a spot in the game site as out-of-play and announcing at the beginning of the night where it is. Those who are being noisy should be encouraged to take their discussion elsewhere. Don't go into the area unless you have to. If you're having trouble maintaining character, it'll be that much harder around a bunch of folks who are there to smoke, greet their long-lost buddies or whatever.

### THE PHYSICAL THINGS

Eating, drinking, and sleeping — little things that our all-too-human bodies crave — can sometimes run roughshod over the mood in a chronicle (particularly for those playing the non-living). People tend to drop character



on the smoking porch or around the snack table, simply because they believe their characters wouldn't be caught dead with a hotdog in hand.

In the case of smoking, either designate the smoking lounge as completely out of play or completely in play. This designation should have nothing to do with smoking or abstaining, however. Your character can still have his coffin nail — just keep talking about in-play topics while you're puffing, or remain out of play until you're done, as the Storyteller dictates.

Some games encourage players to bring snacks and drinks for those inevitable munchies that arise during a busy evening of dominating the city, or your play sites provide vending machines. Should eating be in or out of character? A couple of ideas arise. Consider stickers that can be slapped on the comestible's package (or the player himself) to indicate whether the food is in or out of play. Otherwise, you should take your treat to the out-of-play area if you can't countenance eating in character. Eating in play is certainly not strange to mortals, Garou or changelings, and sometimes it's even encouraged. A growling stomach in the middle of court is a tad embarrassing, after all. Wraiths do Skinride occasionally for the pleasure of tasting food again, while a Kuei-jin who's flushed with Yang may eat without difficulty. Some Kindred practice the façade of eating in order to perfect their Masquerade (which some other Cainites find disgusting).

Physical considerations like sleepiness and illness also make it difficult to stay in character. Not only is it hard to concentrate on the Rite of Cleansing if you're nodding off or coughing up a lung, it's difficult to concentrate if someone else is having similarly obvious problems nearby. If you're bushed, sleep. If you're sick, why are you at the game? This part is common sense, folks. Having a game scheduled is no reason to be out spreading your germs and dragging your groggy butt around. Even if you're determined to run on adrenaline, consider that you might make mistakes that your well-rested character would know to avoid. A head clouded by exhaustion, hunger, pain and the like doesn't make for good roleplaying.

## YOU LOOK LIKE WHAT?

What could be more frustrating than a trail of people wanting to know out of play about your physical appearance while you're trying to roleplay? God bless those who gave us the ribbon, the sticker and the tag. These accoutrements give us the info that we should know by sight. Wear what you need to describe your visible condition, prominently placed (sleeve caps, lapels). Sure, you can be creative, but claiming your purple brassiere indicates your Majesty is, ahem, not a sterling choice. Ignore those dopes who are too lazy to read the tags and interrupt you with questions that are answerable with a ribbon or other sign, and don't be a dope yourself. If you have a tag, *wear it* — it does no good in your car. Bear in mind that a white ribbon in one game may mean something entirely different in another, and if you travel, make sure you're up on the local customs. If your character is something unusual (albino, winged,



humpbacked), this detail is even more important. It helps those around you react properly to you, and sometimes, that reaction can help reinforce the character for you.

Make an effort to costume. Your costume doesn't need to be overly elaborate — a "lucky" flannel shirt, a bone choker, a tabard — but it can really help you "put on your character" as you put it on. Sometimes it's more helpful to consider a general "look" for your character, as opposed to a single elaborate costume. Think colors, styles, adornment — broad brush-strokes no different than when you were creating the numbers side of the character. That way, you have some backup choices should the shirt be in the wash or should you be at a large event.

## ANCIENT, POWERFUL AND DEADLY

Concept problems can be one of the biggest causes of handling character poorly, and sometimes, an ounce of thought can be worth a pound of frustration. Grab that sheet, and let's sit down for a spell.

Look at your Attributes, both positive and negative. Are you actually playing them? How did you get to be *Wiry* or *Wise*? For that matter, how did you get to be *Oblivious*, or *Lame*? Look at shades of meaning. Does your *Oblivious* Trait mean that you zone out because you're listening to the voices in your head, or that you get busy on a project and forget to pay attention around you? These Attributes are the stuff of raw potential, usually deeply rooted in the what and why of your character. They're not just for challenges or to fill out a sheet.

Look at your Abilities; many of them lend something to you. So you've got a lot of *Academics*. Do you read everything you can get your hands on, are you never seen without a book in your hands, or do you ask lots of questions? You've been working on learning to fight? Do your hands clench into fists automatically every time you hear raised voices, or do you just watch brawls to learn more? Your Abilities are a reflection of what you know and have learned, and they carry over into how your character behaves.

Derangements, Merits and Flaws are more than nifty geegaws. Are you actually playing said Traits, or are they just ornaments? Bear in mind that a certain set of stimuli gave you said derangement, Merit or Flaw — stimuli which you may need to provide. Derangements in particular are full-time jobs. What stimuli make your character's insanity flare or settle? Are you playing them actively?

Players of stereotypical characters frequently have the greatest problems with staying in character. Most times, a stereotypical character has a single set of reactions for a set of occasions (usually having nothing to do with free-flow "daily" events, with triggers that are excruciatingly specific or the fabled broad side of the barn). As a result, the players have no clue what to do when something new or unexpected crops up. Even worse, said character falls back on the only thing he can think of (which may be entirely inappropriate). If you've given real thought to your character, then you don't need a rote set of reactions for every circumstance — you know what will happen.



And now, that last section of character creation that many tend to gloss over — quirks, habits and other indefinables. Does your character have hobbies or interests beyond what's on the sheet? Is she reading the latest fantasy works or going to the movies? If you don't know how your character views these things, that can really hamper staying in character when you're around others who are discussing the movie that surely inspired a Chrysalis or two. Even Ghengis Khan took a break.

## DAMN, I'VE GOT TO SIT OOP

Sometimes you've got to leave the action. Maybe you're going to play another character for the Storyteller, maybe you've been asked to sit away from the in-play area while your character runs a ritual or drives somewhere, or you've got to leave early for a real-life job. There are definitely more viable options than making the out-of-play sign and leaving.

If you're going to do something in another part of the game (playing a Storyteller character or helping at check-in), then consider excusing yourself in character to make a phone call, check email or do some other little thing that should naturally occur off-stage. Before you return, take a moment to reorient yourself and re-enter to whatever chaos greets you. The same option is open if you're leaving for a job or other event. Leave under some character pretext (answering a page, feeding the cat, writing the pontifex), make your in-character farewells and depart. Doing so is a lot more story-friendly than simply barging out and making a great deal of out-of-character noise.

In the case of driving, rituals or other tasks that have a time requirement, you need not sit and twiddle your thumbs, nor fall into out-of-play conversation you're not interested in. Grab a book or something that your character might actually be interested in, or think about what your character is doing while running the ritual, hacking the system or driving. Did she run a red light? Did she take extra care with drawing her circles? Storytellers may ask such things as plot fodder, but even if they don't, it can be a neat detail to bring back to play, in addition to keeping you focused.

## MOM, WE'RE BORED!

Then, last but not least, there's that great enemy of the roleplayer — boredom. Sitting by yourself doing nothing seems to be one of the greatest temptations to all sorts of naughtiness. It can also be a powerful motive to slide out of character. After all, you're not doing anything, so why bother?

If you foresee a slow evening for an in-play circumstance, or there's a chance the event you were planning for doesn't go off, bring things with you that your character could do to keep busy, such as a book, the tools of your craft or a game. Chess seems to be the default sport of kings, but backgammon, go, mancala or mah jong are equally valid. Plus there's always a deck of cards. If you must sit out, then you'll have something to keep busy with. If you're in play,



seeing you with something in your hands may well bring over curious observers, and some of the best roleplaying can spring from in-play interest. It also squashes the risk of sliding out of character and distracting those around you.

It could be that the character itself has gone a little stale. You may feel that the character has reached its limits, and he has no more story to tell. Consider a brief walkabout or time away — even the sweetest song can get old if it's played too many times. Some downtime may bring you back refreshed and raring to go, or you may find that you really have reached the end of the road. If the latter is the case, then go gracefully — whether into the sunset or Valhalla — and take what you learn into your next incarnation.

# DEADGUY SPEAKS

by Richard E. Dansky

## GABBA HEY, GABBA HEY, NOT ONE OF US

Or

### PRECISELY WHY ALL OF YOUR NON-LARPING FRIENDS THINK YOU'RE NUTS



If you're reading this column, you fall into one of two classes of people: players of *Mind's Eye Theatre* or my immediate family. If you're one of the former (and the odds are, I think, pretty good), then you've probably had a conversation that goes something like this:

FRIEND

Hi there! Want to go catch a movie Friday?

YOU

Umm, sorry, I can't. It's *Masquerade* night, and I really have to be there.

FRIEND

You said that two weeks ago. And two weeks before that.

YOU

I know, I know, but this is something I've been working towards for a long time, and I have to be there tonight or the Ventrué primogen will...

FRIEND

Whatever. Say hi to Count Chocula for me.

Sounds familiar, doesn't it? Not only that, but it's incredibly frustrating. After all, you want to spend time with your friends who don't play the game, but it seems like every time you talk to them, they're demanding that you give up a game session that invariably contains some crucial chain of events. (And I hope I'm not going out on a limb here by assuming that you do indeed have friends who don't play.)

Your friends, on the other hand, see every attempt to be social stymied because you've got to go to the game. Even worse, they see all of your free time sucked up by this game to such an extent that they're ready to hire Harvey Keitel to kidnap and deprogram you (on the condition that he promises to keep his pants on at all times).

It's not a pretty situation, and it's one that can lead to a lot of strain on both you and your non-gaming social circle. Left untended, that sort of dilemma can cause resentment, wreck friendships and generate enough angst to fuel every *Oblivion* chronicle on the continent.

(OK, the wise-ass who said, "Both of them?" is getting a stern talking-to when this column is over. Count on it.)

Dealing with those who are "outside the tribe" of gamers has always been problematic, but it gets even more so when you have problems dealing with non-LARPers who are at least initially friendly to the idea of LARP. Note, however, that "Friendly to the idea of LARP"

is not semantically equivalent to "Ripe fodder for recruitment into your little ghoul army." A friend can appreciate that you have fun playing Masquerade without having the slightest inclination to do so herself, and repeated attempts to haul her into play willy-nilly will squander that appreciation rapidly.

Let's put it this way: Many of my friends regard Arnold Schwarzenegger as a luminous paradigm of the thespian craft. I think he's got the dramatic range of a kangaroo's discus toss, but I certainly don't begrudge my friends their enjoyment. I wish them happiness when they get together for that boffo Commando/ Red Heat double feature playing down at the campus cinema series, but I'm not going to partake myself, thanks.

The same goes for LARPing. Just because someone doesn't immediately condemn your vampire LARP as a tool of Satan (who, incidentally, really should have kicked Arnold's ass much harder in *End of Days*), she's not necessarily ready to dive whole-heartedly into the game. Maybe she just appreciates the fact that you're having a good time. There is middle ground. Honest.

Unfortunately, there's a steady, basic miscommunication between the LARP community and the rest of the world as to what exactly is going on once the capes come out and the fangs appear. To all but the most closely proximate non-tribesman, that **Vampire** LARP thing you do is a "game." On a certain level, they're right. It's a game, a simulation and an exercise that you do for the sake of fun and social interaction.

However, where the problem comes in is your definition of a "game" versus theirs. After all, they think you're playing a game in the same way that they'd play chess or Parcheesi or Frogger. You play, someone wins, and it's over. That's it, end of story, it's time to move on.

You, however, are aware that you are instead partaking in a chronicle, a long-running series of interconnected stories detailing character growth and conflict, and carried out over a series of sessions that can last years.

What we have here, as the man said, is failure to communicate. Oops.

Is this anyone's fault? Of course not — at least not initially. Most of the folks out there have certain perceptions of what a game is, how it's played and what its demarcations are. There's no reason for them to expect that MET behaves any differently, after all. On the other hand, you have every reason to expect your friends to be understanding of your need to devote time to something that you've invested a lot of work and emotional energy into.

Therein, to be honest, lies the rub. A chronicle is not an episodic sort of thing. It's cumulative. Plots evolve and move forward. Characters become more complex and more fully realized. Social interactions acquire depth. Plus, there are more and more people whose characters you have to consider as each session rolls past.

That sounds fairly generic, right? Every activity gets more complex with time. But you, you've put innumerable hours into your plans and building your alliances. You've spent lots of downtime writing reports, sending in-character emails and arranging brief between-sessions roleplaying moments. You've laid out cash, at the very least, for costuming. You've put a ton of energy into maneuvering yourself into a position where you can grab power in the city and learn that new Discipline you've had your eye on. Now you're ready to put a real stick up your arch-rival's butt, but it's all going to depend on the next session, and you had better be there to make sure all goes according to plan.

Besides, if you skip the session, that son of a bitch Ventrue suddenly jumps two points ahead of you on the experience curve, which means he's in that much better position to crush everything you've worked for, kill your character, and render the long-winded setup in the previous paragraph moot.

(Side note: Why is it that the most intense roleplayers, the ones who put in the absolute most time plotting, scheming, building characters, acquiring experience, shmoozing fellow players and generally working to bend the game to their will are inevitably the guys you hate

the most? [And let's not get into cheating or, even worse, worming into out-of-play positions of power for the sake of benefiting their characters or screwing over people he doesn't like.]

Combating this sort of thing often turns into a vendetta for even the most reasonable folks. They're willing to lose status, have plans come to naught and even kiss beloved characters good-bye — but not if *that* asshole is the one who benefits. After all, *that* asshole will, if crowned prince, ruin the game, kill off tons of characters and generally wreck everyone's fun. Unfortunately, to prevent this outcome, otherwise-well-balanced people are forced into an ever-widening spiral of commitment, just to keep pace with the *schmuck du jour*.

Of course, to an outside observer, this phenomenon looks like a rapid descent into obsessive-compulsive behavior, and possibly an Academy Award-nominated role for Winona Ryder when they finally make that movie about you.)

So let's take a step back to that hypothetical conversation we started things with. Your friend sees everything you're doing to culminate all of the work you've done for the character and cut off Ye Schmucko Grande, and he decides that you've gone LARP crazy and that you no longer have any use for people outside that special little world. After all, on those rare occasions when you do manage to hang out, you talk about what you've done recently — which is LARP.

(Side Note #2: This sort of situation is usually not helped by infrequent sessions of hanging out. After all, at those moments you talk about what you've done recently, which often consists of...what you've done at the LARP. It's an affliction common to all enthusiastic hobbyists — you should hear fantasy baseball players ramble on for hours about the minutiae of the Cubs' backup middle infielder situation — but it's inevitably really incredibly annoying to the non-hobbyists forced to endure it.)

You, on the other hand, have decided that your friend is an insensitive bastard for demanding that you abandon everything you've worked for just to catch a movie that will no doubt be on video within the hour anyway. Plus, he's showing an appalling lack of understanding of all the work, passion and probably money you've put into this, and exactly how much will go down the drain if you miss the session.

So who's at fault? Again, nobody is. It's just a miscommunication. However, that miscommunication will do a Godzilla-style number on your friendships with folks outside the game that you're in if it's allowed to continue. This column isn't me trying to be funny or get in a backhanded slam at folks who genuinely enjoy playing MET full-throttle. This stuff happens, and it happens a lot, which is a shame. After all, like I keep on saying, MET is a game. It's supposed to add to your life and make it more fun. Stressing friendships does not, by my definition of the word, add to anyone's fun, and it behooves you and your friends outside the tribe to make some efforts to bridge that gap of communication before anything irrevocable occurs.

The most important step in achieving some sort of détente between your LARPing and non-LARPing lives is clearing up the misunderstanding over what sort of game it is. The best way to go about it is to couch it in terms that your friends will recognize and relate to. If they bowl, they'd be offended if you asked them to skip a league night for a movie, especially with the league championship (and the coveted gold-plated ugly shoes trophy) on the line. Therefore, it's only a short jump to comparing your showdown with Vinnie the Venture to his showdown with the guys who normally hang out on lane 21.

Couching the session in question in terms like that helps on several levels. First of all, it provides an easily understandable parallel for what you're doing and why you're doing it. You've put a lot of time into the character, he's put a lot of time into his game. You've put a lot of money into costuming, he's bought a strike ball, a spare ball and a pair of God-damned ugly shoes. And so it goes. By bringing what you've done into close comparison to what he's done, it suddenly makes more sense.

Furthermore, doing so helps to ratchet down the "alien hobby — FREAKS" factor significantly. If your behaviors suddenly aren't so different from his behaviors, he may well have a more sympathetic view toward what you're doing and how you're going about doing it.

(Then again, your buddy may just decide that he, too, is an irredeemable freak, and begin the process of ritual self-immolation in the nearest crosswalk. Those, however, are the risks you have to take for the greater good.)

It's a small step, but it's a worthwhile one. You can't mandate understanding on your friends' part; you can only provide the tools and opportunities by which they just might understand why exactly you do that wacky thing you do. Think of yourself as an enabler, and suddenly you'll feel much better about the process.

Then again, there always remains the slim possibility that maybe, just maybe, your friend is right and you actually are devoting too much time to the game. Take a minute and pop open your copy of *Laws of the Night*. Somewhere in that book is a disclaimer about how, if you're calling the primogen at 3:27 in the morning to discuss who did what to whose socks at Elysium, you need to take a break. That one's in there for a reason, folks, and it's not to pad word count. If enough people are saying, "Gee, you're playing that game an awful lot," it's worth a minute or two to do a mental check on exactly how much time, effort and money you're putting into play. If you can answer in the affirmative to more than half of these questions, you might want to take a step back:

1-Do you get your mail and find yourself vaguely annoyed that none of it is addressed to your character?

2-Does your character have a larger wardrobe than you do?

3-Does your email application have a separate folder for IC game correspondence that's slightly larger than a scanned-in copy of *War and Peace*?

4-Do the waitrons at the local 24 hour restaurants know you by your character name rather than your real one?

5-Does the sight of a T-shirt emblazoned with the exhortation, "DO NOT TELL ME ABOUT YOUR CHARACTER!" inspire sudden rage in you?

6-Do you look forward to traveling to exotic locales because they've been described in White Wolf books and you can't wait to have your character announce that he's spoken to the canonical White Wolf characters?

7-Have you ever been in an uncomfortable discussion or situation and had someone say, "Why are your arms folded across your chest all of a sudden?"

8-Do you find yourself mentally assigning Negative Traits to people you don't like?

9-Have you ever seriously considered dating someone else's character, even if you wouldn't touch that particular player with a biohazard suit on?

10-Have you ever screwed up at school or work and found yourself actually trying to explain to your superior/ professor that it wasn't your fault because the Nosferatu kept you up all night?

11-Have you ever shown off your copy of the old *Laws of the Night* and proudly identified it as a first printing because a.) the spine lettering is unreadable and b.) it doesn't have the typo on the back cover?

If you answered "Yes" to a majority of these questions, it's probably time to slow down a bit. If you answered "Yes, and your point is?" it's definitely time to take a break, and possibly time for another hobby.

This is not to say that because you play MET, you automatically play too much MET. After all, I like the fact that you're playing the game. It means, among other things, that you buy MET-related products, and I get to keep churning out this nifty column for which they pay me quite nicely. Having devoted an ungodly number of hours and an untold amount of

sweat and effort to the game over the years, I'm not exactly going to turn on my baby and start decrying the evils of the game system. I mean, come on, people.

However, it's easy to fall into the great trap of the continuing live-action chronicle, which is to say its cumulative nature. Yes, this week is when everything comes to a head — but odds are, there's going to be something just as vital at the next session, and the one after that, and so on. There's always another idiot or munchkin or asshole or twink who's on the verge of ruining the game if you, personally, don't interpose yourself. There's always another email to write, just to make sure that everything's going according to plan, another XP to pick up to ensure that your character will survive the next game. And so it goes — it's no better or worse or different than computer gamers who hog-tie themselves to *Civilization* so they can build one more chariot unit before bed, except that there are other people involved, for better or for worse.

If you lose sight of that, then just maybe your friend might have a point. After all, no matter how many times you throw yourself on the grenade of El Twinko, every chronicle ends sooner or later. Every game winds down. And when it does, you want to be able to dust yourself off, smile nostalgically at your much-marked character sheet, and walk off with your life having been made better by the fact that you played. You don't want to look around at the wreckage with a wide-eyed expression of panic and start planning a new game just because you have no idea what the hell else to do with your time.

You have a responsibility, after all, a responsibility to yourself. You do not have a responsibility to Save The Game. If Baron Von Twinkenstein is ruining it, you don't necessarily have to be the hero every time. If he's really that bad, someone else will probably try to help; if he isn't, maybe you need to relax. And if worse comes to worst, you can always start a new game. If the guy's that much of a ninny, odds good that are the folks you actually want to play with will come with you — and if you're not going toe to toe with your pet schmuck, odds are you'll have a little more time around the game.

More importantly, you have a responsibility to yourself to make yourself happy, and even the most avid player will — upon due reflection — agree that letting the rest of your life atrophy for the sake of the game probably doesn't cover that criterion too well.

In the end, it does come down to perspective. You have to help your friends achieve a clearer perspective on what you're doing and why it's important to you. If they're friends worth keeping, they'll respect that, stick around and make an effort to get together around your gaming schedule. By the same token, you owe it to yourself to re-examine your perspective on the whole thing, and make sure you're happy with the role the game is playing in your life. Yes, it's fun, and yes, it can happily suck up as much time as you want to give it. Just be sure you're happy with how much time you're giving it, and how much time you're giving everything else.

In the end, after all, it's a game that you play — that's all. All in all, that's a pretty damned good thing for it to be. You'll probably want to keep it from becoming anything more. Your friends have no right to try to make it anything less. But in the meantime, that middle's a heck of a place to be.

And if not? There's always room for one more at the bowling alley, if you can stand the shoes.

*- the deadguy -*





# ALL THE WORLD'S A STAGE

## A ROUGH GUIDE TO ACTING IN METPLAY

by Matthew Hooper

*Matthew I Hooper has spent over two decades chasing a career in theater. He graduated from the Catholic University of America with a theater major. He came to Atlanta, GA to become a starving actor/waiter, only realizing late in life that, while acting is cool, starving sucks. While some of the roles he played were immense fun — especially the lead in Romeo and Juliet — eventually he hung up his tights and rapier and went to work in the mundane world. These days, he writes freelance material for White Wolf, contributing to the **Guide to the Camarilla** and Storytellers guide. He still feels the need to tread the boards occasionally, though.*

"So, what's this weird hobby of yours you do on the weekends?" Most Mind's Eye Theatre players have faced this awkward question from well-meaning friends or relatives at some point. It's never an easy one to tackle. How do you explain to your dear Aunt Edna that you pretend to be a werewolf on alternate Tuesdays without making her cough up her dentures and give your folks embarrassed glances? Do you lie and tell her you like to take long, soulful walks in the woods? After all, you can leave out the part where you bay at the moon. Do you just dodge the question by complementing her on her new crocheted sweater?

A lot of players settle for this half-truth: "I'm in an improvisational theater troupe." It sounds nice and profound. The conversation can move on again safely. After all, theater is a respectable hobby. And while improv comedy isn't Shakespeare, Clive Anderson and his friends had a huge hit with that *Whose Line is it Anyway?* show of theirs. Theater is an ancient, noble art where you dress up and pretend to be someone else in front of an audience, while live-action games, why, they're some scruffy hobby where.. er... you do the same thing without an audience. And with some games of Rock-Paper-Scissors tossed in to boot.

Hmm. Maybe that convenient explanation isn't so far from the truth after all.

Live-action gaming is a form of theater, pure and simple. Mind you, there's no audience at a LARP, but that doesn't mean that you aren't acting when you assume the role. Acting and live-action gaming are both about playing make



believe. Acting focuses exclusively on taking that “make believe” as far as possible, while LARPers just settle for enjoying ourselves.

Sure, live-action roleplaying is just a game. So is chess. So is business. So is a love affair. So is art. A game is *any* activity with rules and a goal and a lot of joy involved with the process. Some of the best games —like love or business— are deadly serious. Theater is as much a game as any LARP, in its own way. You just don’t keep score the same way.

Trust me. Ask any actor. They aren’t in it for the money. Why do you think we’re called “starving artists”?

Acting in a LARP and acting on stage isn’t quite the same. You have to work a lot harder on your concentration in a LARP than on stage. You have more freedom — and more work — at a game than in front of the footlights. But the raw pleasure of it all is the same. When you are *In Character* (in capital letters), you know it, and you never forget how good it feels.

It’s hard to explain what that feeling is like. It’s not a matter of “forgetting” yourself. You don’t suddenly develop Multiple Personality Disorder. You just focus completely on the moment. Forget that you’re in a high school gym. Forget that you’re speaking in sonnets. Forget that your tights itch. If you put all these things away and concentrate — really concentrate — on being someone else for an hour, it can be magic. You’re never going to “be” that person, but you’re going to be more in tune with yourself by focusing on making that role come to life.

You can feel it on stage all the time. At an **MET** game, it’s a lot more rare, but those moments of clarity are present. The tests and the rules exist to make those magic moments when the world comes alive happen. And with a little practice, those moments happen a lot more often.

This article is intended to help coach you through getting into character for a LARP, using some basic theater techniques. You won’t be ready to star in the Scottish play after reading these steps, but you will find it easier to enter and stay in character if you follow them. Before your next game, give them a try and see what happens. With any luck, you’ll be able to find those *In Character* moments more easily, once you have an idea of how to get there.

## **FOCUS: PUTTING THE DAY AWAY**

The most important aspect of making a character is concentration. It’s all about focus. You can’t convince anybody you’re an 18th century vampire if you’re talking about the latest episode of *Dawson’s Creek* or catching up on the latest gossip. Building a character takes work. If you’re not concentrating on the job, it’ll slip away from you.

Before you start your next game, take a minute to walk away from the crowd and get yourself ready. Take a few deep breaths. Think about all the things you did today, the good and the bad. Take a moment to look at them. Then breathe out. Put those things away. For the next couple of hours, you



don't need to worry about them. You're here to pretend to be someone else for a few hours, right? So get serious about it. Set the day's worries aside. Above all, take your time. Leave the stuff that's outside the game, outside the game.

The biggest distraction any actor can face is stage fright. When you start to worry about what the audience thinks about you, your concentration is shot. If you worry about what the other players think about you, you can't focus. If you can't focus, you can't do the job correctly.

If you're afraid, you're afraid. That's fine. Focus on who you are and what you're doing. Ignore the spectators. Think about what you are doing right now. Take that fear, look at it a little bit, and then set it on the shelf with today's troubles. You've got something else to do for the next few hours. You're too busy to be scared.

There is no hurry here. Take as much time as you need to get ready. If the game starts without you, fine. It's always better to be late and be 100 percent there, than to do a poor job.

Now try something really scary: Stretch. That's right, move around a bit. Roll your neck and stretch out your back. You're going to be using your body as much as your brain for the next few hours. Acting is as much a physical exercise as a mental one. You need to have both in gear.

Take one more deep breath for luck. Ready? Good. All right, pick up your character and start finding a way into him.

## **GETTING STARTED: INSIDE AND OUTSIDE**

There's an old story in theater about how Dustin Hoffman and Sir Lawrence Olivier prepared for their roles in the movie *Marathon Man*. Sir Lawrence Olivier was playing a torturer, and Hoffman was his victim.

Hoffman really got into the role he was playing: He didn't sleep for three days before the shoot. He didn't eat the day before. The day of the shoot, he didn't bathe. Finally, he showed up to the set, ready to go.

Sir Lawrence Olivier was waiting for him. He stared at his young partner and exclaimed, "Good Lord! You look terrible! What on earth happened to you?"

"I starved myself for the role," Hoffman replied groggily.

Sir Lawrence stared at him a bit, and then replied crisply: "My dear boy. Next time try acting. It's so much easier."

Hoffman and Olivier both had very different techniques for getting into character. Hoffman built on the "interior technique" of acting. He put himself through some really nasty experiences to learn what it felt like to be tortured. Then he took those personal experiences to his character. The end result was a very realistic performance. (Maybe too realistic for those downwind of him.)



Sir Lawrence, on the other hand, used an older technique — the “exterior technique.” He focused on how his character moved — how the tortured stood, how he walked, how he stared at Hoffman. Then he listened to what those changes in his body did to his voice and his heart, and he carried them through to the stage. The end result was just as good, and just as credible, as Hoffman’s.

Both techniques offer a window into getting inside a character. So which technique is best to use in **Mind’s Eye Theatre**? Both, of course.

### EXTERIOR TECHNIQUE

First and foremost, acting is an active process. Saying so sounds silly, but it's an undeniable basic of the art. You tell your audience who you are with your body. Your posture defines your personality more than anything else about you. It doesn't matter how detailed your character background is. It doesn't matter if you tell me that you're a professional bodyguard who lived through the Punic Wars. If I don't see it in the way you walk, I don't believe you, and nothing you say can convince me. And if you can't convince me, how can you convince yourself?

Actors often refer to their bodies as instruments. An actor “uses his instrument” to convey a role to an audience. It sounds pretentious [or dirty, if your mind works like that], but there's a lot of truth there. Without an understanding of it, it doesn't matter how much thought and research you put into a role. If an audience doesn't see your work, you're as effective as a trombonist who hums along to the orchestra. An entire philosophy of acting, called the Alexander Technique, is devoted to this idea of acting with your body. We don't have space for the thousands of pages written about it, but here are some highlights.

Try this on for size. Get up out of your chair and start walking. Don't think about walking, just walk like you were getting a coke from the fridge. Okay. Now speed up a little. Don't run. Just pick up the pace. Concentrate, now. Don't think about how silly you may look, just do it.

While you're walking, think about how you're standing. When you walk through the door to the kitchen, what's the first part of your body that passes the doorframe? No, it's not your feet — not unless you're taking giant steps. Odds are it's your nose or your hips or your stomach.

What happens when you lead with your chin? Don't stick out like you were taking a punch, just think about leading with your chin. Keep it small. Turn around. When you turn, what part of your body turns first? Try to move in such a way that your chin is the first thing that moves when you decide to hang a left into the kitchen.

Clench your jaw. Swing your arms. Clench your fists. Unclench them. Swing your head from side to side, like you were working a kink in your back out.

Stop. How do you feel?

If you said “Angry,” that's good. You paid attention to what your body was telling you. Congratulations. You just acted.



A lot of times, you can slip right into a role just by concentrating on how a character moves. Bodyguards, scholars and slaves all stand still in completely different ways. If you pay attention to this aspect of your character, you'll go a long way toward getting into his shoes.

Body language is absolutely crucial for the more animalistic roles in the World of Darkness, like those of the Garou. Do you want to play a lupus-breed werewolf? Do yourself a favor. Plant yourself in front of the Discovery Channel. Watch wolves for an hour or two. A wolf moves in a certain way. He reacts in a certain way. How do you take your two-legged body and make yourself move like that wolf on the television screen? Try it and find out. Eventually, you'll never have to say, "I'm a lupus," to other players. They'll know before you can say a word.

Show the other players what you are. One of the worst sins you can commit at a game is to raise your fingers and explain yourself. Don't say, "You can see that I'm really beaten up." Don't say, "You can see that I'm furious." Show these things! How does someone move when they've been beaten to a pulp? How do you look at someone when you're ready to chew nails and spit baling wire? Part of you probably knows. At some time in your life, you've been that bruised. You've probably been that angry as well. Feel those feelings all over again, and let your fellow gamers see it. The fewer times you have to step out of character, the stronger your character will be.

Before you enter your next game, spend some time thinking about how your character moves. How does he walk? Is he sneaky? Lead with your nose. Is he arrogant? Lead with your chin. Try as many things as you like. Don't just think about these mannerisms, try them. If you are sitting in a chair pondering all of this stuff, you've missed the point.

Costuming helps a great deal in figuring out the body language of your character. An evening gown forces you move in a certain way. So does a tuxedo or a pair of blue jeans or a doublet and hose. It's hard to slouch in a tuxedo or gown. You have to keep your back straight. As a result, you look more formal. And if you look formal, you feel more formal. Incorporate those restrictions into your character's movement. Every small cue informs your character choices; they all help you decide what does and doesn't fit in your game play.

Now that you've got your character up on its feet, it's time to turn your brain on and start thinking through your role.

## INTERIOR TECHNIQUE

Start going over your character history at this point. Run it through your head like a good movie or a slideshow. Pick three events from your character history that you consider important.

Take a good look at those important moments. Play them back in your head. Go into detail. What did you see? What did you hear? What did you smell? What did you touch? Try and drag all five senses into the mix.



Try and really immerse yourself into the moment, at least for now.

Now start taking a peek into your character's head. What was he feeling when these things happened?

Let's say that your character's father was killed by the Sabbat. How would that make your character feel? Angry? Sure. How about afraid? After all, your father was far more powerful than you were once. How about disappointed? You always thought your dad was stronger than this. How about happy? What did your father do to you that would make you happy to see him dead? Hmm...

Maybe some answers are right. Maybe some aren't. But ask every question you can, even the ones you think are wrong. Maybe you'll be surprised. People are capable of the most amazing things sometimes. Don't settle for the easy answers.

Above all, avoid saying no. Consider everything. Try everything. You owe it to yourself to look at every option. One of the greatest joys about this hobby is that you can be absolutely anyone or anything. You owe it to yourself to explore every possibility, even the ones that you wouldn't normally allow yourself to look at twice.

Now that you've explored these emotions in your character, try and link them to your own experiences in the world. It doesn't matter if your character is a centuries old vampire or a bloodthirsty werewolf or whatever. You've had feelings and experiences that are similar to that creature. If it was impossible to empathize with a character, he'd be boring. If you can imagine a character, you can step into his shoes. It's just a matter of trying. There are no such things as aliens in this world, only strangers.

Maybe your parents haven't been killed by anybody, but have you experienced the feelings that your character felt when his father was killed? Can you remember what it was like to be afraid for your father? When were you angry with your father? Were you ever disappointed with your father? What did those things feel like? Think of those moments. Think of your character history. Splice them together. Now you've really got material to work with.

A lot of material has been written about this internal technique for acting. It's called the Stanislavsky Technique, and again, we don't have a thousand pages to discuss it. The material you've got here is a good start, however. Don't be afraid to take risks, to make choices, and to ask questions. There are no wrong answers here—only answers that you're afraid to try. Dare it. Try them. Remember, it's only a game. The world of make believe is a wonderful place to explore your heart. As long as you keep the line between fantasy and reality strong, you can find some amazing things.

One final note: Make sure that your character's Nature and Demeanor agree with the choices you've made about the character so far. You'll be using those two little words as a touchstone for your character's innermost desires as the game goes on. Don't be surprised if, after all this work, you find that the character's Nature is completely different from what you thought it was going



to be. When you start on a creative process like this, it tends to develop a direction all its own. Change it around until the Nature and Demeanor fit again, and get ready to move on.

## TAKING ACTION: ACTING WITHIN THE GAME

So, you feel like you're getting into character. You're ready to get into the game. Good. Now the work really begins.

Acting applies to your body, and it applies to your mind. When you start playing the game, you need to make an active choice about what you're going to get done that night.

We make choices every day, most of which aren't terribly important. We decide what to have for lunch. We decide what to wear. Theater, and acting, is all about making choices too. Big choices. The bigger, the better. Hamlet isn't deciding on lunch, he's deciding whether he should kill himself or murder his stepfather. The choices you make need to be active choices, things that other people can see and hear, so that they can react to your actions and make the story happen.

What does your character want tonight? Before you answer that question, keep the following guideline in mind: Don't answer in the passive tense. Acting is an active process, remember? Your goal can't be "stay alive." That's boring. Try the goal "kill anyone who tries to hurt me." Or maybe even "run away from anyone who tries to hurt me." As long as you have something for your character to do, you're in good shape.

How about the goal "become prince"? Try harder. Become is a pretty passive word. How about the goal "kill the old prince," or "discredit the old prince"? Those active goals are much better.

Make sure that your choice is informed by all the work that you've done so far. Don't choose to kill the prince for the heck of it. Choose it if your character wants it, for reasons all his own. And don't be afraid to set impossible goals for yourself. It's the choice that is important here, not your success or failure. Your goal, as a player, is to create the most interesting story you can tonight. Your character's goal should be chosen with that fact firmly in mind.

Keep the choices big. Don't make your goal for the evening "get an ice cream cone." That's too easy. Once you get it, you'll be stuck for something to do for the rest of the evening. A good story involves a big decision. Big decisions entail big risks. Never settle for second best. Don Quixote didn't become a librarian or a writer, he set out to restore the lost age of chivalry. Be ambitious in setting your goals. Even if your character fails in his quest, you won't have failed to tell an epic story.

Stuck? Try looking at your character's Nature and Demeanor. Your character wants something very specific from life. If his Nature is Bravo, he



wants to scare people. If it's Judge, he wants to find the truth. Your character's Demeanor lets you know how the character gets the things his Nature demands. If your Nature is Bravo, and your Demeanor is Critic, you may want to ruin someone's self esteem by criticizing her at every turn. When all else fails, use your Nature and Demeanor as the touchstones for your character's desires.

Don't become obsessed with this one goal, however, unless your character is thusly deranged. Goals can change during the course of a game. You can want different things. You can even want completely opposite things. After all, every vampire wants to let the Beast out, but at the same time, he wants to keep it in check. That internal conflict is a great way to bring depth and excitement to your character. Be ready to go with major course changes when they happen. You can never anticipate everything that can happen to a character. You can only react.

What if your goal conflicts with another player's goal? Good. That's what good roleplaying is all about. A conflict lies at the heart of all good theater. Every single staged production you can think of (from *No Exit* to *Wrestlemania*) has a struggle of some kind in it. You get involved in LARPs to stage a production and tell a story, and conflict is what makes that story work.

If your goal conflicts with another player's goal, try your damnedest to get your way. You have every option in the book open to you — you can beg, you can whimper, you can threaten, you can bribe, and you can even kill. But don't back down. At least, don't back down until a more important goal comes across your path. Most people try to suppress conflict in real life. They get along with their coworkers and their friends, so that we can all survive the day smoothly. You aren't required to play nice in the World of Darkness. Don't be afraid to stop playing nice and go for the jugular. (Figuratively speaking, of course.)

When you're playing a supernatural creature like a vampire or a werewolf, you have a lot of freedom. You can go to extremes that human beings can never dream of. The anger of a werewolf is legendary. The passions of a vampire dwarf regular emotions. When you play one of these characters, you have every right to jump in with both feet. Don't hold back or make a halfhearted choice. Don't like something if you can love it. Don't love it if you can obsess over it. And don't dislike something. Hate it. Your choices need to be as bold and strong as possible. The more you try for something, the stronger your character will be for it.

This last piece of advice comes with a very strong caveat, however: Don't forget to respect the real world around you. Don't bellow your inhuman fury at the top of your lungs if you're in a banquet hall filled with people who aren't playing. If nothing else, remember that every supernatural wants to keep his or her nature hidden, for some very good reasons.

More to the point, however, you need to keep the flow of the game going. If everyone has to step out of character to calm down irate hotel clerks and mothers, then all of that drama gets wasted. Theater only works when you have the trust of your fellow actors. If the other players worry constantly that you'll disrupt the event and force everyone to break character, they'll have a much harder time involving themselves in your work.



After the game's over, ask yourself this question: Did I achieve my goal? More importantly, did I have a good time? Now think ahead to the next game. What will be your goal then? How about the game after that? How about over the next year? Be ambitious, and be bold. There are no bad choices, only half-hearted ones.

## FINAL NOTES:

### COVERING THE ODD MOMENTS

There are a lot of oddities to acting in a LARP the demand some specific advice. "Real" theater rarely goes into mass combat, after all. Here are some tips about the little pitfalls your characters can fall into, and how to make the best role-play possible out of them.

Combat is inevitable in every LARP. If you've been serious about chasing your goals thus far, it's very likely that your character will end up throwing a punch at someone at some point. Remember to keep roleplaying your character even as he's fighting for his life. It's hard to keep character in mind while you're juggling numbers in the back of your head, but keep focused. Above all, sell the combat with your words and with your body. Combat can be fun. It's exciting imaging your character performing stunts that make Jet Li in *Romeo Must Die* look like Marlon Brando in *The Freshman*. Long sessions of Rock-Paper-Scissors, however, are not fun. Focus on the story, not the hand signals. Describe what your character is doing as much as possible. Paint the scene for your opponent and your audience. If you can mime out your character's actions (*without engaging in stunts or touching other people*), do so. Remember that the safety of those around you is always more important than the game. Above all, try to get out of turns and into real time as soon as possible.

In the course of a game, it's very likely that you'll have a character die. Accept this fact and keep going. It can be very painful to lose a character that you've spent a lot of time and energy creating, but at the same time, there's nothing more powerful to play — either on stage or in a LARP — than a good, juicy death scene. If you have chased your goals as character with such devotion that you can only choose between their success and your character's death, you've done very well as an actor in live-action play. If your character chooses death at the final hour, you've built a story that will change the nature of your chronicle for years. Remember, the goal of this game isn't to build a nice, safe character that lives to a ripe old age. If that were the case, we'd play couch potatoes, not vampires werewolves. You're here to tell the most exciting story you can. Don't be afraid to risk everything your character has for the sake of making the story sing.

In the same vain, don't be afraid to let your character fail occasionally. Failure is a powerful motivator for change. Characters that change are always more interesting to watch and play. Don't avoid plotting treachery against the



prince just because you know as a player that some obfuscated spy is watching you. Let yourself fail. Have fun fighting with the consequences. Remember, your job as a player is not necessarily to succeed in the goal you set for your character. Rather, it's to tell the most compelling story you can in the course of the night. Occasionally, that means letting the opposition win. It'll make your eventual comeback and victory that much sweeter.

A number of powers in **Mind's Eye Theatre** can force you to play your character very differently from normal. *Dominate*, *Dementation* and blood bonds can alter your character's deepest emotions in ways you'd never anticipate. Don't fight these changes. Try to embrace them. Don't be afraid to step out of character for a minute or two to walk back through your process if you need to. What does your character want now? How is he going to get it? Remember that now supernatural power can fundamentally change who your character is. It is your choice as a player how any effect is portrayed. A blood bond might feel like the greatest love affair a character has ever known. It might also feel like the most powerful drug addiction imaginable. Is your character a lover or a junkie? The choice is ultimately yours.

Trust your fellow players. They're here to tell the best story they can tonight, just like you. If you cooperate, you'll be much more successful. Remember that while characters might butt heads, players can always make the conflict more interesting if they work in harmony. Sometimes you're the hero in your own story. Sometimes you're the supporting character in someone else's tale. Share the spotlight with good grace.

Finally, remember the most important questions anyone can ask about theater: "Who cares? So What?" Why should you bother being a vampire? Who cares about werewolves? Theater only works if it moves and changes its audience somehow. In a live-action game, you are your own audience. It's very legitimate to say that you're doing all this work just to be entertained. In fact, that should always be the first goal of any game. However, don't be surprised if, after trying on all of these different goals and emotions, you find that you have changed and moved yourself somehow. An actor's only real reward for his work is the applause of the audience at the end of the show. When the game's over, put the character away. Applaud yourself. Take your bow. Think about what you've done this night.

Who knows... Perhaps you'll have found that playing a monster for a night has taught you something new about being human.



# HERETICAL DHARMAS

by Peter Woodworth

Given the fulfillment of our wishes, we'd cram every ounce of information we could into each book White Wolf publishes. However, conservation of space (and trees) often forbids us from doing so. With the advent of the *Journal*, however, we can—as the back cover proclaims—pick up where our other books leave off. In this article, we take a look at some of the more unusual schools of Kuei-jin thought that didn't make it into *Laws of the East*.

These relatively young Dharmas are rejected as heretical by the Quincunx, but many of them are gaining support in the tumultuous days of the Fifth Age as younger vampires look to make their own mark on the world. Bear in mind that such freedom from established doctrine comes with a high price as well. Finding teachers for these paths is seldom easy, and open followers of these paths can expect cold welcomes (at best) when it comes to dealing with traditional elders. Being branded *akuma* for espousing such radically different beliefs is never far away for Kuei-jin on these paths, and the brightest of them never forget that this threat hangs over their heads constantly.

Existing as they do outside traditional Kuei-jin astrology, Kuei-jin who follow a heretical Dharma do not receive a lucky number for their Dharma if they purchase the *Horoscope Background*. Such is the price of following such an unorthodox route.

## THE FLAME OF THE RISING PHOENIX

### VIRTUE: HUN AND YANG

Not all vampires believe that they are set down on the Road Back in order to forge a new identity for themselves. Some believe that their responsibility lies in finishing the tasks they failed to accomplish during their breathing days; to set right what so obviously wouldn't let them rest the first time. The reasoning is sound enough to their minds. If life was so short on karma that the Kuei-jin had to return to life once more, then doesn't it make sense that their old lives should be the focus of their renewed attentions? The abilities of the Kuei-jin are only tools that they are meant to use in order to set their lives straight once more, and Phoenixes struggle hard to overcome their P'os and rejoin the world of their living relatives. At first, many of them are surprisingly successful, acting as guardian angels over the ones they considered dear to them in life and settling old accounts left unpaid on their death. Even the most jaded elder harbors the kind of thoughts that drive this Dharma, of returning to his family home or visiting his old love once more. This secret sympathy is perhaps the only reason that this Dharma is merely scorned and not actively hunted.

However, try as they might, the compassion and optimism of the Phoenixes inevitably fades as time goes by. Relatives die, times change, and sometimes the Kuei-jin herself is even responsible for some great family

tragedy (usually committed during a period of shadow soul). Such events can unhinge even the most devoted members of this Dharma unless they possess absolute devotion to their cause, and after a time most Phoenixes are far more pragmatic than idealistic when it comes to restoring harmony to their old lives. Many also start looking for a bigger picture, tending to larger groups of mortals and sheltering them from the dark indulgences of other *shen*. They go from viewing their own lives as the key to their redemption to seeing all human life as necessary to achieve enlightenment. Make no mistake, though. These Kuei-jin are unholy terrors when they feel their protectorates are threatened. More than one *kyonshi* has discovered that affinity for life and the higher soul by no means excludes warriors.

The strangest thing about this Dharma is that it has produced no known bodhisattvas. As soon as they reach a certain level of enlightenment, elder Phoenixes simply disappear into thin air, and even powerful divinations cannot determine their fate for certain. Naturally, the Quincunx and others are quick to use this fact as an example of how this Dharma must be fundamentally "flawed" in some way or another, and they step up persecution of this Dharma accordingly. Of course, the Phoenixes simply claim that it proves that their ways are correct. However, even they admit that the absence of bodhisattvas and other powerful elders makes their unives more politically dangerous than those of other Kuei-jin. As for the missing elders themselves, perhaps the Sixth Age will shed some light on their true fates....

**Training:** Phoenixes typically "train" by spending as much time as they can among mortals, studying their interactions and learning what it takes both to heal them and stir their imaginations. Many take to the arts in some form or another as a means of expressing their hopeful sentiments to mortals at large, and there have been more than a few fairly reputable artists in the last century who were actually counted among the members of this Dharma.

#### Dharmic Strength: Bonds of Living Harmony

All Phoenixes are exceptionally attuned to mortal emotions and manners. Their players receive a free retest on all *Empathy* and *Etiquette* tests with mortals. All Phoenixes also receive a free *Compassionate Social Trait*, which cannot be lost permanently as long as they remain on this Dharma. Most Phoenixes go to great lengths to avoid injuring mortals if it is at all possible in a given situation, although they receive no special benefits for doing so.

#### Dharmic Weakness: Tending Orchids

Phoenixes are doomed to lose themselves among the teeming masses of humanity, where the ravages of the Demon, the hunger and more eventually take their toll on those the Kuei-jin cares about. As a result, most Phoenixes choose one person in particular they wish to shelter from the ravages of their new condition. They are extremely loyal guardians, but any harm to this chosen mortal brings down the terrible wrath of the Phoenix. All Phoenixes must take the Flaw: *Ward*, representing a close friend or family member from their mortal days whom they are especially dedicated to protecting. They are two Traits up on any challenge to resist harming this individual, but their increased attention toward one mortal inevitably draws the notice of enemies willing to use the ward as a pawn. If the ward is harmed, the Phoenix immediately enters fire soul (no test possible). Even once this fire soul passes, the Phoenix is distracted (and two

Traits down on all Social Tests) until she has taken suitable revenge against the one who dared to harm her chosen mortal. Should the ward die, another must be chosen within a month. This cycle of pain and protection cannot end short of reaching dâh.

**TENETS:**

- 1: Return to the world from which you came.
- 2: Repay the debts of your human life.
- 3: Help others to find the unique value of humanity.
- 4: Fight the Demon and deny monstrosity.
- 5: Live not with extremes or balance, but simply well.
- 6: Wake the sleeper who shuns experience. Life is the arising of experiences.
- 7: Never deny the joys and sorrows of life.
- 8: Return to your mortal ways; seek your human state.

**Concepts:** Shopkeeper, public servant, professor, student, poet, artist

**Affiliations:** Mankind, the color gold and the east direction.

**Auspicious Omens and Symbols:** Birds of paradise, clear skies, celebrations of birth, spinning tops, kites

**Quote:** "Why return to this world, only to ignore it?"

## THE TEMPEST OF INWARD FOCUS

### VIRTUE: BALANCE

All the universe is a system of push and pull, give and take. It should make sense, then, that some vampires are dedicated to finding the perfection at the center of such eternal reactions. Kuei-jin who follow the Tempest Dharma are models of diversity and singular function in one stroke; their wide interests matched only by their hunger for knowledge. Whereas the Rootless Trees approach Balance as a matter of finding lessons by hopping from life to life, Tempests prefer to sit in the well of the chaos that is creation and draw their experiences from the storm swirling all around them. Other Kuei-jin have trouble puzzling their ways through the mysterious facades of the Tempests, unable to reconcile how Tempests can take tea with demons one day and dance in the halls of Heaven the next. For the Tempests, however, such seeming contradiction only underscores the foundation of their Dharma — that enlightenment exists in the void between two poles.

Like the Rootless Trees who share their Dharmic Virtue, the Tempests are invariably wanderers either in truth or in ideal, always pushing on to another goal in hopes of rounding out their soul ever more completely. All things are worthy of study, say the Tempests, but only if one remembers that study to the exclusion of all else is to deny the magnificence of creation itself. This is not to say that the Tempests lack focus; quite the contrary, in fact. When a Kuei-jin of this Dharma expresses an interest in a subject, he spares little expense to track

down everything he can about it until he becomes a master in his field. Existence may be a matter of moderation to the followers of Balance, but nothing said it had to be moderation born of mediocrity! Indeed, many Tempests strive constantly to raise their personal bars higher and higher, and a piece of information never leaves their hands once it passes their way. These Kuei-jin simply strive not to overbalance themselves in one area or another.

Ultimately, the Tempests strive to find what lies in between mortal and vampire, spirit and matter, and this quest eventually leads them away from the material, elemental aspects of Kuei-jin society and into deep contemplation of the mysteries of the Kuei-jin soul. Many elder Tempests are masters of arts that allow for introspection and spiritual education, and they puzzle constantly about matters both large and small concerning the undead condition and its relation to the universe around them. Their mastery of a multitude of subjects aside, these masters claim to be searching for what lies beyond the gateway of enlightenment. If the riddles and koans of this Dharma are correct, they surmise, the answer can be nothing less than the universe itself, and so they seek to become one with all things by denying any strong ties to a particular object or condition.

**Training:** Most Tempests fit nicely in the Western conception of a "Renaissance thinker." They strive to master a wide variety of skills, from mundane labor to hidden occult lore to one more Kuei-jin Discipline. Therefore, their training is an eclectic affair designed to expose them to many different subjects but immerse them in none, allowing them to choose their destiny freely. Great measures are taken to balance the forces of Yin and Yang simmering beneath the Kuei-jin's skin, and while they take pains to study the Hun and its devotion to duty, Tempests also probe and develop the Demon carefully. Some think the Tempests are shallow, drinking deeply of nothing, but such moderation is what allows them to have the proper perspective between the clashing forces of the universe.

#### Dharmic Strength: Eye of the Storm

Existing as they do in an unlifed of moderation and temperance, the Tempests are capable of remarkable feats of restraint when called for. Once per session, the Tempest's player may receive a free retest on any fire, wave or shadow soul Test, making the Tempest much less likely to fly off the handle than their more temperamental brethren.

#### Dharmic Weakness: Faintly Fading Winds

Paradoxical as it seems, excessive moderation can do as much harm to the soul as overindulgence can, and the Tempests are prime examples of this principle in action. While their Dharma may espouse forbearance, many Tempests become reactionary after a while, moving one step behind the world because they are too cautious to really embrace the chances that are given to them. Because of their hesitant ways, all Tempests receive the Negative Trait: *Predictable*, which cannot be bought off short of reaching *dāh*. Furthermore, any time the character feels he has overindulged in a particular activity, it ruins his careful sense of balance. When such occasions come to pass, the Tempest is one Trait down on all challenges until such time as he has properly atoned for the indulgence with activities like long meditation or forbearance of material goods. The Storyteller may enforce this penalty if the player does not.

### TENETS:

- 1: Pull all things near and make them part of yourself.
- 2: Balance the needs and desires on all poles, that they strive against each other.
- 3: Never stray from the core of your nature.
- 4: Realize the potential to learn from all people.
- 5: Remember the lessons of the past. Apply them to the future.
- 6: Be consistent in your rewards and punishments.
- 7: Teach others the virtues of peace and moderation.
- 8: Bring harmony to the spirit worlds though balancing the living realm.

**Concepts:** Ascetic, monk, teacher, servant, philosopher, laborer, poet, lunatic

**Affiliations:** The material world, the color gray and the center direction.

**Auspicious Omens and Symbols:** Cyclones, mindless spiral helixes, exploding fireworks, ripples in water.

**Quote:** "The view from the center of the storm is the most breathtaking of all."

## THE FACE OF THE GODS

### VIRTUE: HUN AND P'Ô

Not all Kuei-jin accept that they are being punished for some transgression. Indeed, some Kuei-jin look on their new state with hope and reverence, sure that they have been chosen by Heaven for some great destiny. The followers of the Face of the Gods Dharma are prime examples of the latter philosophy. These Kuei-jin see themselves as souls who once attained godhood, but then fell to a lesser status once more due to some great error. According to the Divine Faces, their new state is proof that they were once something more than mere mortal; that their death was just a transition state, and that it is their *joss* to reclaim the title of gods once more. After all, the Godlings reason, why else would they have been given another chance in a form so assuredly marked by signs of godhood, but at the same time is riddled with so many temptations as well? This new life must be a test of some kind, a training ground for the place in Heaven they are meant to achieve — and woe to the poor being who stands in the way of a Godling along the road to the Celestial Ministry!

The unives of these bizarre and eerily compelling Kuei-jin center around the nature of godly contradictions. They meditate ceaselessly on how their nature stands — barely glimpsed omniscience side by side with the darkest lusts outside of Yomi — and think of ways to combine and strengthen both sides without losing oneself to either total duty or the Demon. To their minds, the Divine Faces must search out the source of this conflict between insatiable evil and infinite compassion and overcome it if they wish to reclaim their godhood. Thus, they must experiment with all manner of situations and ideals in the hopes of finding the right way to unite their disparate halves once more. Other Kuei-jin are often fooled into thinking that the Godlings seek some sort of blissful transformation of their undead state. Such naïve vampires change their minds

quickly when the Divine Face decides to explore the nature of demonic fury. Godlings do their best to be the best in ways both wise and wicked, and they make no secret of the fact that they will demonstrate either side of their personality as they see fit, Demon or not! According to the sacred texts of the Divine Faces — the *Red Book of the Iron Bridge* and *The Celestial Nail* — the Heavens can be restored to their former glory only by the return of the gods who have lost their way. The Godlings have no intention of disappointing.

Given the openness with which they hold their natures, it is unsurprising to discover that many Divine Faces have mortal cults flourishing around them, which the Faces administer with all the grace and horror that befits their divine status. (It takes a rare mortal to deny a god that walks among them bestowing favors and influence in exchange for mere worship!) Not that most Godlings truly care about their "parishioners." Such mortals are a means to the end of returning to Heaven once more, a font of Chi waiting to be tapped. Indeed, even in the relatively tolerant world of the Middle Kingdom, many Kuei-jin meet Godlings for the first time while carrying out a court mission to order the Godlings to stop demonstrating their powers in public. Of course, such actions are perfectly reasonable to their minds. When one aspires to godhood, after all, who cares if the mortals catch a glimpse of your power along the way?

**Training:** The training of Divine Faces tends to be abrupt and to the point. Another Godling finds the Kuei-jin and instructs him in the lessons of reincarnation, divinity, deific values and the need to embrace both sin and virtue in order to reclaim the favor of Heaven and return once more. Many Godlings are also taught the nuances of etiquette and courtly manners during this time. The Kuei-jin must present themselves as nothing less than divine!

#### Dharmic Strength: Mantle of Godhood

The Godlings are nothing if not majestic, and they learn early on how to project a formidable otherworldly aura to the lesser beings around them when necessary. Sometimes this face is full of the Divine Radiance of Heaven; sometimes it is the Eyes of Hell. Either way, the results are bound to impress. The Godling may use each visage once per story. Divine Radiance requires a Yang Trait to activate, while the Eyes of Hell requires a Trait of Demon Chi. When Divine Radiance is active, the Kuei-jin receives the Traits *Compassionate*, *Commanding* and *Magnetic* for the remainder of the scene, as well as a free retest on all Social Tests related to empathy and courtly grace. By contrast, the Eyes of Hell is treated the same as the Delirium (see the *Demon Shintai Discipline* in *Laws of the East* for details), sending mortals scurrying or cowering in terror before the anger of the Godling.

#### Dharmic Weakness: Vanity of the Lotus

Convinced of their own perfection, Godlings can be absolutely insufferable company at times, particularly around those they consider to be "lesser beings" (i.e., everyone but them). Divine Faces receive a permanent *Condescending Negative Trait*, and they are one Trait down to resist fire soul when it's directly sparked by the actions of a lesser being. The Godlings find it difficult to control themselves when they discover that "mere mortals and other rabble" are still capable of upsetting their carefully laid plans.

#### TENETS:

- 1: Develop your divine nature.
- 2: Expand both godly and demonic consciousness.
- 3: Accept the veneration of mortals, but answer their prayers in return.
- 4: Harness Chi to bring divinity back to your dead form.
- 5: Act according to the tenets of your Godly Voice, and your Godly Desire shall be fulfilled.
- 6: Visit the Heavens to remember what you have lost.
- 7: Practice ritual and tradition to empower your own essence.
- 8: Commune with the spirits; learn of their messages from Heaven.

**Concepts:** Priest, cultist, criminal, magician, psychologist, traditionalist, venerated ancestor, wacko

**Affiliations:** The heavenly realms, the color violet and the south direction

**Auspicious Omens and Symbols:** Temple ceremonies, stands of burning incense and candles, shooting stars

**Quote:** "Perfection is my birthright, wisdom my key. What else do I need?"

### THE SPIRIT OF THE LIVING EARTH

#### VIRTUE: YIN AND YANG

While every Kuei-jin recognizes the existence of spirits and pays homage (or at least lip service) to the ethereal world, some Kuei-jin return along the Road Back convinced that they have been given the gifts of spirit-sight in order to fulfill the wishes of the spirits they often ignored in life. These Kuei-jin strive to bring balance to the natural world and peace to the shades of the departed, though typically more of the former than the latter, since the Bone Flowers are quite jealous of their trade with the dead. Early in their new existence, the Kuei-jin come across the staggering array of spirits in the world and recognize their wisdom, humbling themselves before the mighty lords of the Mirror Lands and seeking to serve the Earth as best they can. While Kuei-jin of animistic backgrounds understand and respect the goals of the Cerulean Veils, many others consider them either harmless eccentrics or dangerous eco-terrorists, depending on the individual in question, but the truth lies somewhere in between.

Veils move in a strange and beautiful world, keeping the taboos of the spirits (which helps to explain a lot of their peculiar reputation) while tending to the mundane concerns of the environment around them. Following such guidelines means appeasing the spirits, and appeasing the spirits means another bit of the world will be explained for the vampire — no small payment in an existence fraught with open questions and seeming philosophical dead-ends! These Kuei-jin keep only a nominal interest in the mortal world, considering it transitory and unimportant next to the energies of the earth itself. They typically interact with modern society only in order to feed or when the spirits command them to do so. Other Kuei-jin sometimes see these vampires as little more than slaves to the whims of the Mirror Lands, but that concept is overly simplistic. Cerulean Veils follow the dictates of the spirits because that is what they feel is expected

of them in their new unlivings. To them, such obedience is no more absurd than expecting a child to obey its parents. Even when they do enter into regular society, the Veils are often marked by a kind, otherworldly air. While they are more than capable of defending themselves and the spirits they hold dear, most Veils typically have so little concern for the perils of the mortal world that they refuse to arm themselves against it as others do.

In the dark days of the Fifth Age, however, more and more Veils are being called into the modern world to right wrongs done to their beloved spirits and even to defend the land against those who would defile it. As such, they are becoming a more and more common sight in courts across the Middle Kingdom. Ancestors debate the value of allowing these wise Kuei-jin into their courts to battle the Yama Kings against the threat presented by the loyalty these Kuei-jin give to the spirit worlds over their fellow undead. For their part, the Veils seek only what they always have: an Earth in balance and an unlife guided by the will of the spirits.

**Training:** These Kuei-jin place a great deal of emphasis on ritual, ceremony and the observance of taboos. However, aside from some basic grounding on different issues, each Veil is generally left to his own devices when it comes to inventing rites to use and learning the ways of the spirit worlds. This individuality serves only to confuse other Kuei-jin further, since — while every Veil follows an elaborate system of chants and rituals — no two members of this Dharma do things quite the same way!

#### Dharmic Strength: Clasping Hands with Heaven

Attuned as they are to the invisible world, Veils gain several potent benefits when it comes to dealing with spirits and the spirit worlds. First of all, Veils ignore the first level of Notoriety they may receive every story automatically, as their reputation with the spirits defuses what would normally be a hostile situation. Veils are up two Traits on all Social Tests with spirits except demons and other creatures of Yomi. Finally, the Veils receive a free level of the Rites Background due to their ritualistic upbringing.

#### Dharmic Weakness: Lost In the Mists

Absorbed as they are in the spirit worlds, Veils have trouble relating to mortals, and they are two Traits down on all Social Tests with mortals unless they have known the person in question for at least one story. They even have trouble dealing with others of their own kind, and they are one Trait down on all Social Tests with unfamiliar Kuei-jin. Finally, the special place these Kuei-jin hold in the eyes of some spirits only marks them in the eyes of others. Yomi spirits always make it their special task to attack, harass and otherwise badger these Kuei-jin above any others in the area.

**TENETS:**

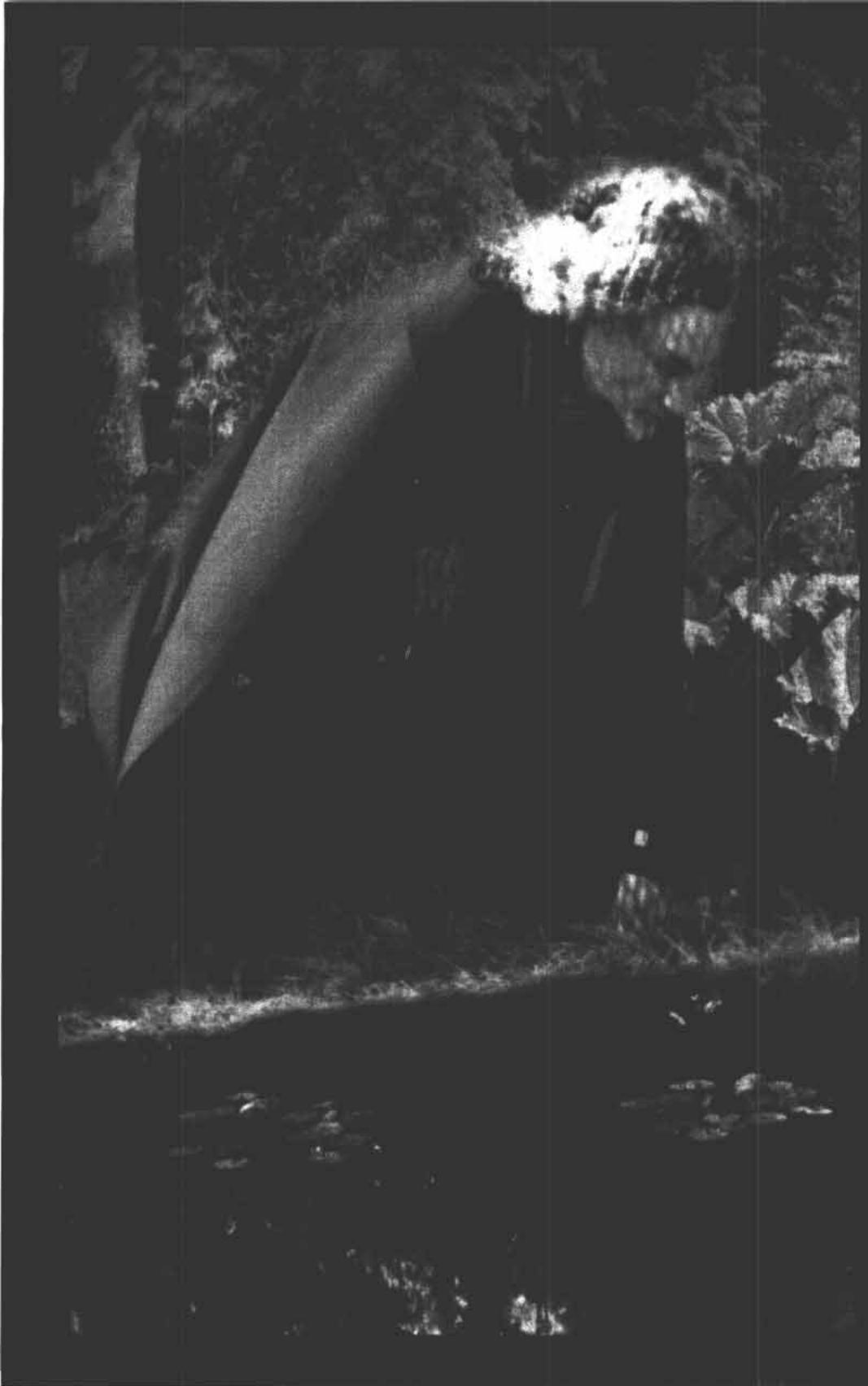
- 1: Obey the will of the spirits.
- 2: Perform the proper ceremonies to remain pure.
- 3: Shun the defiled.
- 4: Tread across the Earth to absorb its full glory.
- 5: Pass wisdom to others freely.
- 6: Help others to surpass the shortcomings of the flesh.
- 7: Renew your thanks and commitment to enlightenment each day.
- 8: Observe your taboos rigidly, that you may overcome your curse.

**Concepts:** Wanderer, ritualist, competitor, *fang shih*

**Affiliations:** The spirit realms, the color blue and west direction

**Auspicious Omens and Symbols:** Shrines and statuettes, tea ceremonies, torii arches, sacred groves and ponds, parades

**Quote:** "Between Yin and Yang, Heaven and Earth, lies humanity. It is a shame that mortals have forgotten such a glorious heritage."





## GEHENNA WEARS A PURPLE DRESS TONIGHT

by Ed Spymoun

*This story is a LARPer's cautionary tale in the truest sense. Once you read through to the chilling, world-altering finale, you'll see why.*

### Vague Threats

Uglyface Johnson loved the frog pond. Each night, before the Licks oozed out of Dallas and Fort Worth to buy his secrets, Uglyface studied himself in the pond's mirrored surface. There were many Nosferatu in this unattractive metropolis; they all hated their reflections.

The Nosferatu looked over his shoulder. He didn't want Iron Teeth McGinty to walk up and witness his vanity.

Uglyface's reflection smiled at him, and he smiled back. He saw the spots on his face, mottled in such interesting patterns. And his reflection was trying to tell him something he couldn't quite make out. Uglyface sounded out the words with the ripples of the water. "You... must... taste... as... good as... as... you look."

He expected his reflection to spring out of the water and suck him down, but his Final Death came at him from behind instead. Uglyface felt the blood draining from his stomach. He looked down at the row of claws jutting from his belly just below his heart. Wooden fingernails. Uglyface remembered what his sire had told him about wooden fingernails.

He saw teeth, then blackness. His mouth tasted like ash; then there was only beauty. A vague darkness near oblivion; a beauty greater than his own.

### Information Networks

King Roachman studied his appearance in the mirror. He centered his monocle, sweeping the flakes of crusty face-skin away with a brush. His foot-long fingers knotted his tie, moving like spider legs.

The door to Roachman's haven slammed shut as someone who was invisible but now wasn't entered. "Ready for a night of wining and dining with the undead of Dallas?"

Roachman went back to his tie. "Hello, McGinty. Glad you're coming with me. No one's gonna try anything stupid with you there."

"I've got some juicy information to sell tonight anyway. Have you heard from Uglyface?"

"Nope. Is he missing now too? Lots of us have turned up missing lately, according to my sources. You think somebody's offing Nosferatu? Maybe those hunter fellows I've been hearing about from my sources?"



"I guess. Glad I stood him up last night. I was busy in my occult library reading up on the Wan Xian."

Roachman remembered the meeting because he had set it up himself. Uglyface and McGinty were supposed to meet Hortense's little crippled friend tonight after the Elysium meeting at the community center. A week prior—at the previous Elysium meeting—they were supposed to hammer out some lies to keep the cripple's mistress off their backs. No big deal that the preliminary meeting with Uglyface didn't happen, though.

"Go ahead and take the meeting with that wheelchair fellow and tell him there's a new BSD hive in Sherman," Roachman said. "That should keep Hortense jumping at shadows for a while. You know how she's always trying to fight the designs of the Wyrm."

Roachman finished tying his tie, and he and Iron Teeth set out into the tunnels. McGinty protested that the king's route would take forever, then suggested taking the tunnel up to Grapevine then going southwest straight into the city. Roachman didn't want to use that tunnel because he didn't want to walk into Elysium with the shit of the cattle all over his shoes. Their route decided, Roachman and McGinty crawled deep beneath the city, past Roachman's traps and ghouled albino alligators, deep into the earthen tunnels of the Nosferatu of Dallas in nights long forgotten.

"Who you think's offing us, Roachman?"

"Not sure. This is a rough town to be Nosferatu. Everyone's got a thing against us. What's one Sewer Rat more or less? That mage up from New Orleans says the Gauntlet was all fucked up at the pond. He thinks something hopped out of the Umbra and ate Uglyface."

"How's he know that?"

"True Magic is beyond my grasp, the mage told me. He said the monster had an *Old and Hungry Resonance*, though."

Roachman squinted his tiny little eyes and peered left and right, not remembering which way to turn. McGinty sorted through all the creatures in the world of darkness that they inhabited, trying to imagine what kind might have such a Resonance.

"It's not... one of them, is it?"

"Oh no. It couldn't be. Absolutely not. Well... maybe."

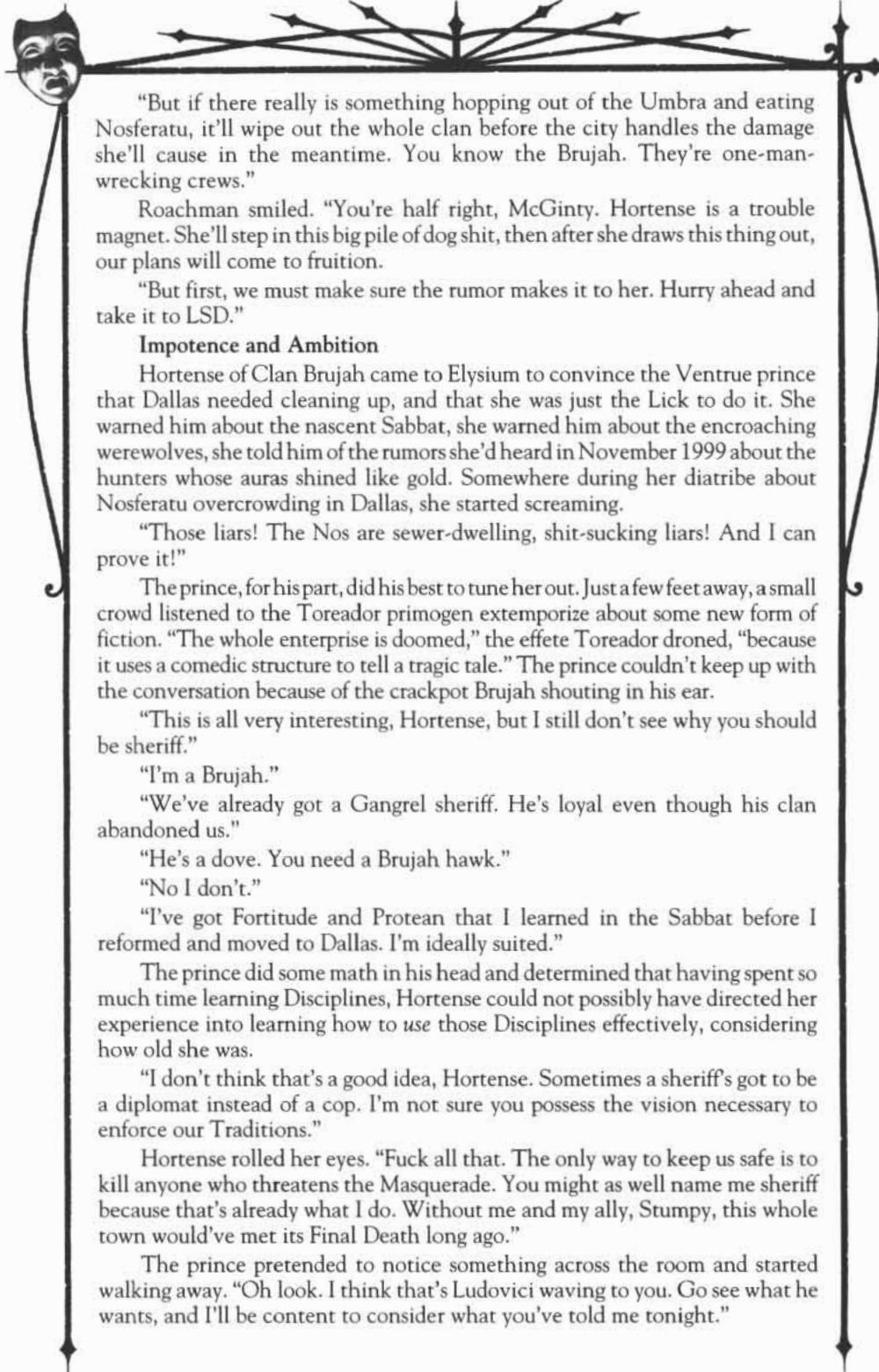
McGinty and Roachman turned right, and after stooping through a series of warrens and mazes that even the King of the Sewers could hardly navigate, they arrived in one of the storm drains beneath Plano.

"Roachman, what are we going to do about this monster from the Umbra?"

"Sell the information, I guess."

Iron Teeth liked the sound of that. "Maybe we could use it to solve our Hortense problem. Make sure she hears it from the rumor mill. Then, after you sell the same info to her little gimp friend tonight, she'll think it's solid. She'll throw a fit, then the prince will get fed up and stick her out in the sun for a few minutes, if you know what I mean. We teach her how to fish, then we watch her hang herself."

"Good thinking, McGinty."



"But if there really is something hopping out of the Umbra and eating Nosferatu, it'll wipe out the whole clan before the city handles the damage she'll cause in the meantime. You know the Brujah. They're one-man-wrecking crews."

Roachman smiled. "You're half right, McGinty. Hortense is a trouble magnet. She'll step in this big pile of dog shit, then after she draws this thing out, our plans will come to fruition."

"But first, we must make sure the rumor makes it to her. Hurry ahead and take it to LSD."

#### **Impotence and Ambition**

Hortense of Clan Brujah came to Elysium to convince the Ventre prince that Dallas needed cleaning up, and that she was just the Lick to do it. She warned him about the nascent Sabbat, she warned him about the encroaching werewolves, she told him of the rumors she'd heard in November 1999 about the hunters whose auras shined like gold. Somewhere during her diatribe about Nosferatu overcrowding in Dallas, she started screaming.

"Those liars! The Nos are sewer-dwelling, shit-sucking liars! And I can prove it!"

The prince, for his part, did his best to tune her out. Just a few feet away, a small crowd listened to the Toreador primogen extemporize about some new form of fiction. "The whole enterprise is doomed," the effete Toreador droned, "because it uses a comedic structure to tell a tragic tale." The prince couldn't keep up with the conversation because of the crackpot Brujah shouting in his ear.

"This is all very interesting, Hortense, but I still don't see why you should be sheriff."

"I'm a Brujah."

"We've already got a Gangrel sheriff. He's loyal even though his clan abandoned us."

"He's a dove. You need a Brujah hawk."

"No I don't."

"I've got Fortitude and Protean that I learned in the Sabbat before I reformed and moved to Dallas. I'm ideally suited."

The prince did some math in his head and determined that having spent so much time learning Disciplines, Hortense could not possibly have directed her experience into learning how to *use* those Disciplines effectively, considering how old she was.

"I don't think that's a good idea, Hortense. Sometimes a sheriff's got to be a diplomat instead of a cop. I'm not sure you possess the vision necessary to enforce our Traditions."

Hortense rolled her eyes. "Fuck all that. The only way to keep us safe is to kill anyone who threatens the Masquerade. You might as well name me sheriff because that's already what I do. Without me and my ally, Stumpy, this whole town would've met its Final Death long ago."

The prince pretended to notice something across the room and started walking away. "Oh look. I think that's Ludovici waving to you. Go see what he wants, and I'll be content to consider what you've told me tonight."



Hortense looked over at Ludo. The Malkavian wasn't waving to her at all, but staring at some stranger in a purple dress. Hortense put aside her clan's long-standing hatred for all Malkavians and approached her demented friend.

#### Dialogue Is Not Action

Somewhere amid the swirls of the auras and tracers left by the drama of Elysium, Ludovici Sinistrati D'Ameno tasted a familiar voice.

"Ludo?"

Ludovici continued looking at the strange Kindred in the purple dress. Hortense's aura was a deep purple, just like the stranger's dress. Ludovici's irredeemable madness suggested that there must be some connection. The stranger seemed oddly familiar with the prince as well, although she had never met the Ventru before tonight.

"Ludo!"

Hortense was talking to him. How best to explain what he was doing? In his madness, he heard her staring at him. He remembered that he had something to tell her.

"Ludo? What the fuck are you doing?"

Ludovici fled his perceptions and returned his sight to the Realm of Waking. He smiled at Hortense as if he had just noticed her. Her glare scared the look from his face. He looked down at his shoes and mumbled.

"I'm a weird cat," he said. "I try not to romanticize it."

"Are you swimming in auras again?"

"Yeah. I saw a good one, but it confused me."

The Malkavian could tell Hortense was pissed off about something. That was always a safe assumption with her, considering how hot-blooded her clan was. She glowered about the room, edging closer to him.

"The prince is trying to fire me again," she whispered.

"There's no time for that now. I've heard something. Something big."

Ludovici was disappointed that this provocative statement hadn't cheered her up. Still, he told her about his conversation with Iron Teeth McGinty. Just after sundown, they'd both arrived at Elysium. In exchange for a small boon, he told her, McGinty had told him about the disappearance of several Nosferatu. Something from the Umbra was up to no good. Again.

"The End Times are here, just like it says in the *Book of Nod*, Ludo," Hortense said. "This thing from the Umbra, this thing killing Nosferatu, is clearly one of the Nictuku."

"I think that's a pretty crazy theory, Hortense."

"Good God, man, it's the only one that makes sense! That clan is complicit in its own destruction."

Ludo allowed his perceptions to catch up to him, and he swam back into the auras. Somehow, it was no defense against Hortense's designs. She was sucking him in like she did every time. Why did she have to have such an interesting aura?

"Here's what we do, Ludo: We kidnap Iron Teeth McGinty and feed him to the Nictuku. That shows it we're serious. Then we help it round up the rest of the Nosferatu. When it's sated — taking care of the Nosferatu overpopula-



tion — the Nictuku will leave. The prince will have to acknowledge my talents then."

"That sounds like a nice plan, Hortense. But how can we be sure the Umbral monster is a Nictuku?"

Hortense reached into her purse and grabbed her cell phone. "I'll call Stumpy and tell him to ask Iron Teeth McGinty when he meets him tonight. Maybe the Sewer Rat will have learned something new by then. And after he finds out what we need to know, Stumpy'll bring McGinty in."

### The Lines Cross

Hortense and Ludovici left Elysium and walked through downtown Dallas. With a few hours to kill while Stumpy acquired McGinty, they decided to get fucked up on some changeling blood down at the May Moloch.

"You know," Ludovici said, "among his kind, Stumpy is called a 'metis.'"

"Yeah, I know. I knew it when I first saw him."

"No, I said metis — you can't possibly know what a metis is. I learned of it through the Malkavian Madness Network over the last month."

"I learned many strange things during the time I spent fighting the Wyrm alongside the Garou, Ludo."

Ludovici couldn't argue with that. He changed the subject.

"So what's this place we're going to?"

"The May Moloch. The changelings meet there once a week for some kind of court. Strangely, it occurs on the same day as our Elysium. I know you dig auras, and you'll see some tripped-out auras on fae blood."

Ludovici hugged his coat around him and walked faster. He walked with Hortense between him and the street.

• • •

Stumpy wrapped his jaws around his chair's joystick and steered down the path that led to the frog pond. He took it slow, making patient turns and coasting down hills. The motor didn't make much noise at such slow speeds. Although the metis could see in pitch darkness, he knew the path by heart. He'd come here with Hortense a hundred times. And aside from Hortense, he'd dealt with McGinty more than any other Lick in town.

He found McGinty waiting for him. Always the same place, always on time.

"We know about the thing from the Umbra that's eating Nosferatu," Stumpy said. "We just want to know this: Is it Nictuku?"

"Both your master and her insane friend owe me boons for this, you know."

"Agreed. They'll owe you. Is it Nictuku?"

"Our Nosferatu sources think so. You know I'll expect— Aeeeeee!"

Iron Teeth McGinty's head burst into flame. He screamed as his flailing hands slapped at his face. Stumpy felt the elements lingering in the air, waiting for him to realize them. He reached out to Gaia. McGinty's eyeballs exploded from his head. The vampire collapsed to the ground.

With a whip of his back, Stumpy fell from his wheelchair and inched himself over to the collapsed vampire. Stumpy thought about his missing feet, and his missing hands. The thoughts fueled his rage, and he changed form



instantaneously. He snarled and went for the vampire's throat. Somewhere in the back of his mind, Stumpy heard his ancestors beating war drums.

The metis felt the flames on his lips. He leaped up with a yelp and swayed back and forth trying to find a balance on his feetless legs. Stumpy fell to the ground. He called upon Gaia again for water to extinguish the flames. McGinty's teeth faded from hot orange to dull gray as the evaporating water hissed away into vapor.

"I want to tell you a story, while you're in a condition to appreciate it: There used to be this pack of Garou. Two of them loved each other very much. From their forbidden passions came a child. But the kid was fucked up, see. Twisted and deformed; I mean his soul as well as his body. The kid had some weird appetites — something I'm sure you can understand with those crazy teeth of yours. But the pack must have figured that Gaia needs all the help She can get, because they tolerated that hungry little shit for years. Until he was old enough to join his pack in the fight against the Damned, that is — he had a bad habit of eating his vanquished foes.

"The pack didn't like the whole vampire-eating thing. His pack took him into the city then cut off his hands and feet. But they couldn't just leave him for dead. They entrusted him to a bad luck princess they'd fought alongside for years, but told her to never return to Garou lands. She's helped the kid get back on his feet."

McGinty lifted his eyeless face from the dirt. He tried to laugh. "Must... be... figurative..."

"Real funny, Sewer Rat! But I didn't tell you end of my story. Remember how I said the kid used to eat vampires? His favorite was Nosferatu."

Stumpy snapped his jaws over McGinty's ear. He ripped the cooked meat off McGinty's face. The metis rolled on his back, chewing the Nosferatu's flesh. McGinty screamed. Blood streamed from his eye sockets, and horror washed over him.

Stumpy swallowed the last bits of McGinty's nose. "Don't fuck with me, Leech. I'll light you up every time. Now get up off your ass and help me back into my chair."

### Distractions

"Ludo? I'm trippin' balls."

"Me too."

"What are you thinking about?"

"About drinking another faerie."

"This one's scared. I can see his aura."

Hortense and Ludovici gazed up at the stars, nestled in the trash bags piled behind the May Molloch. The changeling boy squirmed between them. If it seemed like he was about to worm away, they grabbed his wrists and bared their fangs.

"They killed J.F.K. here, Hortense."

"I remember. I was there in brighter days."

Hortense and Ludovici had gone on something of a binge, draining about a third of the faerie court in the last 30 minutes. The blood did strange things to their dead brains.



"I can see your aura, Ludo. You're fucked up, dude."

Hortense heard their van pulling up. It arrived with that familiar hiss of its loose power-steering belt. She heard the backdoor slide open and the hydraulic lift lowering Stumpy's chair to the ground. The sound of his wheels came closer to them. Ludovici looked up at the sound and threw a few trash bags over their changeling captive, his paranoia overwhelming the half-hearted Arcadian protest. Stumpy rolled up on the pile of trash.

"You didn't tell me you'd be out back," he said.

"Did you get... that big-teeth guy I sent you to get?"

"Yeah, Hortense. He's waiting in the van. He ain't got no face."

"Did he say the Umbral monster was a Nictuku like I thought?"

"Definitely."

The world reoriented itself as Hortense sat up. She picked moldy cheese from her hair and looked over at her metis companion. "Now all we need to do is find the Iron Teeth McGinty and take Nictuku to it."

The changeling boy struggled again. Ludovici socked him in the face with a brutal chop to calm him down. "I think I know where the beast lurks," he whispered. "Now that I am completely out of my head, the language of the auras is apparent to me. I think I've already seen the creature tonight, but we must make sure." Ludo pulled himself out of the pile and brushed himself off. "But I'm not sure that Elysium is the safest place for this betrayal. This Nictuku is no doubt very dangerous."

But Hortense was already walking to the van. "No more dangerous than the three BSDs I killed when I was in Montreal last year. Let's go."

Ludovici realized that, for tonight at least, Hortense was his clanmate. He volunteered to drive.

#### Population Control

Elysium had peaked by the time Hortense and Ludovici showed up. The current scene was strictly post-mortem. The proclamation of the prince that there would be no more Embraces in Dallas for the next 50 years hadn't gone over well with the assembled Licks. Most of them had left in a huff, and the few who remained stood around seeing who could prophecy the most utter doom. The Toreador primogen, though, was still there, deep into the discussion he had begun earlier that evening. His audience stood and snored. Stumpy, and the disoriented fae boy in his lap, rolled past the keeper of Elysium, who figured it was too late in the evening to start kicking out Lupines and changelings. Instead, he invited them to join him at the bar.

Ludovici placed his hand on Hortense's shoulder to steady himself as he prepared to surrender to his perceptions. With an explosion of color, the emotions and secret thoughts that lingered in the room revealed themselves to the Malkavian. He looked at the young stranger who sat at the right hand of the prince whispering things unheard by Kindred ears.

"It is just as I suspected," Ludovici gasped. "Gehenna wears a purple dress tonight."

"I know. I see it too."



With the fae blood in their systems, Hortense and Ludovici saw the thing for what it really was. It was not some new childe, some anonymous traveler, but an old and hungry evil, a curse inflicted by an Antediluvian on his childer. Her aura was a constantly exploding purple, a purple deeper than even Hortense could transmit, a purple that summed all the murderessness of the vampiric condition. Hortense and Ludovici felt the Curse of Caine heavy upon them.

Hortense looked at Ludo. The disgruntled frown was gone. "It's time, Ludo." Was she nervous, perhaps? "Everything depends on this moment."

The pair approached the Nictuku.

The woman in purple exuded the most charming presence even when perceived in the normal spectrum. She curtsied to each of them and made small talk about Dallas and how she was looking forward to making her haven here. As she talked, Ludovici watched Hortense growing increasingly skittish. Finally, the tension exploded.

"Look, you can cut the bullshit! We know you're a Nictuku. We figured it all out."

"But we don't fear you!" Ludovici added, just in time to keep the prince from calling a Blood Hunt on the monster in his Elysium. "In fact, we've brought you one of your clan's errant childer. We'll deliver the rest of them as soon as we can."

The woman didn't seem to appreciate their generous offer. "I don't know what you're talking about, I'm not a — what did you say again? — Nictuku?" At the sound of the word, a few vampires turned to listen to the conversation. Even the Toreador primogen ceased in his ramblings. Roachman slipped quietly into the shadows with a look of terror and fear.

Hortense leaned in and whispered to the ancient beast. "If I were a Nictuku, I believe I'd do almost anything to take a bite out of Iron Teeth McGinty."

The thing's eyes narrowed as a smile crossed her face.

"Yes," it said. "Did you know he actually has iron teeth? A descendant of Baba Yaga perhaps. He must be delicious."

Ludovici backed away from the Nictuku. "Time to leave, Hortense. Are you still looking at her aura?"

"No way. We're so close, Ludo. Don't crap out of me now!"

The woman in purple ripped off Hortense's arm and stuffed it into her growing mouth. The halls of Elysium echoed with screams. Hortense stood there, disbelief in her eyes. "This isn't supposed to be the way it happens! I thought you ate Nosferatu!"

"I do. And Brujah, and Malkavians, and on down the line. Each has its own flavor." The Nictuku licked her lips, which were already swelling into turgid scars as the svelte young vampire melted away to reveal the creature's immense true form. "The only thing I like more than vitae is fae blood. And Garou blood."

There was a quiet whimper from Stumpy's direction, and a yellow pool collected under his chair. He put aside his species' ancient hatred of all vampires — he and the Leeches had a common enemy now!

### The Inevitable Showdown

The Nictuku ripped through Elysium, tearing apart the Kindred in her wake. A legless neonate tried to drag himself to safety until the Nictuku planted

its massive foot in his back. The Toreador Primogen had lost his eyes and was clutching at his skull. Nothing beautiful transfixated him now. Only horror. A broken wooden fingernail in the heart of the prince held him immobile. For some reason, the Nictuku did not destroy him outright as she had so many others.

Hortense and Ludovici huddled behind an overturned banquet table. Hortense grasped her bleeding shoulder while Ludo stared at the aura light show. "The whole room is purple now, Hortense."

"Who fucking cares! We're gonna die!"

"We're not going to die. I have an idea, but I am much too preoccupied right now to vocalize it." He felt Hortense screaming something about how he should snap out of it.

"I'm trying to be patient. We must wait for the prerequisite conditions to realize themselves." The Nictuku fell upon the changeling and gulped him down. The creature's purple aura wavered then threatened to black out the room while the changeling's aura floated away into the ether.

"Now!" Ludo leaped over the table and made his way through the door while the beast oriented itself to its new outlook on reality.

*At least Stumpy won't abandon me,* Hortense thought as the Nictuku picked up Stumpy's chair and hurled the shrieking metis across the room. The chair bent when it landed, trapping Stumpy underneath.

Hortense huddled behind the table, unable to formulate a coherent escape with the fae blood swishing around in her head. She briefly considered making peace with her maker but quickly decided it was important to remain stand-offish at the end. Her hot-blooded Brujah heritage would permit nothing less. She presumed that no miracles would be forthcoming on her behalf.

All hope seemed lost, but suddenly, Iron Teeth McGinty burst into the room. His burns had disappeared and most of his face had grown back. He now had a healthy complexion for a man with mottled green skin. Ludovici stumbled in after him, grasping at the door frame trying desperately to remain upright. He crawled across the room to rejoin Hortense as the Nictuku wheeled around and faced her new opponent.

"McGinty!" the Nictuku screamed.

"Absimiliard's Concubine!" McGinty shouted back. "The Mistress with Wooden Claws! I haven't seen you this side of the Gauntlet since you killed my sire. His old occult books told me how to finally defeat you!"

McGinty lunged at the Nictuku and buried his iron fangs deep into her skull. Where the iron contacted the changeling blood in the beast's system, a strange spectral feedback began. The Nictuku's aura became a negative of itself and started shrinking. The aura around McGinty seemed to vibrate, speeding up to some grand explosion. Then the beast bit his head off and spit out 12 iron spikes. They left colorful trails in the air as they fell.

Ludovici leaned over and whispered to Hortense. "That was fucking cool."

The Nictuku staggered about the room, holding the spot McGinty had bitten into. She howled in pain then ripped the Tremere primogen in two. No one in the room seemed to mind.

"Nice tactic, the iron and changeling blood," Hortense said. "But it looks like she's still going strong."



"One again, Hortense, you underestimate your enemies. Her aura is diminishing, and thus her power. Now in comes the cavalry."

As if on cue, the remaining strength of the Dallas Nosferatu coalesced out of the shadows. Each held a broadsword reinforced to withstand the rigors of their advanced levels of Potence, and they all wore chain-mail vests beneath their clothing. The King of the Sewer led the creeping deployment, admonishing the Nictuku in a language Hortense didn't understand. Then, only for a moment, a silence held the floor. The Nictuku roared, and the Nosferatu waded in to destroy her.

#### Transferable Characters

Hortense saw herself in the rear-view mirror, applying her makeup with her remaining hand while Stumpy desperately gripped the steering wheel of the van with his forearms. "The whole Nictuku thing ruined my buzz," she said to Ludovici, who sat in the back seat holding his head. They heard a scream from somewhere inside the community center.

"Hurry it up, Stumpy. The police are going to be here soon to investigate this disturbance."

"I'm far too mad for the police to catch," Ludovici said. "But I'm worried about whoever wins that brawl in there. I'd like to be someplace else. Like Minnesota, maybe."

Stumpy whined and floored the pedal. The van merged onto I-35 North as the vampires crawled under their seats to sleep the day away. Stumpy rolled down the window and licked his lips. He wondered what the Nosferatu tasted like in Minnesota.





# THE FOMORI

by Carl Bowen

## WHAT ARE THE FOMORI?

Fomori are the product of the fusion of a human and a spirit in service to the Wyrm. For a myriad of reasons and through a wide variety of means, an otherwise normal man or woman devotes him- or herself to the ideals of corruption and destruction that motivate all other servants of the Wyrm.

It is a common misconception that Pentex, a corrupt organization wholly in thrall to the Wyrm, creates and directs all fomori. Not to underestimate matters, Pentex does indeed go to great lengths to recruit new fomori and keep them busy doing the company's dirty work. Pentex scientists also keep themselves busy finding new ways to facilitate the creation of fomori among the populace at large. However, the company did not create the process by which Bane spirits bond with human souls. All human beings have qualities attractive to the Wyrm's evil Banes, be they weak spots in our moral fiber or antisocial tendencies we only barely manage to keep in check. Once a Bane detects the avenue through which it may exploit this potential in a prospective human host, it needs no coaching to travel that road on its own.

## TYPES OF BANES

These listed spirits are not the only ones that serve the Wyrm, but they are the spirits best able to possess humans. Most fomori are the product of joining one of the following Banes with a human subject. The possession is not instantaneous, however, so a Garou warrior with a mind to prevent the conjunction could travel into the Umbra to do battle with the spirit before the fomor is born. Keep in mind, though, that most fomori are not necessarily the product of joining these Banes with *willing* human subjects. A Bane with a powerful enough command of the Possession Charm can latch on to the soul of a victim regardless of the victim's resistance. The fight for dominance may take some Banes longer than others, but enough struggle will overcome any obstacle in time.

### BLOOD BANES

Blood Banes are the farmers of the crop of filthy, festering cesspits that the modern age is heir to. These Banes frequent toxic dumps, blights and other equally repulsive sites in hopes of acquiring disease. They then seek out victims to infect with the diseases they pick up. When a Blood Bane has transferred a disease successfully—much as a bee would pollinate a flower—it feeds on both the disease and the concomitant suffering to which the disease gives birth.

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 6, Power 20

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Possession

### BREEDER BANES

These Banes are responsible for the existence of the Ferectoi breed of fomor. The Banes appear from the Umbra to extract the semen or fertilized egg of a



sleeping human victim. They then retreat back across the Gauntlet. Most Breeder Banes use the Charm: *Breeding Trance* to erase all memory of the rape from their victims' minds. The Charm replaces the memory with one of a disturbingly violent erotic dream, provided it works. The most fortunate victims of these Banes suffer minor brain damage and lose all memory of the events that took place that night. The least fortunate victims remember both the dream and the nocturnal visitation itself.

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 5, Power 25

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Breeding Trance, Materialize

#### HOWLING INSANITIES

Lacking almost entirely in form, these Banes are difficult foes to overcome. Worse yet, they do not attack the body or corrupt the land. Instead, Howling Insanities lie in wait for prey, then shriek and howl mindlessly. The sounds buffet the minds of those who hear them, stripping the victims of their sanity. The Banes then feed on the madness they create. These Banes were among those who brought about the downfall of the White Howler tribe.

Rage 7, Gnosis 6, Willpower 7, Power 20

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Corruption, Possession

#### MIND FEEDERS

Mind Feeders have existed as long as the human mind has existed, leading some to wonder if humanity somehow created them long ago. Further speculation suggests that these Banes' manipulation gave rise to the first human psychics. Putting speculation aside, however, some facts about these three-eyed monstrosities cannot be ignored. For some reason, the Pentex Corporation has been enjoying greater cooperation with Mind Feeder Banes as part of a project to create a new, psychic breed of fomor. Tests have shown that these Banes bond best and become most powerful when they bond with human psychics. Otherwise, they bond with the most intelligent non-psychics they can find.

Rage 4, Gnosis 5, Willpower 8, Power 20

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Corruption, Possession

#### SCAVENGER PACK

A single Bane creates a Scavenger Pack by possessing a host of small animals then seeking out a larger animal inside which to make a true home. The most common example of this phenomenon is that of a Bane possessing a horde of rats. The rats then seek out a dead or dying human body and force their way inside, hollowing out as much space for themselves as they can. The resultant bulging, shambling mass becomes a fomor known as a Hollow Man.

While possessing the host of smaller animals, the Bane's consciousness extends to all of the individual members while remaining anchored in only one. If that particular anchor animal is destroyed, the Bane is forced back into the Umbra where it must start its search anew.

Rage 4, Gnosis 6, Willpower 4, Power 20

**Charms:** Airt Sense, Healing, Materialize, Possession, Prolonged Dying



## TYPES OF FOMORI

### BRAIN EATERS

Despite the schlocky sound of their name, the Brain Eaters are some of the most subtle, insidious Fomori ever created. As part of a far-reaching initiative to corrupt those fortunate few humans born with psychic powers, a division of the Pentex corporation binds a Bane known as a Mind Feeder to the brain of a latent human psychic. The torture and anguish the psychic suffers as a result of the operation awakens his power, but at a terrible cost. While it makes the psychic more powerful than he would have become on his own, the Mind Feeder Bane creates in the new fomor the urge to consume living human brains. Should the psychic deny himself this urge for longer than a week, his powers atrophy, and his very body begins to wither and decay. The addiction is so strong, however, that most Brain Eaters indulge more than once a week after they have indulged the first time.

In return for dining on this gruesome delicacy, the fomor develops the power to make people hallucinate, he no longer needs fear the Delirium, and he can read people's minds with ease. Worse yet, the fomor retains any psychic powers he may have had before being bound to his Bane. To top off all else, the binding operation causes no noticeable physical change in the fomor, allowing him to blend in with the rest of human society without so much as a ripple.

### ENTICERS

Enticers exist to bring out and exploit the worst, most base instinctual behavior in human beings. They live and breathe such raw, powerful sexual magnetism that only the most saintly and reserved victims can control themselves. (And even their resistance ultimately folds.) Regardless of sex or sexual orientation, once an Enticer spots a victim, the victim is doomed to the fomor's depredations.

Pentex uses Enticers as Judas goats or Jezebels, depending on the circumstances. Many a valiant and driven werewolf has followed a stunning Enticer into a trap, never realizing his mistake until it was too late. Many a pack of young hotheads has been torn apart as its members fought tooth and claw for the "affections" of the same fomor. More often than not, an Enticer needs only whisper a few encouraging words in the right ears to accomplish its dire aims. Should physical confrontation be necessary, however, the Enticer's only form of defense is a row of wickedly barbed fangs.

Should a character ever manage to see through an Enticer's seductive illusion, he might be surprised to see an entirely normal-looking person underneath. Enticer fomori are created by repeated exposure to a highly addictive chemical in a special brand of cosmetics distributed by a subsidiary of Pentex. The chemical creates an intense high in the wearer, while transforming the sweat glands in the wearer's skin into high-output pheromone factories. These pheromones attract members of either sex equally (regardless of the sex of the person wearing the makeup) by dredging up the image of sexual perfection in the victim's mind and lowering the victim's inhibitions accordingly.

Pentex keeps Enticer fomori compliant very simply by threatening to cut off the Enticer's supply of its addictive makeup if the Enticer does not do as it is told.



### **FERECTOI**

Born from the disgusting womb of a Breeder Bane, the Ferectoi consider themselves the larvae of the Wyrm on Earth. They look human and act human and have human motivations. To the casual observer, each appears entirely human (if a particularly vital and ruthless human). Even the Ferectoi's formidable powers remain concealed when they're not in use. However, these fomori's resemblance to humanity stops at the surface. Deep down, the Ferectoi are Wyrm creatures through and through. While some might struggle with their true nature, that nature always wins out eventually.

In the mean time, the Ferectoi enjoy all the pleasures of power and luxury life on Earth offers. Banes and lesser Wyrm beings serve them, as do the unwitting humans the Ferectoi dominates in his human semblance.

### **FOMORI FAMILIES**

Sometimes, groups of Banes choose the path of least resistance in bonding with human hosts. These Banes congregate around blights or Hellholes in remote backwoods areas and infest the sequestered, inbred families that sometimes also congregate in such isolated areas. Once they have become fomori themselves, the older members of these families do most of the work for these Banes thereafter. When their offspring grow old enough, the parents take them to the site where the Banes wait and perform a twisted bastardization of the Rite of Passage. This rite makes the young adult part of the family "right and proper," ending the hellish existence the child has likely endured thus far. The child then receives his first taste of the special Charm (and Taint) that runs in the family, otherwise known as the "family gift."

### **FREAKFEET**

These beasts are almost comically monstrous. They scuttle along on long, muscular arms and stunted legs. Their fingers and prehensile toes stretch out of proportion to their limbs. Their luminescent, unblinking eyes bulge grotesquely from the sockets. Liver spots stipple their slimy skin, and they communicate in porcine snorts and clicks. Morbidly obese "queen" Freakfeet lounge about laying eggs and being served by the more able males of the species.

Oddly enough, not even the Pentex Corporation appreciates the existence of these disgusting beasts. Originally created by joining a Sludge Elemental (known as a H'ruggling Bane) with a human-amphibian genetic hybrid, the first generation of Freakfeet escaped from Pentex's service after an explosion at the lab that created them. When given the opportunity, Pentex field operatives "sanitize" Freakfeet hives where they find them. Unfortunately, however, Freakfeet were designed to be prolific in any climactic conditions. The creatures maintain subterranean hives all over the world, regardless of Pentex's every effort to cull the expanding population.

Despite the human DNA that led to their creation, Freakfeet young do not gestate within a Freakfeet queen. Rather, the queen injects her fertilized eggs into the body of a living human being with a sharp stinger/ovipositor at the base of her spine. Freakfeet males gather human hosts by venturing up through sewer pipes in urban areas and abducting them. They use the *Rat Head* power to make the journey up out of the sewer — often emerging through toilet bowls in their



victims' homes — and they use the *Malleate* power on the victims in order to reverse the journey with their prize. More often than not, a human will die as a result of the Freakfeet birthing process. Those hardy few who survive remain in the hive as "breeders" until they either expire or are traded to another hive.

### GOREHOUNDS

While it can be argued that some fomori resist the changes that overtake them and make them less than human, no such case can be made for the Gorehounds. Gorehounds revel in what they become, living up to whatever ghastly potential they possess. The transformation into a Gorehound usually marks the human's achievement of a lifelong goal.

Deranged loners brimming with repressed rage and sadistic fantasies make the best prospective Gorehounds. To capitalize on this fresh pool of potential fomori, the Pentex Corporation distributes Bane-possessed slasher videotapes through a shell company called Slaughterhouse Video. Merely watching the tapes opens the viewer to possession by the Bane. Once in place, the Bane helps reduce the viewer's inhibitions, opening the floodgates on the barely contained sadism. Inspired by the "heroes" of the slasher tapes he watcher, the young Gorehound sets out to stake his own claim on trademarked over-the-top violence. The serial torture and murder of which Gorehounds are capable and all too happy to indulge in knows no bounds. A new Gorehound might begin his career on a small scale (say by mutilating household animals in his neighborhood), but his ambition to indulge in more sensational violence grows as his confidence grows.

Should a Gorehound ever be caught or confronted, he will fight to escape for as long as he can move, causing as much crippling pain and destruction as he can. While unreliable as operatives or employees of Pentex, Gorehounds do the work of the Wyrm with admirable zeal, and they provide an excellent distraction or scapegoat for actors undertaking more important Pentex initiatives.

### HOLLOW MEN

Although no one is entirely certain of where the Hollow Men came from, most speakers who have a reputable opinion on the subject agree that no other breed of fomor has existed longer on Earth. These horrifying monsters have done much to bring about the destruction and ultimate corruption of Gaia.

From the outside (and a distance), Hollow Men appear human, if somewhat distracted and fidgety. Closer examination, however, reveals more hints to the true nature of just what a Hollow Man is. A Hollow Man's skin bulges and ripples when he moves. His joints bend stiffly or with a too-fluid grace. His chest fails to rise and fall with the rhythm of respiration. Occasionally, a particularly alert viewer might even see a dark shape scuttling across the Hollow Man's skin, climbing out of one orifice to disappear into another. The Hollow Men appear thus because the bodies they wear on the outside are little more than convenient homes for a horde of smaller animals possessed by a Scavenger Pack Bane. The spirit of the human shell remains intact enough to bond with the Bane, granting the pitiful human a grotesque type of immortality in return for taking the Scavenger Pack into his body and carrying out the urges of the Wyrm.

The types of animals most likely to make up a Scavenger Pack include rats, snakes, bees, roaches and the larger species of spiders.

### SHADOWFIENDS

The Shadowfiends operate in direct contrast to the Gorehounds. Gorehounds are created from random malcontents by chance in hopes of spreading destruction, suffering and terror; Shadowfiends are selected carefully from a pool of willing applicants for the express purpose of disposing of socially visible or political enemies of the Pentex Corporation. Gorehounds slaughter indiscriminately with whatever implement of destruction comes conveniently to hand; Shadowfiends move in shadow and kill with eerily beautiful precision.

Pentex keeps its Shadowfiends tightly under wraps until a delicate assignment arises. When the standard tactics of dealing with a minor enemy of the corporation fail, a Shadowfiend is activated to dispose of the troublemaker. When someone learns too much about the company's ulterior motives, the company dispatches a Shadowfiend to prevent that someone from disseminating what he has learned.

Although unremarkable in most respects, Shadowfiends do bear certain physical similarities that set them apart from other fomor breeds. They all share a lithe, sinewy frame with skin somewhat darker than their racial average. Yet, what sets them apart from normal people most distinctly is the jet-black sheen of their eyes. Very few individuals outside the Pentex corporate structure have seen the eyes of a Shadowfiend and lived to describe them, however.

### CREATING FOMORI CHARACTERS

Creating a fomor character proceeds initially just as does the creation of a human in *Laws of the Hunt*. Assign the character a Nature and Demeanor, as well as a motivation. Give the character six, four and three Attribute Traits in the primary, secondary and tertiary Attribute categories as you see fit. Assign whatever negative Traits go along with the concept as well. Finally, add in the character's Willpower, Backgrounds, Merits and Flaws. Don't bother tracking the Humanity Trait, however. The slow descent from full humanity to utter corruption by the Wyrm is better represented through roleplaying than random marks on a character sheet.

After creating a human character, pick from the preceding selection a breed of fomor that such a character would most likely become. Reflect the change and the reason why your character is most suited to that breed in your write-up of the character's history. (Unless, of course, you're playing a Freakfeet fomor, in which case your character history pretty much writes itself.)

When you've come this far, assign the character Powers and Taints. You are not limited in the selection of your character's Powers, but keep in mind that some Powers are more appropriate to some breeds than others. Remember also that Powers do not come at all cheap. You cannot spend Freebie Traits on Powers, you cannot spend the Traits derived from Flaws on Powers, and you cannot spend the Traits derived from Negative Traits on Powers. The only Traits you can spend on Powers are those you receive from taking Taints. Luckily, though, you can spend the points you receive from Taints on Traits other than Powers.

For instance, you can assign your character seven Traits worth of Taints then take seven Traits worth of Powers. If you don't want seven Traits worth of



Powers, you could take four Traits worth of Powers and spend the remaining Traits just as you would spend Traits derived from Flaws or Negative Traits.

## USING THE FOMORI IN A CHRONICLE

Potential players of fomor characters, be prepared to hear this response to your initial request: "You want to play a *what!*?" Fomori are not pretty, they're not heroic, and they certainly aren't going to come out victorious in the end. Even when the fomori are the good guys in a chronicle, they're still bad guys. They exist by only either the grace of the Wyrm or thanks to the genius of Pentex scientists. Should the fomor ever step out of line and try to do the right thing, one or the other will assuredly make him pay. Fomori, as characters, have little to no redeeming value whatsoever. How then can you possibly hope to use such a character in an ongoing chronicle?

On one hand, the easy answer to this question is to use fomori as Pentex and the Wyrm intend: as the bad guys. Fomori make excellent villains, shock troops and Wyrm-beast mooks. No better evidence of the Corrupter's presence on Earth than the existence of these monsters. Roleplaying a fomor offers a player the chance to explore the deepest, most vile depths to which his imagination can sink then put that nastiness aside when the character meets his inevitable end. Letting your character give in wholly to his evil nature (for the sake of plot) is one of the most cathartic experiences roleplaying has to offer. At the same time, the character's story demonstrates the price of power and the importance of keeping your darker urges tightly in check.

By the same token, it's just fun to play the bad guy sometimes. If you're enjoying yourself by playing a right bastard, the other players should have just as much fun trying to put a stop to your nefarious schemes. Nothing is more fun than overcoming an unrepentantly evil opponent, especially if that opponent is one's equal in all but motivation. Playing the villain everyone loves to hate is an awful lot of fun, even when the good guys finally manage to pull together and conquer you once and for all.

On the other hand, one can tell a compelling story in which the fomori characters are the protagonists. This type of story, however, is not nearly as much fun as the preceding one. Fomor-centered stories are some of the most horrifying and tragic tales one can find in the World of Darkness. Consider the life-cycle of the standard fomor: A bleak, depressing or violent life leaves gaps in the soul of the potential victim. A spirit of corruption finds (or is directed to) those gaps, and it begins to attach itself to them. The hapless individual feels this intrusion, but he is powerless to prevent it. After all, some part of him *wants* the spirit to fill the void within him. When the fusion is complete, the victim's body warps and mutates to match the changes that go on in his mind. After the transformation (or before, in many cases), a corporation driven by a force more sinister than greed tries in every way to exploit the new monster in any way it can. Finally, often before the poor, pitiful wretch can come to grips with the horrifying changes that have been so rudely thrust upon him, he runs afoul of vicious zealots who want to tear him apart with tooth and claw for no better reason than the fact that he even exists.



Fomor protagonists must search for a cure for (or a reconciliation with) their new state, all while trying to hold tightly to what made them human in the first place. However, one must remember that the Bane with which the human has merged is not just a voice in the character's head. The Bane is just as much who the character is as the human. The joining process is not so much an addition of halves as a multiplication of wholes.

## POWERS AND TAINTS

The following list is not all-inclusive, but it does cover the basic range available to the fomor breeds listed. Storytellers and players are encouraged to make up new and even more disgusting Powers and Taints for their games' characters in addition to the ones presented here.

### POWERS

#### Berserker (variable)

The fomor begins play with Rage Traits equal to the cost of the Power at character creation. He may use these Traits just Garou use their Rage, but the player may not buy more Rage Traits after character creation. The fomor regains spent Rage the first time he is wounded in a game session, at the beginning of any new conflict or when he's particularly humiliated.

#### Brain Eating (6 Traits)

A character using this Power robs his victim of Mental Traits and adds those Traits to his own Mental Traits. The fomor's player steals one Mental Trait from the victim per Willpower Test he wins. The transfer affects the characters' effective maximum number of Mental Traits for the rest of the game session. Should either player spend a Willpower Trait to refresh his character's Mental Traits during that game session, the expenditure refreshes the newly adjusted number of Traits. The stolen Traits return at the beginning of the next game session.

This attack does not constitute a physical assault, but the victim will know who is using the power. Should the fomor actually eat the victim's physical brain after the victim has died, he adds the victim's Mental Traits and Willpower Traits to his own for the remainder of the session.

#### Chameleon Coloration (four Traits)

When the player spends Mental Traits, the character's skin changes color to blend in with his surroundings. The nature of the change causes the Mental Trait expense to vary, but the illusion is flawless. Only players of characters with supernatural perceptions may make a Mental Test to notice the fomor using this Power.

#### Claws, Fangs or Horns (three, five or seven Traits)

An unnatural adaptation (be it cybernetic, organic or a mixture of the two) makes the fomor's attacks all the more vicious. Although these adaptations can be disguised or retracted, they cannot be removed without causing serious physical pain. In combat, claws, fangs and horns add an extra level of lethal damage to the fomor's attacks. The base Trait cost purchases one adaptation; the secondary cost provides two. The full seven-Trait cost adds all three bodily weapons to the same monster.



### Colony Powers (variable)

Particular to the Hollow Men, *Colony Powers* bestow an ability to the fomor that is usually attributed to the animal that makes up its Scavenger Pack. A Hollow Man full of spiders might be able to scale sheer walls or infect his victims with a deadly venom. Being inhabited by a Scavenger Pack of rats might grant the fomor the *Rat Head* Power. The Storyteller should assess the advantage the *Colony Powers* grant the character and price them accordingly.

### Corrupted Visions (four Traits)

When the player spends a Mental Trait and wins a Mental Test against his opponent, the fomor causes his victim to suffer from compelling hallucinations. Fomori use this Power to prod victims into action or to drive them over the edge into insanity. The victim's player may banish these hallucinations by spending a Willpower Trait.

### Darksight (two Traits)

The fomor can see in perfect darkness, and the player suffers no Trait penalties for impaired visibility. This power represents chiropteran sonar, feline low-light vision or a heightened sensitivity to disturbances in the air, as is appropriate to the character. Should the character's compensatory sense be overloaded suddenly by sensation, however, he is completely stunned for one turn, and he suffers the Negative Trait *Oblivious* x 2 for the entirety of the scene after which the character recovers from the onslaught. He also loses the *Darksight* advantage for the rest of the scene.

### Dispersion (four Traits)

As another Power specific to the Hollow Men, *Dispersion* is a fantastic defense mechanism. By spending a Trait of Willpower, the fomor's player can force the entire Scavenger Pack to evacuate its hollow human shell at once. The empty human body collapses and remains inert, but the fomor's entire consciousness extends to each member of the Scavenger Pack. Should the animal central to the Pack be killed, the fomor dies. When a Hollow Man is beaten to the Incapacitated health level, this Power activates automatically.

### Enhancement (three Traits)

By winning a Social Challenge against the player of her intended victim, the player of a fomor can cause herself to appear to be her victim's ideal physical mate, regardless of the fomor's actual appearance. Should the fomor's player lose the test, the fomor still seems attractive, if only slightly above average.

### Foot Pads (one Trait)

Spongy pads on the bottom of the fomor's feet muffle the sound of his footsteps to such a degree that only supernatural perception can detect the sound.

### Garou Gifts (variable)

The fomor's player may purchase and use Garou Gifts for one Trait times the Gift's level plus one.

### Immunity to the Delirium (one Trait)

Having become monsters themselves, the sight of a werewolf in its Crinos form does not trigger the instinctual fear response to which normal humans are heir.



### Malleate (six Traits)

By piercing the hide of her opponent, a fomor injects a powerful venom under the skin that changes the victim's body into a putty-like mass. The fomor may then warp and shape that mass as she sees fit. Using this power requires the fomor's player to win a Physical Challenge to make the first contact and successive Physical Challenges to make the desired changes. The effects of this Power are permanent unless the victim uses the Gifts: Resist Toxin, Doppelganger or Adaptation. A Garou can also purge the venom from the body of a victim with a successful Rite of Cleansing. When the venom is gone, the victim's body returns to normal.

Changes made to one's body by this Power cause health levels of aggravated damage. The severity of this damage is up to Storyteller discretion and the magnitude of the change.

### Mind Rape (six Traits)

If a fomor's player spends a Willpower Trait and wins a Mental Challenge, his character can invade the mind of a victim and pull out even well hidden secret thoughts. That is to say, after a successful challenge, the user of this Power can demand from the victim a complete and honest answer to one question. The player of the victim must give as thorough an answer as possible, even if his character has blocked the information out subconsciously. This Power cannot detect uses of other supernatural mind-altering powers, nor can it retrieve information that another supernatural power has erased. Use of this Power is in no way subtle, as far as the victim is concerned.

### Prolonged Life (four Traits)

The Bane fused to the human's soul extends his life span far beyond that of any mere mortal. Any fomor with this Power, however, must take the Addiction Taint. The fomor will not die of old age as long as he engages regularly in his addiction. This Power, however, will not protect the fomor from the external rigors of its existence.

### Rat Head (four Traits)

By spending a Physical Trait, the player allows his character to wriggle through a space roughly one-twentieth of his size. For example, a fomor of average human size could squeeze underneath a closed door or escape danger through the drain in a sink.

### Regeneration (five Traits)

The fomor with this power recovers from non-aggravated damage at the same accelerated rate werewolves do.

### Scent of the Wyld or Weaver (five Traits)

The fomor's player spends a Mental Trait in order to mask his character's obvious Wyrmtaint. Characters who use the Gift: Sense Wyrmtaint on a fomor using this Power fail automatically, gaining a strong sense that the fomor is actually a creature of the Wyld or Weaver. However, neither Red Talons nor Glasswalkers are fooled by this Power.

### Slobber Snot (three Traits)

Oozing warts cover the fomor's skin, exuding a slick coat of foul-smelling slime. This slime grants the fomor's player a free retest in all Physical Challenges.



in which he is trying to break free of an opponent's grasp. This slime also makes it particularly easy for a fomor to escape from ropes, handcuffs or tightly confined spaces. The slime's distinctive and powerful stench puts the fomor's player one Trait down in all challenges related to stealth.

#### **Spirit Ties (variable)**

The fomor may draw upon a well of Gnosis, which he can use just as the Garou can. The player receives one Gnosis Trait per Trait he spends into the Power at character creation. He cannot increase this Trait thereafter. The fomor regains spent Gnosis Traits by meditating (see *Laws of the Wild*), destroying fetishes or slaughtering Umbral spirits.

### **TAINTS**

The Taints listed here serve as guidelines for building fomor characters. Players should work out the specifics of each Taint with their Storytellers with an eye toward their games' particular balance and the dramatic needs of their stories.

#### **Addiction (variable)**

The fomor must engage in some activity on a regular schedule, lest withdrawal and distraction overwhelm him. The frequency with which the fomor must indulge his taste varies from once per month to once per hour. The substance or action to which he is addicted also varies. The player may even designate the use of one of his character's Powers — such as *Brain Eating* — as the activity to which the character is addicted. Should the character deny his addiction, he loses a health level, and the player is one Trait down in all challenges per period that the character has abstained.

#### **Brainwashed (three Traits)**

As a result of intensive psychological treatment or skillful emotional manipulation, your character has adopted with fanatical zeal a belief that was not originally her own. She will not question this belief, and she reacts violently to those who question its validity. In her opinion, the naysayers against her belief are obviously vicious malcontents bent on destroying all she holds dear, no matter how ridiculous the idea with which she has been brainwashed is. Not even blatant, incontrovertible evidence of malfeasance can shake the faith with which she's been indoctrinated. The player of a brainwashed fomor is down two Traits in any confrontation against an acknowledged representative of her character's faith.

#### **The Crusties (three Traits)**

Fomor with the Power: *Slobber Snot* are the most common victims of this Taint. Once a month, for a period of approximately a week, the coating of mucus and oil on the fomor's skin dries out and flakes off in itchy, irritating patches. During the period of this affliction, a fomor is one Trait down on all challenges due to the constant distraction. On the plus side, the *Slobber Snot* Power still functions optimally during this period. However, instead of the low-viscosity slime protecting the fomor's skin, the flakes themselves provide the benefit by tearing away more easily.

### Derangement (three Traits)

Fomor are not the most stable individuals to begin with, but your character has gone further around the bend than most. The Bane that possesses your fomor has discovered a particularly prickly spot in your character's psyche, and it exploits that sensitive spot in any way it can. This mental malady is now the core of your character's every motivation.

Check a psychology textbook for the symptoms of some common mental illnesses and roleplay them in everything your character does. You may not spend Willpower Traits to overcome the drives of your character's derangement.

### Physical Wasting (six Traits)

One of your character's Powers takes a physical toll on your character's body. Whenever the character uses that Power in a scene, he loses one Physical Trait for the scene. Each subsequent scene in which the character uses the Power in question robs the character of another Physical Trait unless he has rested sufficiently between uses. Wasted Traits return at the rate of one Trait per hour after the scene in which they are used.

### Rotting (six Traits)

The fomor's body is falling apart. The character loses one health level per month as his body withers and decays. The fomor's player may make a Static Test to hold off the loss of the health level at the beginning of each month, but he must win the test. Players who test successfully to attack a character with this Taint may immediately make a second Static Test. If the attacking player wins the additional test, his character's attack inflicts an additional health level of normal damage.

### Walking Bomb (five Traits)

Agents of the Pentex Corporation have implanted an explosive charge in the base of your character's skull to secure his future cooperation. The bomb can be set to detonate under a variety of conditions (a remote switch, a heart monitor implanted in the Pentex agent himself, a proximity sensor or a simple countdown timer), but only a qualified Pentex explosives expert can deactivate it. Neither blunt trauma nor even a direct hit from a .357 slug will cause the bomb to go off, but the fomor's employer can detonate the device at whim. The charge is shaped so that the explosion will blow the fomor's head clean off with as little collateral damage as possible.

Variants of this device flood the fomor's system with a deadly venom, deliver a debilitating electric shock, release a highly caustic acid or pump ultra-concentrated depressants into the fomor's bloodstream.



# WRAITH MERITS AND FLAWS FOR OBLIVION

by Jess Heinig

The dead have plenty to worry about. It's tough enough just hanging on after dying. Since every wraith is an individual, complete with carefully plotted goals and driving Passions, it only makes sense that their foibles, problems and advantages be similarly unique.

Each wraith character has a personal set of Attributes, Abilities, Arcanoi, Passions and Fetters. Some, though, have their own spins on such things, or peculiarities that aren't common to other wraiths. Thus, we give you Merits and Flaws for **Oblivion** characters.

Remember: A modifier to bidding affects the number of Traits required to enter a challenge. A one-Trait bid penalty means that you must bid an extra Trait on a challenge. A modifier to resolution affects total Traits for resolving ties and overbids.

## CORPOREAL MERITS AND FLAWS

### BOTCHED MOLIATION (1-3 TRAIT FLAW)

Something went horribly, horribly wrong during a Moliate attempt, and your character's Corpus has resisted attempts to change it back. This deformity gives him problems, and it's not going to go away soon. Perhaps some guilty, dark part of your character's psyche believes that he really deserves to reflect the deformity, or maybe he's just an unlucky punk who's stuck with an extra tentacle for the rest of his existence.

For one Trait, your character has a relatively minor and annoying moliation "scar." Perhaps he has an ugly-looking hunch, a discoloration or some other noticeable incongruity. This incongruity makes him easily recognizable unless he takes steps to cover it, and it's in an inconvenient place where it'll take some work to conceal it. A funny color under one's arm doesn't count. A hand that's been moliated into a gnarled, inflexible lump is a much more reasonable expression of this Flaw.

For two Traits, the moliation problem is fairly nasty. Maybe your character has a withered arm, or his skin is scaly in patches due to a failed attempt at creating armor. When the botched moliation isn't concealed, the character suffers an extra negative Social Trait of *Repugnant*, for which you gain no extra Traits. Your character might be able to conceal this problem, but it takes some real effort.

For three Traits, some terrible mistake inconveniences your character horribly. Not only do you suffer a Negative Social Trait of *Repugnant*, but you also suffer a one-Trait penalty to all challenges where the specific moliation might hinder the character. For instance, if your character's legs are fused together above the knees, he will have trouble running or balancing. If his head is sunk into the center of his torso, he'll have difficulty seeing peripherally or speaking to people. These botches are generally too extreme to conceal.

The victim of a botched moliation may be able to repair the damage eventually (with a good use of *Moliate* and the expenditure of experience Traits equal to twice the Flaw's value), but it's sure to be an annoyance for quite a while. You must wear a tag in a conspicuous location, which explains the nature of the deformity. If another wraith uses *Moliate* to correct this deformity, his player must spend one extra Pathos Trait beyond the art's standard cost per turn he wishes the moliated change to last. At the end of those allotted turns, the unfortunate wraith with this Flaw reverts to normal. Continuous work and moliation over an extended period of time (plus the appropriate expenditure of experience Traits) can overcome this Flaw eventually.

**DISTINCTIVE APPEARANCE (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Some feature (such as blue hair, a prominent tattoo carried over from life or eyes of different colors) really stands out about your character. Unlike having a botched moliation, this feature is not necessarily repulsive or problematic, but it's also not something that a character could hope to change permanently, either. Indicate this feature by wearing make-up to simulate it (or by wearing a prominent card that describes it). The Moliate Arcanos could cover it up temporarily, of course. After the moliation, the character's appearance reverts to normal at the end of a scene.

**ROTTING (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

Organic matter in the land of the living decays and rots away eventually, and that fact haunts your character's mind. In fact, it's so closely tied to her conception of death that her very self-image as a dead thing is corrupted by rot. Chunks of her body are rotted away, and tatters of flesh hang over corded muscle. Naturally, this psychonecrosis doesn't necessarily hinder or damage the Corpus itself, but it's definitely unpleasant and unsightly. You suffer an automatic one-Trait penalty to Social Challenge resolution. When interacting with mortals, they react to the Fog (*Oblivion*, p. 234) much more strongly. If the player of the mortal wins his Static Mental Challenge against 20 Traits, the Storyteller or Narrator representing the Fog gets an automatic retest.

**FRAGILE CORPUS (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

The strands of will that hold your character's plasm together just aren't as strong as those of many other wraiths. When he become insubstantial due to physical damage, he loses two levels of Corpus instead of just one. If he ever suffers four or more levels of damage in a single blow, you must win or tie a Simple Test, lest the character collapse immediately into a Harrowing.

**AMBIDEXTROUS (1 TRAIT MERIT)**

Most people are good with just one hand or the other, but your character is equally good with both. You suffer no Trait penalty for using either hand since your character is equally good with his right or left (or Moliated tentacle or whatever). Of course, you still suffer a one-Trait coordination penalty if your character uses both hands at once, but you incur no additional penalty for using an uncoordinated hand.

Interestingly, many wraiths seem to slide toward ambidexterity over time. As a wraith's self-image changes, his sense of handedness may well erode.

**FULL OF LIFE (1-4 TRAIT MERIT)**

While most wraiths are sad, pallid things, your character's Corpus is so strong that it practically glows with vibrancy. The character seems more "solid" than most plasm, and it's harder to disorporate her. For each Trait that you spend on this Merit, your character starts with one extra level of permanent Corpus. While above 10 Corpus, though, she is extraordinarily conspicuous to other entities in the lands of the dead.

**MALLEABLE (2 TRAIT MERIT)**

Like the semi-liquid plasm from which it's formed, your character's Corpus flows into new shapes easily. Anyone using the Moliate Arcanos upon her (including herself) receives a two-Trait resolution bonus.

**DISEMBODIED (6 TRAIT MERIT)**

Most wraiths form a corporeal shell that resembles an idealized version of their living form. Your character, however, has discarded the entire notion of flesh. He has no Corpus or body at all; he's just a floating voice, a collection of memories and thoughts.

Obviously, having no body can be problematic. Such a character can't actually carry anything, nor can he interact with anyone physically. He has no Physical Traits at all. He can't even use Arcanoi that would interact with physical material, including *Embody*, *Inhabit*, *Molate*, *Outrage* and *Pandemonium*. (Similar restrictions might apply to certain Jade Kingdom Arcanoi, too.)

On the upside, your character is pretty much immune to physical trauma. He simply can't be hurt that way. Nobody can make Physical Challenges against you; weapons can't hurt your character because he's not there. Arcanoi and other powers that require touch or contact with some part of the body fail because he have no body to touch. If some power that your character has would require you to make a Physical Challenge, just use a Mental Challenge instead. Your character has no Corpus rating, so he obviously can't be sent into a normal Destruction Harrowing. Should he fall into a Harrowing by running out of Willpower (or, perhaps, by falling into a Harrowing with another wraith), you risk permanent Willpower instead. If he ever runs out of permanent Willpower Traits, he disappears into Oblivion.

You should wear a tag to indicate your character's disorporate status. It helps if you wear a shroud or the like as well, so that you have no distinguishing features. Remember, though, that your character cannot pick up, push or touch *anything* on either side of the Shroud.

## MENTAL MERITS AND FLAWS

### **ADDICTION (1-2 TRAIT FLAW)**

Just as wraiths cling tenuously to the remnants of existence through force of will and memory, they sometimes fall victim to dangerous and compelling psychological drives. Your character is attached to some activity or substance in such a fashion. If he is denied access to the subject of his addiction, you lose a number of Traits equal to the value of this Flaw in all test-resolutions. The source of this addiction may even be harmful in some way, but the character is miserable without it. He will go to any lengths he can to fulfill this addiction (including Skinriding or possessing humans who indulge in it).

### **COMPULSION (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character is compelled to perform some sort of noticeable, curious or harmful action. It may be a constant urge or just one that strikes at inconvenient times. Perhaps he can never seem to shut up, or maybe he twitches spasmodically for several seconds any time someone mentions the Hierarchy. Maybe he hoards every scrap of relic detritus he comes across, no matter how useless the junk seems at the time. You must roleplay the effects of the compulsion. You can spend a Willpower Trait to suppress the urge; if you fail to roleplay the compulsion, a Narrator may rule that you have spent such a Trait already.

### **DARK SECRET (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character keeps skeletons in the closet... possibly literally. Some dirty deed in her past haunts her. Although it's not widely known, if knowledge of the misdeed were to get out, it would cause serious inconvenience. Perhaps she was Reaped by a Mnemos, or maybe she opened the gates to a Citadel for the Spectres. Worse still, situations seem to come up from time to time where her dark secret might get out. She may have to make difficult or embarrassing compromises to keep the truth under wraps. The Storyteller determines when and how the secret comes up in play. Should it ever be exposed, your character is likely to suffer the social consequences. Gaining an enemy or losing status are just two of the possibilities.

### **ECHOES OF THE PAST (1-3 TRAIT FLAW)**

Whether consciously or not, your character can't leave the living world behind. Some trapping associated with him in life continues to bleed into the living lands even after his

death. Some characteristic or trait associated with the character during his mortal days continues to manifest wherever he goes, even in a fashion noticeable to the living. These manifestations are uncontrollable, and they don't relate directly to your character's actions. Rather, they just "happen" in the material world when he's around.

For one Trait, the character causes a specific, peculiar scent in the world of the living. People might catch a whiff of a perfume that she used to wear or smell the cordite from the gun involved in her death. This scent is noticeable to anyone who searches for it specifically. Someone who has a vague idea that something is wrong — perhaps because of a subtle use of Arcanoi in the area — can make a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty of six Traits), with success indicating that he notices the scent and recognizes it.

For two Traits, your character's presence causes sounds in the physical realm. People might hear ghostly footsteps, catch the hint of rattling chains or notice a distant laugh. People in the immediate area will almost certainly hear some manifestation, although the sounds are not constant, and someone who just brushes by may not be present for an echo. (Use a Static Mental Challenge at a difficulty of six Traits from someone near you if he might hear an unexpected echo.) People near your location — just outside the room, for instance — might hear an echo if one occurs. A Static Mental Challenge (difficulty of eight Traits) is appropriate, although someone who's listening specifically for such things would notice the effect.

For three Traits, your wraith actually causes some sort of visual manifestation. Perhaps people see dancing candle flames when she's around or a hazy blob of light or a hallucinatory, translucent image of something important to your character in life. People in the room with you will almost certainly notice and be startled by such manifestations. Individuals within a reasonable distance will notice such things if they succeed on a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty of six Traits.

You can take this Flaw multiple times to generate multiple Effects. For six Traits, your character creates a hazy image accompanied by strange sounds and smells.

### **OVERCONFIDENT (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character believes in a rather exaggerated impression of his actual capabilities. While most people have enough sense not to get in over their heads, he honestly believes that he's better than he really is, and he lets that belief get him into trouble. During situations in which he's under duress or threat, your character is likely to forge ahead heedless of the consequences and convinced of victory.

### **PHOBIA (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

Some overpowering fear seizes your character in the presence of a specific object or situation. This fear may be tied to circumstances of her death — a fear of large bodies of water, for a drowning victim — or it may come from some hidden impulse that predares her demise. When the character encounters the object of her fear, you must expend a Willpower Trait or retreat in terror. If unable to escape, fear makes the character shaky and uncertain. You are two Traits down on all challenges in such a situation.

### **CONFUSED (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

The world is a disjointed place. Everything is disturbed, noisy and grating. Maybe your mind was unhinged during death, or perhaps you can't seem to filter out all the background chaos of the Underworld. You are always a bit distracted and disoriented, but when you are subjected to intense stimuli, such as a sudden whipping of a Maelstrom, a barrage of conversation from multiple people or a loud and chaotic situation, your mind simply can't make sense of it all. Under such stress you must spend a Willpower Trait to overcome your problems for the scene, or else you just curl up, helplessly unable to cope with your surroundings.

**CURIOSITY (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

Well, your character's already died, so it's not like curiosity can kill him, right? He just tends to stick his nose into anything and everything. When presented with an innocuous little mystery — a locked container, a secret room, a mysterious library or the like — you must win a Simple Test, lest your character mosey on into trouble.

**OBSESSION (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

A driving fixation permeates your character's every thought and drives him to unhealthy extremes in pursuit of his fascination. Often, he finds himself in difficult straits because of the obsession. Perhaps he would spend his last obolus for some relic of a sort that he collects obsessively, or maybe he hangs out around some Skinlands area that's dangerous to him. Only by spending a Willpower Trait can you overcome your character's obsession for a short time.

Storytellers should make sure that obsessions do not tie into strong Passions. A disadvantage that isn't a disadvantage isn't really worth much, after all.

**VENGEANCE (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

A certain score must be settled, whether it's against some still-living foes or against an already-dead one, and your character intends to see justice done. Heck, maybe your character intends to kill her enemy then send him screaming to Oblivion. In short, someone did your wraith wrong, and now she's driven in the pursuit of a vendetta. You must spend a Willpower Trait if your character has an opportunity to pursue her vengeance but you want to avoid doing so — for instance, to avoid screaming and charging into the Labyrinth to get the Spectre that Harrowed your daughter's ghost.

Again, Storytellers should make sure that the Vengeance Flaw does not tie into any Passions. The wraith does not draw strength from her vengeance; she just has an unrelenting need to get even.

**DRIVING GOAL (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

Some overreaching goal pushes your character on, even past the strength of will that it took to cheat death. He'll never achieve this goal completely, but he keeps trying. This goal is limitless in depth, yet your character feels compelled to strive toward it constantly. Examples of such goals include proving to the living world that ghosts really do exist, tearing down the Hierarchy entirely and making an all-inclusive map of all of the Far Shores. You don't gain any bonus Traits when pursuing your character's driving goal, but you must spend a Willpower Trait to avoid pursuing it. The goal directs and focuses all of your character's actions.

Like other similar Flaws, *Driving Goal* cannot tie to a wraith's Passions.

**FLASHBACKS (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

When your character is under stress, he flashes back to some similar horrible situation in his past. Perhaps he has memories of his time as a soldier, and he suffers post-traumatic stress syndrome. Maybe he relives horrible memories of a torturous adolescence. It's entirely possible that he relives the events of his most recent Harrowing time and again. While the wraith suffers these flashbacks, he's off in his own little world. He can't hear or interact with the people and circumstances around him. He might sometimes incorporate a person or action into the nightmare fantasy, but it's always in the fashion of what he hallucinates, which means that he's functionally useless for at least a full turn.

Flashbacks cannot trigger a Passion.

**LIFESAVER (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character has a deep and abiding respect for life. Perhaps she was always this compassionate, or maybe she got that way after she lost her own. Either way, she is loath to use violence or to inflict harm on others. She'll never endanger people or other wraiths willingly, nor will she actively harm another person. These objections aren't nearly as strong with respect to animals, Spectres and other creatures, but she still dislikes violence or inflicting injury in any form. If the character is forced into a confrontational situation, she may go so far as to defend herself, but you suffer a one- or two-Trait penalty because the character's heart isn't in it. Such a character would sooner run away from a fight than hurt someone in self-defense.

**COMMON SENSE (1 TRAIT MERIT)**

They say common sense ain't nearly so common these days, but your character is a repository of such wisdom. Her intuition and folk sayings carry her through many a rough situation with simple wit. When your character is about to do something impractical or just stupid, the Storyteller will stop you and warn you that the action may not be sensible. This Merit is excellent for new players, in keeping them from making mistakes due to inexperience playing the game.

**CENTRATION (1 TRAIT MERIT)**

When your character focuses on a task, he shuts out all distractions completely and lets absolute precision overtake him. Nothing shakes this resolve. You never suffer any penalty Traits due to environmental circumstances such as loud noises, strobing lights or howling Maelstrom-winds.

**LIGHTNING CALCULATOR (1 TRAIT MERIT)**

Your character has a natural talent with numbers. He performs complex calculations in his head with ease and near-perfect accuracy. Higher mathematics such as calculating standard deviation and variance or calculating trajectory require a few moments more of thought (and the expenditure of a Mental Trait). Number theory may be entirely beyond you, but nobody's perfect.

If your character has this Merit, you never need to test to perform basic math calculations on the fly. You [the player] can use a calculator, if you like, even if your character doesn't own one; the character runs all the numbers in his head. Vegas casino owners hate people like this.

**CODE OF HONOR (2 TRAIT MERIT)**

A character with a strong code of honor continues to follow a specific set of beliefs, even after death. This discipline gives the wraith strength, and his adherence to his code stands out as exceptional. Work with the Storyteller to detail the code of honor as a specific ethical or moral framework. Although your character may not delineate it in specific terms, it should be written down out of game to give a basic idea of what behavior he considers unacceptable. Any time supernatural compulsion is brought to bear in a manner that would violate said code of honor, you get a free retest to resist.

**EIDETIC MEMORY (2 TRAIT MERIT)**

Your character has a mind like a steel trap, and this one's not rusty. She remembers the general sense of most events that she experiences, and she's particularly good at remembering names, dates and written material. After a single turn of concentration, she can memorize a page of material or the gist of a scene completely. Doing so requires a Static Mental Challenge, difficulty of six Traits, if the character is in combat or otherwise under duress. You should have a small "cheat sheet" of notes so that you and the Storyteller can agree on what your character has committed to memory.

Incidentally, memories of this quality are extremely clear and concise to the Mnemosynis Arcanos. A Mnemos who delves into these memories sees them with vivid clarity. Conversely, if someone tries to erase or alter said memories, the operation leaves jagged "holes" around the area affected. Therefore, you get a free retest to defend against memory manipulation, but others looking in on your character's memories gain a retest to draw out details.

### **NATURAL LINGUIST (2 TRAIT MERIT)**

Although your character don't necessarily have the ability to learn extra languages automatically, he does have a powerful command of language in general. He finds it easy to sort out principles and ideas in other languages. You get a three-Trait bonus in all challenges related to any languages that your character knows. Of course, since all wraiths speak the language of the dead, this Merit is most useful with written material or when interacting with the Quick.

### **IRON WILL (4 TRAIT MERIT)**

It's very difficult to shake a character with an iron will from his chosen course. Even magical compulsions take minimal hold against such formidable determination. You may expend a Willpower Trait to gain a retest against any use of the vampiric *Dominate* Discipline, and if you win, your character is immune to that vampire's further uses of *Dominate* against him for the rest of the scene. Furthermore, you gain three extra Traits in all defenses against direct mental (not emotional) manipulation.

### **SELF-CONFIDENT (5 TRAIT MERIT)**

In difficult situations, your character draws upon a reservoir of skill and confidence to perform with grace. When your character is forced to perform some difficult task, you need only spend a Willpower Trait to succeed automatically.

When you're making a Static Challenge with a difficulty of six Traits or more, you can spend a Willpower Trait for automatic success. This trick works only if the subject of the challenge is not another character. Your character could manage to open a tough lock automatically (if he has the *Security Ability*), or he might manage to jump across a chasm, but he wouldn't be able to use the benefits of this Merit to *Crescendo* someone into Oblivion.

Note specifically that this Merit supersedes the normal ruling that Willpower cannot be used to win a Static Challenge automatically. Remember, though, that it does not apply to Simple Tests, to challenges with a difficulty of less than six Traits or to challenges against other characters (including Narrator characters).

### **SOCIAL MERITS AND FLAWS**

#### **ENEMY (1-5 TRAIT FLAW)**

Someone out there is after your character, and he wants her dead, dead, dead. (For good this time.) This enemy is probably a fellow wraith or a Spectre, but it might be some other sort of creature capable of causing serious problems. The Trait value of this Flaw determines the overall potency of the enemy. For one Trait, your character has an opponent roughly similar in power to herself; for five Traits, a seemingly unstoppable enemy is out to do her in. The motives of this enemy should tie in to your character's background and history in some fashion. The Storyteller determines when and how the enemy intervenes in stories—possibly even to the point of going after your character's entire Circle as well.

#### **SHY (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Some people are just uncomfortable around crowds and in social situations. When your character meets new people, he gets tongue-tied; when he runs into groups of three or more, he's positively flummoxed. You suffer a two-Trait penalty on all social dealings with groups of three or more. This penalty rises to three Traits with groups of 10 or more.

**BOON (1-3 TRAIT MERIT)**

Someone owes your character. Maybe this someone is a lowly wraith among a Renegade gang, or maybe he's an important Hierarchy official. The more important the wraith, and the more he owes, the greater the value of the boon.

For one Trait, someone owes your character for going out of her way on his behalf. He'll give you useful information or shelter, but he probably won't do anything risky for her.

For two Traits, your character did someone a serious favor. This someone might sneak your wraith some contraband or look the other way while she cross through restricted territory. He may also speak up on her behalf within his organization once or twice. (Just hope that he doesn't go into Catharsis and sell your character out.)

For three Traits, some wraith pretty much owes his existence to your character. He'll shield and protect her to the best of his ability, speak up for her with his organization and even break a few wraithly laws to pay off the debt.

Note that if a powerful Gaunt owes your character a boon, however, the wraith probably won't give her as much as a less powerful wraith would. One can assume that a Gaunt has sufficient influence and power to pay his debts with little effort, after all. This Merit assumes that the wraith in question feels bound for some reason to pay back the boon, be it through blackmail or just an unquiet conscience.

**MORTAL COMPANION (2 TRAIT MERIT)**

Despite death and the Fog, your character has managed to keep reasonably close ties with a living person. This person may be a parapsychologist, a medium or just someone who has a mutual tie to one of your character's Fetters. This person is as helpful and sympathetic as a still-living person can be to a ghost, but she does have a life, and she won't always be able to help out directly. Plus, a few episodes of Catharsis may make this acquaintance rethink the relationship. Still, if you exercise a few Arcanoi on this person's behalf, you can often expect a good return in the living world.

**PSYCHIC ALLY (4 TRAIT MERIT)**

Not only is your character on decent terms with a mortal, but that mortal is a bona fide sensitive. The mortal can perceive ghostly visitations in some fashion, and he accepts the existence of ghosts for exactly what it is. Your Storyteller must determine the full extent of the mortal's powers and motivations, as well as how that person manages to communicate with the other side. Furthermore, some vindictive or desperate wraiths may try to steal away or hurt this link to the other side. (See *Laws of the Hunt* for some ideas about mortals with psychic powers and the ability to speak to the dead.)

**SUPERNATURAL MERITS AND FLAWS****CURSED (1-5 TRAIT FLAW)**

Some awful bane afflicts your character, even beyond death. In certain circumstances, he may find himself compelled to do terrible things, or perhaps some things just never go right.

The strength of the curse determines the value of this Flaw. For one Trait, perhaps one always suffers dire consequences from betraying a confidence. For five Traits, maybe the character is so cursed that he will wander the lands of the dead endlessly without surcease or rest, unable to ever Transcend or even make a modicum of success in his endeavors to protect his Fetters or Passions.

**DAMNED (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Despite being a believer in some mortal religion, your character has come to realize that the endless Purgatory of the Shadowlands is just another torment and another lie in the chink of his former faith. Whenever your character enters a place sacred to his former

religion, you lose a Willpower Trait each minute due to the psychological stress. If he touches an artifact of the faith (material or corporeal), he suffers a level of Corpus damage as his form sloughs off in agony of this existence.

The Storyteller should make sure that the player selects a religion that may actually appear in the course of the game. A Zoroastrian is unlikely to suffer much inconvenience from this Flaw in a modern urban setting.

### **IMPROPERLY BURIED (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Many superstitions surround the practices of burial. By your character's beliefs, he was interred improperly. Perhaps he was buried without clothes, or maybe he needed to be buried in his family's grave plot, but such was not to be the case. Whatever the case, he suffers extreme discomfort in the afterlife. This difficulty with his own corpse causes him to suffer by taking your own body as a Fetter (and not as a free one, either), but you gain no Trait bonuses when trying to resolve or affect it. Instead, you suffer a one-Trait resolution penalty when your character tries to affect his corpse. He might overcome this Flaw if someone finally interts his body properly (and you spend two experience Traits).

### **THE BARD'S TONGUE (1 TRAIT FLAW)**

Terrible truths come from your character's lips, completely unbidden and without forewarning. It's not that he sees the future; rather, things that he says have an uncanny way of coming true.

Once per game session, some uncomfortable truth will come out of your character's mouth, and the dire predictions of this event are almost certain to pass. Should a Storyteller note a particularly appropriate phrase, then when it has a chance of fulfillment, anyone trying to resist it must make an automatic retest and take the worst result. Thus, such a character might remark offhandedly, "Just what we need. What's next, a batch of Spectres?" only to hear cackling and howling a few minutes later. Perhaps he'll note, "You'll never be able to cross the Shroud like that," and suddenly find that the player of the character to whom he said it must retest his next attempt to use *Embody*.

### **TIME CYCLE (1-5 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character's death is tied somehow to a repeating pattern of time. The Shroud's effective rating is one to four Traits higher for you (equal to the value of the Flaw), except for certain times when you can reach normally. If your character has a certain "hour of death" that works for her each day, this Flaw is worth its normal value. If she is limited to, say, only one day a month, add one Trait to the Flaw's value. You should tie this time to an actual event surrounding your character's death. If she died at sea, she might only be able to affect the world at the hours around high and low tide. If she was killed on a Sunday, she can only touch the world on Sundays.

### **ECHOES (2-5 TRAIT FLAW)**

Old wives' tales and superstitions about ghosts are true with respect to your character. When he's around, animals react strongly; open flames seem to hypnotize him; running water bars his passage, as does sea salt; his outline sometimes appears in fog. Sounds he makes can be recorded on tape, and he might even leave bits of ectoplasm on things that he touches in the living lands. Your character can't control this phenomenon; he just seems to reflect the area residents' beliefs regarding the behavior of ghosts naturally.

The value of this Flaw depends upon its severity. For two Traits, the character may just make the occasional bump in the night or cold spot. For five Traits, he slimes everything he touches, he causes animals to hiss and spit at him, and he can be driven out by exorcism rites and wards against the Evil Eye.

**LIMITED LIFESIGHT (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character has great difficulty seeing living things and their patterns. While most wraiths can sense the general patterns of emotion and life in people, you suffer a two-Trait resolution penalty in such challenges (*Oblivion*, p. 160). To your character, the living world is blurry and difficult to see, almost as if the shroud of death itself keeps him from tying back into the brilliance of the living.

**LIMITED DEATHSIGHT (2 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character's ability to discern patterns of injury and decay is quite limited. Maybe she rejects death so much that she can't sense it in others, or perhaps it's just not part of her conception of ghostly power. For whatever reason, you suffer a two-Trait resolution penalty in all challenges with Deathsight (*Oblivion*, p. 160).

**BOUND (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

Some place or event holds such significance to your character that he can't leave it. Maybe he can haunt only a house where he lived and died, or perhaps he haunts a particular tree. You cannot move more than 100 yards from this location, and you must take it as a Fetter.

Naturally, this Flaw can limit your story possibilities a great deal, so choose carefully! Should the character ever resolve this Fetter, you will be able to leave the area, thankfully.

**DISEMBODIED SHADOW (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

Most wraiths just have dark urges in their minds encouraging them to do nasty things. For your wraith, though, those urges manifest in the form of a small plasmic animal or object. It can manifest at odd times, even moving around to interact with things as if it has one Physical Trait. If it's disorporated by force, the Shadow simply dissolves back into your character's head to torment him internally. (You can't get away from it *that* easily!) While the Shadow exists in this external form, you must speak aloud to address it.

You should carry a prop or card that represents this disembodied Shadow. From time to time, your Storyteller or Shadowguide may rule that it's harassing someone or playing around with objects in the vicinity.

**UMBRAL CONNECTION (3 TRAIT FLAW)**

By some quirk of chance, your character's existence extends into the middle Umbra, the mirror of the vibrant living lands. Although he cannot see or affect the Umbra, spirits that wander there can see him as a pale shade. Werewolves or magicians can even use their magical powers to affect such an unfortunate character, binding him or banishing him while he remains unaware of what exactly is going on.

**DARK FATE (5 TRAIT FLAW)**

Your character is doomed not only to an existence more horrid than this wraithly one, but to a final end where all of his struggles come to naught. Worse still, he is aware of this fate through vague dreams, hunches or premonitions — or maybe just because some malicious demon or Shadow told him about it. At some point, his struggles will end, and he will go on to a fate more terrible than Oblivion, more repugnant than Spectrehood and more inevitable than death. Your Storyteller will design this final end, of which you may have occasional premonitions.

**UNKNOWN FETTER (1-5 TRAIT MERIT)**

Some connection ties your character to a place or object, but he has no idea what it is or why he's connected. Certain Arcanoi might help one to identify this Fetter, but otherwise it's a mystery. This Merit is actually quite handy, though, because nobody else is likely to

know of the Fetter either, and thus it's not at great risk of destruction by enemies. Then again, a wraith can't protect a Fetter if he doesn't know what it is.

The value of this Merit depends on the value and durability of the Fetter in question. If the Fetter is unlikely to suffer from outside intervention, it costs more to be unknown. If neither your character nor his enemies ever discover it, it may exist forever! A Fetter that's at risk of discovery or that is more easily disposable costs less.

### **COLD (2 TRAIT MERIT)**

Remember those tales of ghosts causing "cold spots" in haunted areas? They're true with your character. When he walks through an area, the temperature drops noticeably in the living lands. This drop can draw attention to the character's presence, and it could even be tracked and measured with heat-sensing gear. On the other hand, most mortals will only shiver and try to get away. By applying the effects of this Merit carefully, a ghost can encourage people to leave a haunt or to pay attention to him, or even communicate crudely with the living. (This cold spot is just a blob of low-temperature, though. The wraith with this Merit does not appear as a ghostly silhouette if viewed through infrared goggles.)

### **LUCKY (3 TRAIT MERIT)**

All right, your character can't be all *that* lucky — she's dead, after all — but Fortune does seem to favor her. You have three *Lucky* Traits that you can use for retests on any challenge. As usual, you can only use one such Trait on any given challenge. These Traits refresh each game session.

### **OTHER HALF (3 TRAIT MERIT)**

Some philosophers believe that each person is a half-soul, who can find completion only by discovering its other half in another person. Well, your character did just that. This other half is just about anyone still living — casual acquaintance, old friend, relative, whatever — but the depth of the connection is profound. Count this individual as one of your wraith's Fetters (no, not as a *free* one). Whenever the character is near this individual (within, say, the same room), he regains one Corpus Trait per hour. Any bonuses that you'd gain for acting on the person are doubled, making it very easy for your character to attune the individual and then use his Arcanoi on him.

You cannot take both this Merit and the Merit: *True Love*.

### **BRIGHT (4 TRAIT MERIT)**

Even the Shroud cannot staunch the intensity of your character's drives. His desire to exist beyond life is so powerful that he practically radiates his emotions into the living lands. (Or, perhaps he doesn't *intend* to do so, but for some reason, he finds that the Shroud doesn't keep him from interacting there.) You gain a one-Trait bonus to resolution of tests across the Shroud, and any mortal who cares to interact with your character gains a similar one-Trait bonus on the test to notice him. Furthermore, all mortals gain a free retest against the Fog when dealing with such a character. The emotions he generates are so intense that it impresses him on their minds and memories.

### **TRUE LOVE (4 TRAIT MERIT)**

At some point, in either life or death, your character found a true love. Memories of this joy buoy him in difficult situations, and the thought of his love is enough to keep him pressing on when the afterlife seems stacked against him. You gain a one-Trait bonus on all challenges in which your character is acting to directly maintain his relationship with his true love (for as long as his true love reciprocates the feeling).

You cannot take both this Merit and the Merit: *Other Half*.

**WEAK SHADOW (4 TRAIT MERIT)**

Your character's dark emotions have limited sway over him. Perhaps his superego is stronger than most, or maybe he's just a naturally temperate soul. Your character's Shadow must win or tie a Simple Test to enter Catharsis after spending five Angst, and it gains Angst from Dark Passions only if it wins a Simple Test, rather than getting a retest on a tie (see *Oblivion*, p. 170).

**TRUE FAITH (7 TRAIT MERIT)**

The strength of your character's religious convictions buoys her. She believes firmly that some sentient power guides and watches over the cosmos. Although this existence may not be the afterlife she was promised, her strength of character expresses itself in the unshakeable devotion to her principles. You receive the benefits of the Merit: *Code of Honor*, plus an added perk. Attempts to coerce your character to eschew or betray her code of honor — be they supernatural or attempted Social Challenges based on your character's Nature — fail automatically. You may also make a Simple Test after using an Eidolon Trait to put down your character's Shadow. If you win that test, you do not lose that Eidolon Trait (as you should, as per *Oblivion* p. 136).

# EVENT HORIZON: UPCOMING LARP EVENTS

## VAMPIRE EVENTS

### NORTHWESTERN US

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|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Blood Moon Social Club;<br>Las Vegas, NV<br><a href="http://www.bloodmoonsocialclub.com">www.bloodmoonsocialclub.com</a><br>(702) 877-1813       | Trails End Troupe;<br>Oregon City, OR<br><a href="mailto:TheChylde@aol.com">TheChylde@aol.com</a>                                                                                 |
| Ruby Rain Society;<br>Mountlake, WA<br>Tracy Soldan, <a href="mailto:tarot01@juno.com">tarot01@juno.com</a>                                      | Theatre of Roses; Portland, OR<br>Kewi-Cee Chu,<br><a href="mailto:kc@csua.berkely.edu">kc@csua.berkely.edu</a>                                                                   |
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| <b>MIDWESTERN US</b>                                                                                                                             |                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| Crimson Facade; Indianapolis, IN<br>Paul M. Starr, <a href="mailto:tophat@indy.net">tophat@indy.net</a><br>(317) 466-9064                        | All Seattle Camarilla-run games<br><a href="mailto:seattledc@hotmail.com">seattledc@hotmail.com</a><br><a href="http://www.lovelys.com/seattlecam">www.lovelys.com/seattlecam</a> |

## EVENT HORIZON: UPCOMING LARP EVENTS

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(617) 576-1097

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**EAST CENTRAL US**

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Bay of Blood; Baltimore, MD  
Ed Adelsberger  
edla@erols.com  
www.geocities.com/Colosseum/  
Sideline/5931/

Blood Masks:  
Cincinnatus By Night;  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Brian-Joseph Baker,  
Elomae@aol.com  
513-777-7778

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**EVENT HORIZON: UPCOMING LARP EVENTS**

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The Dark Capital Domain Chris Herr, mephis@juno.com (703) 273-5530	Mudge Lounge; Pittsburgh, PA cam@andrew.cmu.edu
Das Dae'Mar; State Capitol Complex, WV WachuDancR@aol.com	A Stake in the Heartland II; Northeast Ohio Ryan S. Cope, cedric@neo.rr.com (330) 923-4483
Dayton: Valley of the Shadow; Dayton, Ohio Lee Highfield schlgrmstr@aol.com 937-222-2330	Shadows on the Mall; Washington, D.C. Abigail Moore Shoemaker, ams@gwis2.circ.gwu.edu members.aol.com/dellacruz/SotM/ Index.html
House of the Unknown; Pittsburgh, PA cam@andrew.cmu.edu	Towson LARP; Baltimore, MD Ryan Sachse, tsachse@ycp.edu
The Most Deadly Game; Baltimore, MD Joseph Palser, palserj@columbia.aim-smart.com	Vitae Aeternus; Hyattsville, MD Royal Connell, underdog@clark.net

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**SOUTHEAST U.S.**

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Club Seraphim; Norfolk, VA <a href="http://www.angelfire.com/va">www.angelfire.com/va</a> ClubSeraphim <a href="mailto:club_seraphim@hotmail.com">club_seraphim@hotmail.com</a>	New Orleans Nightfall; New Orleans, LA Mark Leberecht, <a href="mailto:Frost@acadiacom.net">Frost@acadiacom.net</a> (504) 943-9814
Ft. Lauderdale; Ft. Lauderdale, FL <a href="mailto:PrintError@mindless.com">PrintError@mindless.com</a>	Night's Children; Atlanta, GA Jason Norred, <a href="mailto:hemlock@mindspring.com">hemlock@mindspring.com</a> <a href="http://larp.digitribe.org">http://larp.digitribe.org</a>
Macon by Night; Macon, GA Shonda Slaughter, <a href="mailto:LucindaWst@aol.com">LucindaWst@aol.com</a> <a href="http://www.cityofshadows.org">http://www.cityofshadows.org</a>	

Seraphim Saloon; Norfolk, VA  
club\_seraphim@hotmail.com  
<http://www.angelfire.com/va/>  
ClubSeraphim

Shades of Pale Society;  
Chattanooga, TN  
Laura Middleton,  
shades@larp.com  
(423) 876-4561

House of the Sanguine Moon;  
Tampa, FL Hope Summerall,  
zandria@hotmail.com

Athens by Night; Athens, GA  
Storyteller List:  
abn-st@math.gatech.edu

Blood Moon; Charleston, SC  
Ian Betts,  
alisterlegare@hotmail.com

Charletonus Ab Noctum;  
Charleston, SC  
Ian Betts,  
alisterlegare@hotmail.com

Eclipsed Moon; Charleston, SC  
Ian Betts,  
alisterlegare@hotmail.com

Kindred of the Shadows;  
Auburn, AL  
boudrej@mail.auburn.edu

Shadows of Vulcan;  
Birmingham, AL  
Sarah Riggs,  
coordinator@shadowsofvulcan.com

Libertas Aeterna;  
Charlotte, NC  
Tim Harris,  
harrist@cs.winthrop.edu

## GAROU

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### NORTHEAST U.S.

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Apocalypse Rochester,  
Rochester NY  
Chris Manos,  
cmanos@worldnet.att.net

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### NORTHWEST U.S.

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Ruby Rain Society; Edmonds, WA  
Tracy Soldan, tarot01@juno.com

Tacoma; Tacoma, WA  
sheperd@darkdestiny.com  
(253) 581-8728

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**EVENT HORIZON: UPCOMING LARP EVENTS**

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Theatre of Roses;  
Battleground, WA  
Kwei-Cee Chu,  
kc@csua.berkeley.edu

Of No Concern; Eugene, OR

Jmcloud@gladstone.uoregon.edu

Olde Guard; Anchorage, AK  
Tom Alexander,  
nightstalker@customcpu.com

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**EASTCENTRAL US**

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The Sept of the Awakening;  
Washington D.C.  
Mindy Williams,  
terhunepayson@juno.com

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**NORTHCENTRAL US**

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Knights of Rage;  
Colorado Springs, CO  
Dan Page, AllmityBob@aol.com  
(719) 447-0399

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**SOUTHCENTRAL US**

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Crimson Tear Society;  
Jonesboro, AR  
Tom McFarland,  
thomasmc@fastdata.net  
(870) 931-0959

Fourth Tower Falling; Dallas, TX  
Matt Ragan,  
matt\_ragan@hotmail.com  
(972) 788-1895

Bryan/College Station;  
Bryan/College Station, TX  
Ken Reinertson,  
khr7057@unix.tamu.edu

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**SOUTHEAST US**

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House of the Sanguine Moon;  
Tampa, FL  
Hope Summerall,  
zandria@hotmail.com

Onyx Illuminatus; Charleston, SC  
Ian Betts,  
alisterlegare@hotmail.com

**SOUTHWEST US**

Rage Against the Darkness;  
Tempe, AZ  
Collin Toohey,  
[Cybertec@cyberdude.com](mailto:Cybertec@cyberdude.com)  
(602) 942-4994

Song of Sonora; Tucson, AZ  
Kevin Lynch II,  
[KWLynch@aol.com](mailto:KWLynch@aol.com)  
(520) 722-2688

**OTHERS (UNSPECIFIED AND MIXED GAMES)**

Dark Carpathia, Portland, Maine  
[http://home.maine.rr.com/  
darkcarpathia/darkcarp.html](http://home.maine.rr.com/darkcarpathia/darkcarp.html)

East of the River, Vernon, CT  
D. Scott Stewart,  
[storyteller@eotr.org](mailto:storyteller@eotr.org)

Fortress of the Mind's Eye;  
Lansing, MI  
Aaron Ledger,  
[ledgeraa@pilot.msu.edu](mailto:ledgeraa@pilot.msu.edu)  
(517) 372-1452

Imagination Shop Theater Guild  
Fridays: Sacramento, CA  
Alternate Saturdays:  
Santa Cruz, CA  
Sundays: Santa Rosa, CA  
Pete Magnetti,  
[ISTG\\_MAIN@hotmail.com](mailto:ISTG_MAIN@hotmail.com)  
(916) 369-6948

More Than Night:  
Portland, Oregon  
(Independent game that sometimes playtests upcoming supplements)  
Bruce Baugh, [bruce-baugh@sff.net](mailto:bruce-baugh@sff.net)

Nox Imperium; Longview, WA  
[katzmeow@kalama.com](mailto:katzmeow@kalama.com)

Of Shadow & Light,  
Cincinnati, Ohio  
Brian-Joseph Baker,  
[bakebjb@email.uc.edu](mailto:bakebjb@email.uc.edu)  
(513) 777-7778

Trails End Troupe; Salem, OR  
[Coordinatrix@hotmail.com](mailto:Coordinatrix@hotmail.com)

United San Diego; San Diego, CA  
Dennis "Tristan" Hanson,  
[Dollphynn@aol.com](mailto:Dollphynn@aol.com)