

The World of
NECROSCOPETM



By Ed Bolme
Introduction by Brian Lumley

NECROSCOPE

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Malediction

We braved the Hyborean miasmas to ask Brian Lumley, creator of the *Necroscope* saga, to write us an introduction. Instead, we received the following from someone — or something — else!

To you I am like ...

... I am like an open book. It is as if you hold in your hands a tome of tombs. A story of life (well, of sorts) and of death, and a nightmarish place between the two called undeath! A tale of things seen ... and of others best left unseen, left unperceived by the five pitiful senses of mundane men, but all too real in the cringing minds of certain metaphysicians. This is your introduction — we might even say your *malediction* — to a secret and terrifying world. And perhaps the most monstrous thing of all is that it is this world, *your* world —

— Well, for now at least.

Your green and pleasant planet of field and forest, sea and sky, morning sunshine and evensong. Your home, the home of Mankind since that first evolutionary leap down from the trees and up from the ape ... when the first of anew species walked proud and upright on the land and called it his own, vowing to make it safe. A world where Man would hold dominion over all.

Oh really?

Dominion over all?

Safe...?

Oh, there were wars, of course. What, a world of intelligent, lustful, greedy, territorial creatures such as men, without petty little squabbles? Unthinkable! "I think, therefore I think I'll lie, cheat, steal, rape, murder, anything to get to the top of the heap. I want more, bigger, better. I want money, position, power, pleasure. I want total domination of everyone, everything, forever! I think — therefore no one else is allowed to!" And deep down inside, almost every one of you is thinking the same thing. You called it evolution: "the survival of the fittest."

But *are* you? Well perhaps you are, for now ...

In this, your world some two thousand years ago, the greatest ever Force for Good way paying the price of mankind's sins; a great light was going out so that the light of faith might be lit. Perhaps it was simply a matter of balance or synchronicity — or the greatest imaginable irony — that at the same time in the parallel world of Sunside/Starside, even as *your* Force for Good was dying, *their* Force for Evil was coming into being.

Bred of misted, forbidden swamps at the ends of the world, it was a force that should have, would have, died stillborn but for men. A parasitic creature, the vampire was a simple, or perhaps not so simple, leech. It had little intelligence, only an insatiable lust for blood and an incredible knack for survival. On the

evolutionary scale it was little more than a zero. Crossbreed a starfish with an Earth-leech, you might find certain comparisons. The leech lives on the blood of its host, and the starfish will survive and grow, even when dismembered limb from limb; indeed, each piece will grow a new starfish! Little to fear from such creatures. The leech is an ugly thing, true, and there are certain species of poisonous starfish; but they are things of nature, and men understand them.

But the vampire leech of Sunside/Starside, which clung to the *inside*, not the outside of its host, was ... different. It evolved differently. Survival of the fittest, aye.

A parasite, it *sensed* that a strong host made for survival. A blood-beast, it knew enough not to take too much from its host, but make him last, make *him* take the blood it needed from lesser creatures! With little or no intelligence of its own, it manufactured the chemical elements to enhance the performance of its host — not his intelligence, but his *performance!* A fox with a leech was a deadly hunter; but only in the swamp, the leech's territory. Likewise the wolf. Likewise the great bat. But no matter how strong or wily the host creature, eventually he would die. The sucking swamp would get him, or a leech with a fresher, more powerful host, or his own creature would suck him dry when the hunting was bad. And so the evolution of the vampire leech had come to a standstill ...

... Until foolhardy men ventured into the swamps. For in Sunside/Starside there were — there are — men; and just like the men of this world, your world, they have the power of reasoned thought. They think, therefore —?

Therefore, they made the perfect hosts for the leeches of the vampire swamps! They were the next great evolutionary leap forward for the vampire ... and a stumbling, staggering pace to the rear for mankind.

Picture a man with a leech, with metamorphic, self-repairing flesh, with all his emotions magnified tenfold by his parasite, his senses enhanced to supernatural proportions, his lust for life, for everything, like a fire burning from within. But remember that he is a man, with all of Man's intelligence! And now, since he already has the Devil's attributes, now give him the bat-like ears, the scarlet eyes, the lying split tongue — *now give him the very face of Satan!*

Why not, since Lord Shaitan was the very first vampire?

Thus in the world of Sunside/Starside, it was the dawning of the age of the Great Vampire, the dawn of the Wamphyri! All they required was a route — a way, a Gate — from their world into *yours*, and an Age of Dark Legend could commence here too. And there was just such a Gate ...

The first Lords of the Wamphyri in their high aeries saw the hemisphere of cold white light on the barren boulder plains as a gate to hell: for no one ever returned from it. They punished transgressors by tossing them bodily into the hell-lands Gate ... which terminated in your world in Romania: the source of all vampire legends. Mercifully for you such punishment was rare.

Mercifully, too, your world had its own protections. The sun was not shut out by high mountains; the nights were short, allowing the vampires little time to establish themselves; the people were warriors, used to fighting off "alien" incursions. And the invaders from Sunside/Starside quickly learned that in this world they would not be tolerated. If men were to discover them, believe in them, then they would hunt them down and destroy them utterly.

And it soon became a password, a maxim among the Wamphyri, that: "longevity is synonymous with anonymity," from which time forward they were loathe to bring themselves into prominence.

But they were here, and they are here still ...

However, and again mercifully, evolution has no favorites *except* the fittest. And *homo sapiens*, Man, is an extremely able species. Just as the Wamphyri are

talented, so were — so are — certain men, and there are minds among you that have moved forward along with your bodies. You are no more the ape, and your thinking now is not so much physical as metaphysical. There are ESPers among you. Only *be grateful*, that some of them are good!

You, for instance ...

Enough! I grow weary. I feel the salts of the earth gnawing at these ancient bones of mine. You, Necroscope, have called to me in my grave, begging me to reveal these secrets out of time. No payment for me, save the "pleasure" of our conversation itself. Very well, it is done, I have played my part. Now I would ask a boon of you.

What? Dig me up? Bring me forth again into your world? Did you think I would ask that? Oh, *ha-ha-ha!* No, no, nothing so venturesome! What? But there's nought left of me save crumbling bones, for I've lain here long and long! Besides which, I know that you're no fool ...

No simply this:

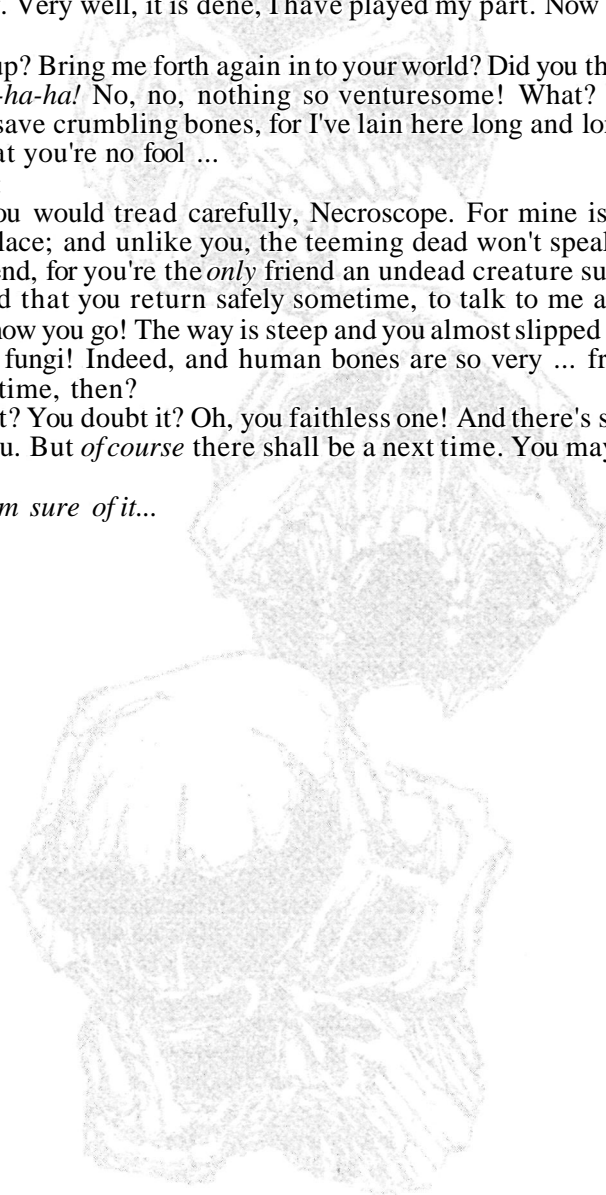
I would that you would tread carefully, Necroscope. For mine is a cold and infinitely lonely place; and unlike you, the teeming dead won't speak to me. So step wary, my friend, for you're the *only* friend an undead creature such as I may have! And I would that you return safely sometime, to talk to me again.

Ah, see! Mind how you go! The way is steep and you almost slipped in the mush of those decaying fungi! Indeed, and human bones are so very ... fragile.

Until the next time, then?

Eh? What's that? You doubt it? Oh, you faithless one! And there's so much I've yet to reveal to you. But *of course* there shall be a next time. You may be sure of it—

— *Even as I am sure of it...*





Introduction



Things Are Not What They Seem

Welcome home. I hope you don't mind that there are a few things crawling around, but don't worry, you probably won't see them. At least, not for very long.

This is the world of the Necroscope, our world, and in these pages you'll get to know a little more about the true nature of reality than perhaps you want to. For all our posturings, for all our hopes and fears, for all the neon and glamour of Main Street, the world is a very grey place indeed.

Beneath the thin veneer of civilization lies the realm of the mind. Arcane knowledge — psionic manifestation — some would even call it magic. To those whose minds can breach the ethereal, it is called by many names. Among the Americans and English, it's "a Talent," as if it's something they learned by themselves. In Asia it's "the Blessing." Asian psychics don't seem to understand the difference between a blessing and a curse; or perhaps they don't even acknowledge that there *is* a difference. Russians call it simply "the Gift," although only a Russian can truly understand the melancholy implications that the name carries.

By whatever name it's called, psionic ability is a two-edged sword, for while it gives you power beyond the ken of most of humanity, it forces you also to understand and embrace things about which you'd rather not know. And although those with The Gift practice their craft, they do so carefully, avoiding the burning gaze of the public, a beast of billions that can turn from scoffing unbelievers to teratophobic hunters in the blink of a frightened eye. Theirs is a desperate mission, to save the world without its ever finding out and protect it from others with the power who would conquer it. Those gifted few whose power extends to encompass the globe, like gossamer tendrils from Washington D.C., from the Kremlin, and even from the shadowy trails of the Amazon.

Even those engaged in the service of their countries find it difficult to recalibrate their view of the world to accommodate psionic talent. Everywhere else, all around them, the world is acutely normal, compatriots and loved ones blithely unaware, and they are somehow monsters, on the outside looking in, and praying never to be noticed for what they really are. Their knowledge is a terrible burden, but if they only knew what darker creatures slither beneath the veil of normalcy, if ever they met one of the things that oozes beneath the skin of their neighbor, it might be too much. And yet they *know* it might be too much, and because of that they dedicate themselves to protecting their fellow countrymen with a devotion that knows no limits. Because if one agent goes, that's one fewer left to stop the Opposition.

This, then, is the world of the Necroscope. Our world, the modern world which spins about you in its orbit about the sun, is but the bright and bitter outer crust. Pierce the shell, and you shall find the loathsome things which crawl beneath. Turn the page, and begin to pierce that shell.

"Are you sure you're ready?"

— Harry Keogh

About This Book

The World of Necroscope is one of the *MasterBook* series of games, and it contains all the background material and advice that you'll need to adventure in this uncomfortably twisted version of reality. To begin play, you'll also need the *MasterBook* rule book, two ten-sided dice, and whatever other accessories you like. You do not need the *MasterDeck* to play *Necroscope*, but we recommend you use it: the wild cards can throw a monkey wrench into the best-laid plans of the players ... or their enemies.

The book contains the rules addenda to adapt the *MasterBook* system to *Necroscope* role-playing, full descriptions of what the world is really like, and an in-depth look at psionics. Notes on tone, setting and adventuring are included for the gamemaster, as well as a short adventure.

Important Note

Throughout this book, the terms ESP, psionics, psychic power, psi talent, gifted and others are used interchangeably. We just thought you'd prefer not to see the acronym ESP over and over and over again, because we'll be talking about it a lot.

Suggested Reading

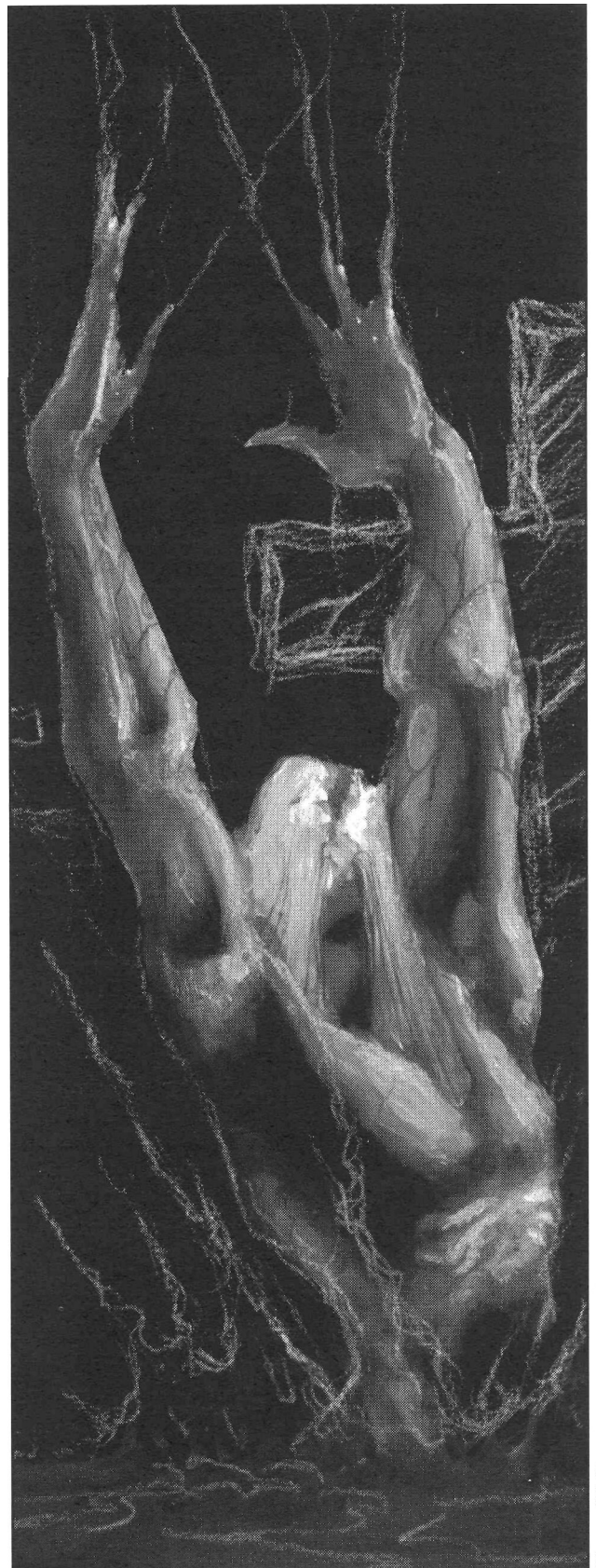
Necroscope is based on Brian Lumley's vision of secret horror of the same name. There are five books in the *Necroscope* series:

- Necroscope*
- Necroscope II: Wamphyri!*
- Necroscope III: The Source*
- Necroscope IV: Deadpeak*
- Necroscope V: Deadspawn*

There is also a second series of books based in the same world — although "worlds" might be more accurate a term. As of this writing, there have been three books released in the second series:

- Blood Brothers*
- The Last Aerie*
- Bloodwars*

Obviously, we recommend heartily that you read these books to familiarize yourself with the universe you are about to explore. Likewise, we'd suggest that you buy this book as well as its future supplements to complement your knowledge of Brian Lumley's work.



Thomas O'Neill

One

The World of the Necroscope

"You have plumbed depths deep as space, Boris Dragosani, and I know your bravery is greater than that of any cosmonaut. Science fiction to the contrary, there are no monsters where they go. But the frontiers you cross are the very haunts of horror! I know these things ..."

— Gregor Borowitz

The *Necroscope* novels are set in the 1970s and 1980s. Our world, our history, but with a bit of a darker twist. Beneath the pages of the history books lie dark creatures: the Wamphyri, powerful nearly-immortal beings driven by heady lusts and fueled by blood. The Wamphyri have been dying out for many long centuries now, hunted by desperate, vengeful humans. Those few who are left are now in hiding, blending as seamlessly as possible into modern society or lairing in places far from human settlement.

Although in older times those in power sought to eliminate the Wamphyri by striking all knowledge of them from official records, stories of the Wamphyri have survived and been passed down for generations. These stories are now legends, much the worse for the retelling; the facts they once held have been obscured or inadvertently altered, the raw terrible truth has been replaced with the guise of a dark fairy tale. In these tales they are called vampires. And when we mention a vampire, we think of a high-browed gentleman with pointy teeth and a long silk-and-velvet cloak who bites the necks of fair maidens.

Nothing could be further from the truth.

Take the lust of a "classic" vampire, the relentlessness of a hungry wolf, and the devious corrupt intellect of The Devil himself, then wrap them in a superhuman shell, and you still won't have a creature as terrible as a Lord or Lady of the Wamphyri. Ah, but there are things you must first learn about this world before we teach you the secrets of the Wamphyri; there is other knowledge you must learn.



Death and the Dead

"It's a terribly lonely place in your grave. I've felt it in them: a loneliness they don't even know is there — until they waken to my touch!"

— Boris Dragosani

Shakespeare knew not how right he was when he wrote of sleep and death being but one and the same state of being. And yet, almost four centuries since

his death, you can be certain he knows now. He was absolutely right.

Humans are made in two parts; the body and the spirit. The material in our bodies changes constantly on a molecular level: we eat, we grow, we sweat, our skin peels off, we void waste, and we eat some more to replenish all that we have lost. Our bodies are constantly changing, yet they ever remain the same; the clothing of the spirit. In life we are bound to our bodies inextricably. It so happens that we are also bound to them in death.

Put bluntly, when we die, nothing happens. Nothing.

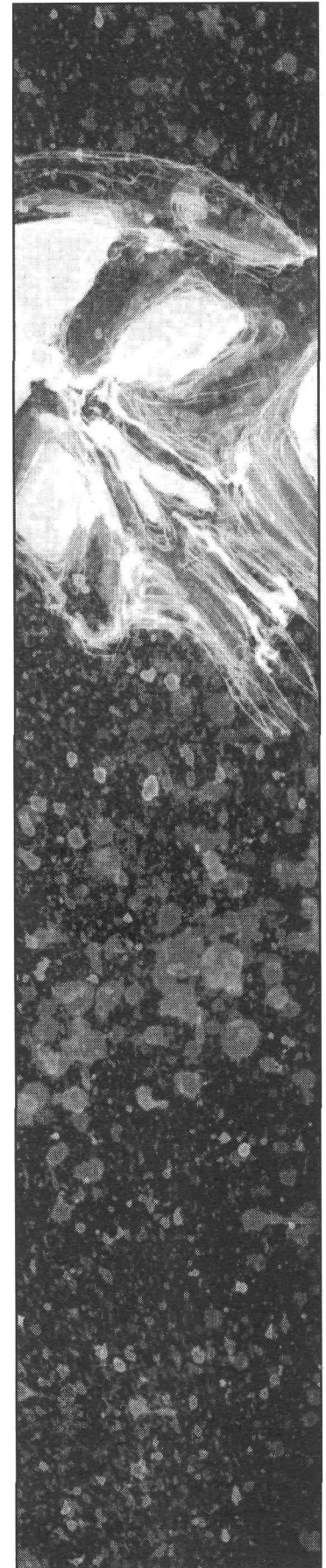
When alive, we can think and move and act and talk. And what's the difference between a live body and a dead one? Well, a dead one can't sing and dance. Unfortunately, that's about the extent of it. The spirit goes nowhere; it remains with the body, tied to it in death as in life, and, for most of us in the Western world, spends the rest of time six feet underground with not a whole heck of a lot to do and an eternity of time in which to do it.

Not that this is necessarily a torment. What the dead do with their time is entirely up to them. In fact, many of the dead shut themselves down, turn off their minds and sleep permanently. Those who suffered in life, abused as children or tortured as adults, find the grave a restful place where they cannot be reached, cannot be hurt, cannot be disturbed. These dead exult in their peace, in having nothing but cool, quiet isolation in which to enjoy their complete lack of pain. To them, an eternity of nothing is as close to heaven as they can imagine.

Isolation is heaven for others, too. The great minds of history — Pythagoras, da Vinci, Möbius, Mozart — continue to pursue the arts and sciences which drove them in life, for the hungers of the mind do not cease in the grave, but are made sharper still by the lack of distraction from the physical body. Einstein had seven identical suits, so that he would not have to spend any of his precious thought deciding what to wear. How much more could he dedicate himself to his pursuits if he never had to worry about eating, bathing, sleeping, trotting down to the store for some aspirin or even scratching his elbow? As of this writing, he's had forty years to perfect the theory of relativity and discover the unified field theory. Do you think he's achieved it yet? Remember, forty years to the dead is easily worth 150 years to the living, once you discount for sleep, weekends, and free time. And what of Mozart? Over 40 symphonies he composed in his short life. How many more in the last two centuries? The dead can be a wealth of valuable, nay, not just valuable, but indeed priceless information.

For others, death is no paradise; they create for themselves their own version of Hell. Jack the Ripper, wherever he is, certainly has invented more sinister, more vicious ways of disposing of his hated ladies of the evening. Genghis Khan dreams of conquest, and certainly since his death his dreams and schemes have gotten more violent, more clever, and are driven by a fierce desire which, in his grave, he knows cannot be realized. Need we say anything at all about Hitler, Stalin, Caius Caligula? Whatever hatred or illness possessed sick and vile people in life has taken over their soul completely after death. The dead can be a veritable grimoire for vile scheming. Priceless information for those to whom the world is worthless.

But for most of the dead, for the rank and file of public life, death, though not unpleasant, is not particularly great, either. Those alert to their situation find themselves with no one to talk to, no company. Those fortunate enough never to catch on to their state must simply bear this feeling that a vital, intangible *something* is somehow missing. The dead exist in total isolation. Limbo. The netherworld. And so these masses lie fallow in the earth, and wait. They wait for anyone to talk to them. And no one ever comes. Ever. The graveyards are full of thousands of lonely people, none of whom can talk with each other. And if these people are without hope, how much worse for the sailors buried at sea, resting, abandoned, at the bottom? The pharaohs in their pyramidal tombs, knowing that all their worldly possessions lie about them, untouchable?





Thomas O'Neill

As mentioned, the spirit remains tied to the body after death. Though the body rots, the spirit remains, because the essence of the person remains in the soil. Yes, it changes over time from flesh to soil, but whatever molecules made up the corpse at the moment of death are the body. Just like the body processed material in life and it made no difference, likewise it matters not to the spirit if dead flesh and bones are replaced with equally inert earth. That's where the body is, and that's where the spirit remains.

Extrasensory Perception

"The story I have to tell is ... strange."

— Harry Keogh

Of course, although they are in their graves, not all the dead are isolated from the real world, for, unknown to most, paranormal talents are very real indeed. Psionics are the powers of the mind, the very soul itself, and whatever those powers may be also follow their practitioners into the grave. Down there, buried beneath the earth, work some of the most powerful psychic talents of all time, untold years of practice beneath their belts. Somewhere, certainly, is a telepath, penetrating the mind of every passerby; sharing in the grief of the bereaved, keeping tabs on the passing days by the thoughts of every person who wanders near, learning people's innermost thoughts.

Telepathy is but one manifestation of psionic talent, a rare but potentially powerful gift. There are others gifts, as well: clairvoyance, healing, necromancy, necroscopy, prescience, psychokinetics, scrying, seeing, sensitivity, and shamanism, just to name a few. Those blessed — or perhaps cursed — with these talents live in a world different from our own. Theirs is a world filled with the mind, and haunted by the darkest thoughts and imaginings anyone has ever had. Their awareness is expanded, and cannot help but embrace things which the normal people around them choose to ignore. Someone sensitive to nuclear power cannot help but be continuously aware of the vile throbbing of a nearby power plant. Those who can read the undercurrents of emotions know the dark

fantasies we all play out in our minds while smiling at the very people we hate. Yet neither of these ESPers can do anything about these burdens. There is no one they can talk to, no therapy they can seek, for to admit to the existence of their paranormal perceptions would bring the unwanted light of public scrutiny to bear upon them.

Yes, although those who have talents (or at least understand how to use their talent effectively) are few indeed, they guard their minds carefully. No one lets anyone else know of the strange talents they possess, neither parents nor spouses nor children. Fortunately, most intimates desire not to know these things, either. Were a psychokinetic's husband to see their priceless Ming vase fall then stop abruptly six inches above the floor, his psychokinetic wife would have an easy time convincing him that he had hallucinated the incident — the image of the vase about to hit was so strong that his brain didn't register the fact that it miraculously bounced. He'd much rather embrace the unbelievable than to face that his wife was a psychic oddity.

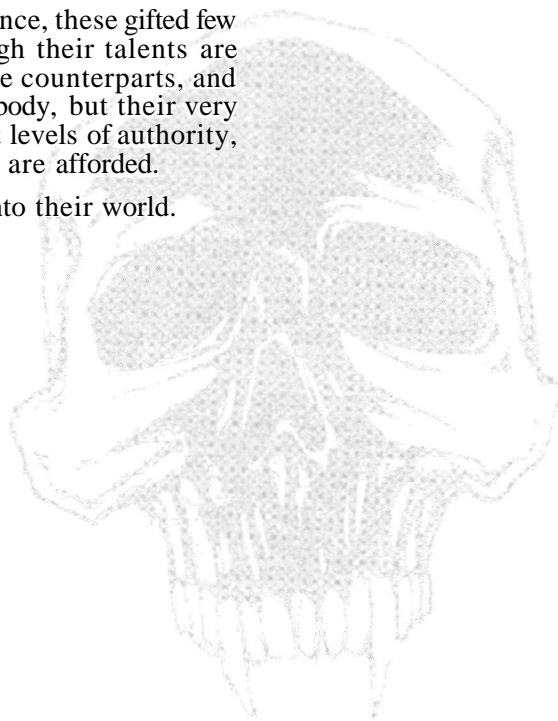
ESPionage

"He knew that by now his talent shouldn't surprise him any more, but it always did—"

No one yet knows exactly how or why extrasensory perception and paranormal phenomena work, although in certain nations secret task forces have been assigned to probe these mysteries. In the meantime, like primitive humans who did not understand fire but still knew how to use it, these agencies give ESPers an opportunity to use their unique abilities, train and hone their minds, and serve the greater good while doing so. Yet even among these agencies, disbelief is high, bewilderment common. Part of this is residual surprise on the part of the agents to discover that they are not the only ones who have these strange potentials, but the greater part of it is due to the fact that even these agencies, government-sponsored bureaus, must keep themselves secret from the public, and even from the vast majority of the government itself.

So it is that in the deniable world of extrasensory surveillance, these gifted few play a critical role in the defense of their nations. Although their talents are unreal, their dedication is every bit as real as their mundane counterparts, and their danger even more extreme; they risk not only their body, but their very souls. And yet their existence is denied by even the highest levels of authority, robbing them of whatever diplomatic protection the others are afforded.

Theirs is indeed a secret and vicious war. Enter, now, into their world.



Two

Character Generation

Necroscope takes place in a modern real-world setting; that's Planet Earth in the late 20th Century for those of you who've been watching too much MTV. The characters themselves tend to be exceptional people, although their unusual abilities are slowly becoming understood by the shadowy science of parapsychology. The following rules help achieve this balance.

To create a character for *The World of Necroscope*, turn to page 25 of the *MasterBook* and follow the steps there. You'll want to refer back to this chapter for Advantages, Compensations and Skills.

Advantages and Disadvantages

"Remember, Boris Dragosani, there are those in the KGB who would eviscerate us — if only they could find a way!"

— Gregor Borowitz

Each character can choose Advantages up to the following limits: 3CI, 2CII, 1CIII. They are not required to select this many advantages, nor in fact are they required to choose any at all, but for each one they choose, they must choose an equivalent Compensation. (If you want a high-power game, you can eliminate the CIII compensations.)

All of the advantages in Column I and Column II can be used under most circumstances. Paranormal abilities (the ESP skills) are considered Column III Advantages. Most of the other CIII Advantages can be used, although Special Abilities, Special Effects (except for ESP), and Supranormal Knowledge are strictly disallowed. There are no restrictions on Compensations; as long as the idea is carefully developed and rational, any Compensation can be used.

As described below, the characters can be a part of a country's paranormal espionage organization; this is not counted as an advantage or a disadvantage. ESPionage agents have a job, get assignments, and receive equipment from their government. As a result, ESPionage agents cannot use the Advantage of Wealth (any Column) or the Compensations of Debt, Employed, or Poverty. The Advantage of Equipment can be used; it gives the agent either experimental gear (like a psi detector or something similar) or equipment which the heavily-funded conventional agencies get but which is not normally available to the ESPionage branch (like a collapsible assault rifle or a personal jet pack).

Compensations can also be applied to a character's ESP skill. Ordinarily, strengths and weaknesses of an ESP skill directly impact the difficulty or effect of the successful use of the skill (see Extrasensory Perception, Chapter Four for full details). However, characters may opt to have Compensations (or, with gamemaster approval, Advantages) impact their ESP skill instead. Price and

Burn-Out are obviously designed to be applied in this manner. Advantage Flaw can be used to cover those peculiarities not easily covered by the SFX rules. Handicap or Quirk can even be applied to ESP skills; one such example would be an ESPer who really doesn't believe his unique talent works, or one who can't make his ESP skill work whenever he wants it to. Granted, applying Compensations on ESP skills instead of accomplishing the same effect with the SFX rules robs the character of the chance to reduce the DN of his skill for the trouble, but it does take care of a Compensation that would otherwise bring on additional problems.

ESPionage

"Harry, no one else is going to know about you. That's a promise. You know who I am, so now I'll tell you what I am and what I do for a living. More importantly, I'll tell you about the people I work with."

— Sir Keenan Gormley

We recommend that you have your players' characters be members of one of the national ESPionage agencies. This gives you, as gamemaster, an easy vehicle to give them adventures to pursue; as employees of the government, they must follow their orders, and these orders could take them anywhere. It also gives structure to the game world beyond the scope of the adventures themselves, what with superiors, the public, and current political events to worry about.

But what does an ESPionage agent do? To illustrate, consider the modern air force. For many years wars were fought without them, but now they are seen as indispensable. Their primary purpose? Their first purpose is to defeat the enemy air force. Once the enemy air force is destroyed, the air force can concentrate on attacking enemy ground forces. In essence, this parallels the purpose of the E-branches: they are there to counter enemy E-branches, and support conventional intelligence where possible.

In an E-branch, much of their time is spent monitoring the enemy service. Strong telepaths spend hours trying to worm their way into the minds of an



Ron Kulp

enemy ESPer. Spotters roam the nation's cities, shadowing a foreign ESPer. Pyrokinetics or shamans perform assassinations, carefully planned to look like accidents to the public, if not to the enemy ESPers.

E-branches must also endeavor to build themselves a reputation for reliability among those who are privy to their existence. To this end, sensitives track nuclear vessels, telepaths and empaths ply their trade at diplomatic receptions, prescients work to protect public officials, seers make predictions of the future which are sealed until they come to pass, and sometimes necromancers pry the secrets from slain criminal suspects or enemy agents.

Field work is also important, whether pursuing enemy ESPers or trying to crack large crime rings, E-branch agents are constantly trying to prove their utility — without, of course, revealing their existence. As an ESPionage agent, characters can expect to be sent around the world to combat the efforts of the Opposition. Foreign psi operatives are active throughout the world, trying to spread their own power, and while they balk at overt murder in public, they will not pass up a chance to take out whomever they can. And rumor has it there are creatures far more terrible than mere humans to be met, but as yet most ESPers laugh at such hysterical folklore tales.

The Short End of the Stick

"As is the case with so many experimental, unproven projects, their funding was of a low priority, came out of 'petty cash.'"

Most of the paranormal covert operations organizations in the world are small, weak, and under-funded, the only exception being the Agency for the Development of Paranormal Espionage in the Soviet Union, and though that branch is well-funded at the behest of the Premier himself, those therein must nonetheless contend with dangerous domestic political struggles and maintain secrecy even among the intelligence community.

Most paranormal agents operate without the full support of the government they defend, and informed consent is certainly nothing that any government has really given to the operations. Few if any of those in power actually believe that parapsychic phenomena are real, and those who know about the ESPionage experiments only allow such "dabbling" to continue so long as it does not consume a noticeable portion of the budget appropriations. As a result, most paranormal agents are stuck in second-rate offices and endure mediocre pay. In fact, the only place where the ESP branches receive adequate support is in security; the public embarrassment that would follow an expose on government-funded fortune tellers and horoscopes causes the governments to provide their psychic agents with the best in security equipment. If the embarrassing truth is never leaked, then the politicians never have to worry about being connected to such a boondoggle. The agents themselves see their work as critical, of course, as do those few believers who lobby hard to keep their activities afloat. For them, the security, though given for the wrong reasons, is nevertheless a welcome respite from their otherwise limpid support.

Worse yet, the ESP agencies are typically unofficial branches, offshoots grafted onto the main force and not extant in any official degree. Most ESPionage agents are not even on the rolls of the service, but instead receive a stipend as a "consultant." They do not normally have any official identification, no badges they can flash when they arouse the ire of the law. After all, the intelligence communities make a business of keeping track of all their agents, and having some unknown face flash an official badge will certainly call down embarrassing questions upon those who support the psi branch. They can call on their parent organization for aid at times, especially when they need to be bailed or there is a need to cover up their activities. In fact, cover-ups are guaranteed to have the shortest response time; again to help the government avoid those uncomfortable questions about witches and Tarot cards on the payroll.

Background

"It's my business to know these things."

— Sir Keenan Gormley

Despite the fact that an ESPer belongs to an intelligence agency, some other career or occupation had to fill the character's time before their country's E-branch recruited them. What did they do beforehand? What interests them? How did they discover their paranormal ability, and what (if anything) did they do with that knowledge?

This sort of character development can lead into a personality, likely skills for the character to have, and can easily incorporate Advantages and Compensations. Even the method by which a character was recruited can affect how the player runs the ESPer... especially if the players are Russian ADPE agents, and have been recruited against their will by Gregor Borowitz. After all, in the Soviet Union, no one refuses when they're volunteered.

The sample characters (starting on page 127) come from a wide variety of backgrounds. If you have difficulties coming up with a past life and an explanation for how your character got into ESPionage, you might wish to peruse them.

Team Membership

"And yes, we are going to be friends. That's because we need each other, and because we in turn are needed."

— Sir Keenan Gormley

In the hidden world of international ESPionage, powerful organizations both large and small are at work. The Soviets' well-developed Agency for the Development of Paranormal Espionage (an operation independent of the KGB), the UK's shadowy E-Branch (later renamed INTESP), and the USA's cryptically-named Affiliate are all active to some extent. There are secret societies as well, who have haunted these mysterious grounds for centuries. This is war, undeclared, unknown to most, but a cold, cruel war nonetheless. That being the case, all your characters should be on the same side. Have your players select where they'd like to cast their allegiance collectively. Once that's done, they can select varying levels of Advantages and Compensations related to that organization. They don't even have to choose any, but their loyalty must still be with the group.

We don't recommend that you as the gamemaster allow the characters to be members of different agencies, unless said agencies are very closely related. It would be okay to have characters from the Affiliate and West Germany's Buro P cooperating, or the KGB and Bulgaria's experimental ESP agency, but someone will have to do some explaining to allow a KGB agent and a E-Branch agent to work side by side week after week. It can happen, and in fact did happen when Felix and Alec got their groups together to eradicate Yulian Bodescu, but this is the exception rather than the rule.

Of course, there are also those gifted few who, through dint of birth and fortune, have access to the powers of the mind and have as yet made no allegiance — such people may not even know there is a covert war of the psychonatural, and as such are a resource highly sought-after by all parties. There is no pressing reason why the characters have to be members of any group, but as rare as psychic powers are in *Necroscope*, it is extremely unlikely that a group of everyday acquaintances would all have psionic powers. If several players are willing to play "normal" characters, or if the players come up with a good excuse (they all work at CalTech's Paranormal Research Department?), then you can allow them to be non-aligned civilians.

Finally, although it is acceptable to have some characters be part of an agency and some non-aligned, again we recommend against it. All groups, whether secret government agencies or secret societies, want to recruit new talent.

Failing that, they want to deny the opposition the chance to recruit the same person. And there's only one way to be sure they can't. And that solution carries the added bonus that you can do an autopsy with which you can try to better understand how paranormally-active people came to be that way ...

Equipment

Since *Necroscope* is set in the real world, a full list of equipment can be found in Chapter Seven of the *MasterBook* rules. Any additional equipment can be pulled from a number of real-world sources (magazines on firearms and surveillance equipment are of particular use).



Three

Skills in Necroscope

"Now listen: go to school in Ploesti — become as clever as your teachers, more clever—and when you return, come back as a scholar. Ah, but there are other seats of knowledge, and other sorts of knowledge! I have a gift for you. A gift... and a sign that indeed I can teach you things. Things you cannot possibly imagine."

— Thibor Ferenczy

In this chapter we'll discuss the skills used in the covert world of *Necroscope*. Most of the skills from the *MasterBook* basic system are also used in this game, although there are a few deletions and alterations. The list starting below contains all the skills used in *Necroscope*; the new skills are marked by a dagger (†). Psychic skills are marked with a double dagger (‡). Players familiar with the other *MasterBook* games (*Indiana Jones*, *Bloodshadows*, *Species*, and *Tank Girl* as of this printing) will recognize some of the new skills have actually been ported over from those systems. This has been done deliberately to avoid confusion among players switching from game to game.

Although psionic gifts and talents are treated as skills, they are presented in their own chapter, beginning on page 27.

Necroscope Skill List

AGILITY

Acrobatics
 Beast Riding*
 Climbing
 Dodge
 Long Jumping
 Maneuver
Martial Arts*
 Melee Combat
 Melee Parry
 Running
 Stealth
 Swimming
 Unarmed Combat
 Unarmed Parry

DEXTERITY

Fire Combat
Gunnery*
Heavy Weapons*
 Missile Weapons*



Prestidigitation
Security †
Thrown Weapons
Vehicle Piloting*

ENDURANCE
Resist Shock

STRENGTH
‡**ESP: Necromancer** †
Lethal Strike* †

Lifting
INTELLECT
Camouflage
Computer Ops

Deduction
Demolitions
‡**ESP: Prescient** †
‡**ESP: Sensitive** †
‡**ESP: Telepath** †

Espionage †
Forgery
First Aid
Linguistics
Mechanic* †
Navigation*
Perception
Photography †
Science*
Teaching*
Tracking
Trick

MIND
Artist*
Bureaucracy †
Business
‡**ESP: Seer** †
‡**ESP: Spotter** †
Hypnotism †
Language*
Medicine
Research †
Scholar*

CONFIDENCE
Blind Maneuver †
Bribery †
Con
‡**ESP: Shaman** †
Faith*

Interrogation
Intimidation
Psychology †
Streetwise
Survival*
Willpower

CHARISMA
Charm
Disguise



‡ **ESP: Necroscope** †
 Persuasion
 Taunt

* Macroskill; must select a focus.

Boldface: Skill cannot be used untrained.

† New skill: Rules or adjustments are in this book.

‡ ESP skill: See chapter four for full details.

Skill Descriptions

Dexterity Skills

Security

Use: Cannot be used untrained

Sample Specializations: Lock picking, system design, electric locks, infrared systems

Security is the purview of the master thief, and therefore the espionage agent, who is really a master thief who pulls down a steady paycheck. In the modern world, knowledge of how to pick a spring lock is no longer enough, what with electric eyes and pressure-sensitive pads and deadbolts and alarms which automatically call the police. Today's agents have to study all aspects of security: first how to create it; then once they know how to make it, they learn how to break it. James "Superthief" MacLean used to steal state-of-the-art security systems just to make sure he knew how they worked.

Security can be used to survey a site and get an overview for what kind of defenses an installation might be using, check for specific types of security systems, and bypass them without triggering the alarm. Picking locks and cracking safes also fall under this skill, but generally require specialized tools. Finally, *security* can be used to set up a defensive perimeter and security system for an installation, be it a house or an old agrarian mansion somewhere on the Serpukhov road outside Moscow.

When using *security* to penetrate an area, failure of a task does not mean the alarm is automatically raised. The character can make a second *security* skill check. If the second try succeeds, the character manages to avoid triggering the alarm; he stops his work because the system is "too tight." The character can then make subsequent attempts to bypass the alarm, but the DN for each pair of rolls (one for bypassing the system and one for not triggering the alarm) is increased by +2 for each subsequent retry. Obviously, then, if someone keeps messing with a tough system, the bells will be ringing real soon.

Note: As an optional rule, an untrained character may endeavor to use *security* at a DN modifier of +8. Failure automatically activates the alarm system and brings the worst possible results to an untrained character.

Strength Skills

Lethal Strike*

Use: Special, cannot be used untrained

Sample Focuses: Martial arts: tae kwon do, melee combat (knife)

Sample Specializations: No specialization allowed



Ron Kuhn

In the midst of the Cold War, spies aren't particularly concerned with fair play, mercy, or even decency. And if you think the espionage agencies are bad, try the secret societies. One expression of this businesslike attitude is the *lethal strike* skill.

Basically, *lethal strike* is an expression of a killer mentality. When your average woman takes a self-defense class, she learns to hurt her assailants very badly, perhaps even cripple them. She learns to put them into a position where they cannot hurt her any more. The same goes for boxers; they learn to hammer their opponents into unconsciousness. Not so for Navy SEALs. They learn to kill people with ruthless efficiency. Where a boxer may try to break someone's nose to cause his eyes to water and his face to hurt, a SEAL will try to drive the victim's nose into his brain. Both are done with punches to the face, but one is much more deadly.

This extra damage is done because the attacker has studied anatomy (specifically its weak points), learned special maneuvers, and practiced how to focus each strike for maximum impact. It is not a skill that is easily acquired, and any player who chooses this skill must justify it through their character's background story. Even among the covert operations agencies, this skill is often reserved for trained assassins alone.

Lethal strike must be focused on a particular martial arts focus or melee combat specialization. It cannot be focused on a general skill or on any unarmed combat specialization. When a character with *lethal strike* skill adds hits an opponent, the character's *lethal strike* adds are added to the damage result done by the attack. The *lethal strike* adds also increase the maximum damage of that particular weapon. Characters get no bonus whatsoever for *lethal strike* adds they have with any skill other than the skill they used to attack their opponent. **A character may never have more adds in his *lethal strike* skill than he has in its focus skill.**

Example: Dieter the East German terrorist is in a bar in Bonn, drinking a bottle of Belhaven Scottish Ale. He has two adds in melee combat, another two adds in melee combat (knife), and on top of all that he has one add in lethal strike: melee combat (knife). Dieter is suddenly attacked by a couple of CIA agents intent on capturing him for questioning. Startled, Dieter lashes out with his beer bottle using his two adds in melee combat to help his situation. He connects with his swing. Since lethal strike cannot be applied to general skills, he receives no damage bonus, but nonetheless he drives back one CIA agent. Then he pulls his combat knife and attacks the other. Again Dieter connects. His base knife damage is STR+4+1: that's his strength +4 for the combat knife, +1 more for his lethal strike: melee combat (knife) skill add. Further, the maximum damage of the combat knife increases from 19 to 20.

Intellect Skills

Espionage

Use: Can be used untrained

Sample Specializations: Wire tapping, defection, countersurveillance

Espionage is a catch-all spying skill, and one that every ESPionage agent should have at least one add in. Since it's a part of basic training in all intelligence agencies, we've made it one single skill. *Espionage* covers basic techniques like eavesdropping and swapping courier pouches to more complex activities like wire taps and bouncing lasers off windows to listen to conversations. It also includes familiarity and training with all the tools of the trade, including pen guns, poisons, recorders, bugs, scanners, etc.

Espionage cannot replace other spy-like skills like *stealth* and *demolitions*. Also, *espionage* cannot be used for cryptography: that is a specialization of

deduction. Likewise, shadowing is a specialization of *tracking*.

Note: Untrained characters may use *espionage* for low-tech activities like eavesdropping and spying on someone through binoculars. For high-tech uses like planting a bug, or for techniques like lip-reading which require extensive training, untrained characters incur a DN modifier of +8.

Photography

Use: Cannot be used untrained

Sample Specializations: Outdoor, portrait, nature, video, movie

What's an f-stop? What kind of film is this? What do you mean, "the lens cap was on"? *Photography* is the skill that handles all of these questions and more. *Photography* covers the basics of operating a camera, handling film, determining lighting and exposure, composition, depth of field, use of special filters, and even developing and printing your film.

The difficulty of the task is related to the quality desired and the effect. Basic newspaper photos have a difficulty of 8. Front-page shots or family portraits are a 10 or 12. Photos which are compelling, disturbing, or emotional are DN 15. To get a prize-winning shot requires beating a DN of 18 or more.

Note: Despite the fact that this skill cannot be used untrained, characters can still get simple 35mm or even point-and-shoot cameras. The skill of *photography* covers the finer technical points, but it in no way prevents a typical character from photographing anything she wants. If there is a need to judge the quality of the photographs an untrained character takes, use the character's raw Intellect attribute.

Vehicle Mechanic*

Use: Cannot be used untrained

Sample Focuses: Cars, boats, airplanes, climate control devices

Sample Specializations: By type or make within focus, i.e., Ford vehicles, formula race cars

Vehicle mechanic is the specialized skill of diagnosing and repairing problems in mechanical devices (or, with the proper focus, electronic devices). This skill can be used for simple fixes (changing a tire) to larger projects (repairing a damaged aileron) to long and involved processes (rebuilding a boat hull damaged on a reef).

If a character fails a *vehicle mechanic* roll, it does not necessarily mean that the repair failed utterly. Gamemasters may instead have the repair work temporarily, with the degree of failure determining how much stress or time will cause the repair to fail again.

Since it involves a knowledge of how the vehicles work, the skill can also be used for sabotage. This can cause immediate and critical damage so the vehicle won't function at all, or the sabotage could cause the vehicle to break down in the future.

Note: An untrained character may perform a simple *vehicle mechanic* chore (changing oil, reseating a bike's chain) at a DN modifier of +4.

Mind Skills

Bureaucracy

Use: May be used untrained, but we recommend against it

Sample Specializations: Acquisitions, cutting red tape, burying programs

Let's face it, the down side of modern civilization is the rise and proliferation of the bloated bureaucracy. Some have likened these to large creatures, alive in their own macrocosmic fashion, feeding on information and money and excreting burned-out wage slaves. Bureaucracies have their own rules, and living deep within the bowels of a bureaucracy requires a different understanding, a

Weltanschauung that defies the understanding of the average citizen.

Most people opt to follow the rules and toe the line, no matter how convoluted or illogical they may be. *Bureaucracy* allows you to avoid this horrid fate. *Bureaucracy* is the knowledge of how the system works, why it works that way, where you can cut corners, and when you can buck the rules. You also know how to use the bureaucracy on your side, either to keep your detractors off your backs or to snow an underling beneath mounds of papers and red tape so he won't get your job. Master bureaucrats may never be seen by the public, but run their entire agency from behind an office door labeled "Kitchen Staff Supervisor."

It's an ugly skill.

Hypnotism

Hypnosis is being used more and more among the intelligence agencies, and it has long been a staple of secret society life. We're not changing the rules for hypnotism in this book, we're just adding to them to cover two areas not mentioned in *MasterBook*: post-hypnotic suggestion and temporal regression. Both of these (as well as the standard questioning as described in *MasterBook*) are available as specializations within the hypnotism skill.

Post-hypnotic suggestion is implanting a subconscious command in the target's mind while the target is under hypnosis. The most common command is "you will forget about having been hypnotized," but other commands are possible as well. The base DN for the post-hypnotic suggestion attempt is equal to twice the target's Confidence or *willpower*, and is modified by the difficulty of executing the command. See the chart below for suggested modifiers.

Temporal regression is making already-hypnotized people remember earlier and earlier times in their life. Through use of this skill, the character can get the target to describe in vivid detail memories from three years earlier or from when they were but one or two years old. In some cases people have been regressed past the date of their birth and into what are believed to be previous lives. This is not actually the case, although no one (except possibly Harry Keogh) knows this. Since the essential spirits of the dead remain with their corpses, reincarnation is not a possibility. It appears therefore that these "previous incarnation" memories are actually inherited in some fashion from the target's parents on the cellular level. For willing subjects, determine the base DN for temporal regression as follows: take the value of the time the character wants the target to regress, subtract the target's Mind attribute, and then divide the result by two. Thus regressing a target with a Mind of 12 one year back gives a DN of (38-12V2, or a DN of 13. For unwilling characters, take the time value, add the target's Mind or *willpower*, subtract ten, and then divide by two.

Finally, *hypnotism* is a valuable tool for speaking with those people (like, say, your necroscope) who have been possessed by malign spirits.

Research

Use: May be used untrained

Sample Specializations: Historical, biographical, media types (e.g., documentaries, books)

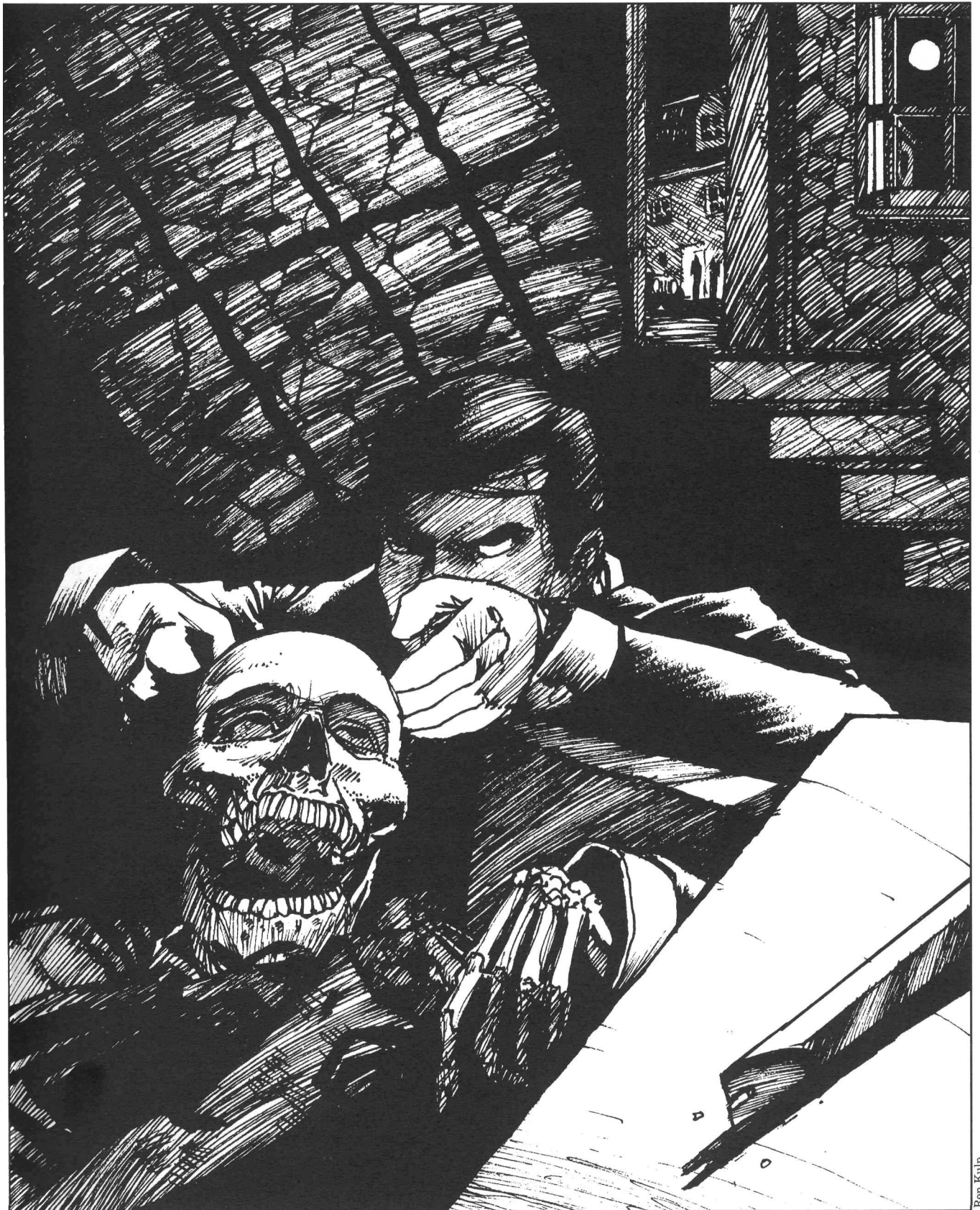
In the information age, the problem is not the availability of knowledge, but gathering it together. This is where the skill of *research* comes in. *Research* is the ability to cull useful tidbits from newspapers, magazines, television shows, books, and on-line data services; any repository of knowledge can be used for research. It is used primarily to get a broad overview of a subject, although it can be used for more specific information if the character can invest the time.

The value of the time required to dig up the information is equal to the DN of the search plus ten. Adjust this time value as necessary for common or very unusual information, or areas where the information resources are unfamiliar or limited in scope or availability. Subtract the character's success level from the time value to determine how much time was actually spent getting the information, thus Good successes result in more information in less time.

For guidelines on *research* difficulties, see the chart below. -

Post-Hypnotic Suggestion DN Modifiers

Situation	Modifier
Target wants to perform the command, and it is easy (lock your house doors)	-2
Target wants to perform the command, and it is hard (quit smoking)	+0
Performing the command is a light inconvenience (call me at this time)	+1
Performing the command is a moderate inconvenience (walk to work tomorrow)	+3
Performing the command is quite difficult (withdraw \$5000 from your account)	+8
The action is anathema to the target (kill your children)	+20



Ron Kulp

Research Difficulty Chart

Situation	Difficulty
Common knowledge (sports statistics)	7
Information that requires searching through various sources (history of a family that has lived in the area for a while)	10
Information from sources of varying reliability (local legends)	15
Hard-to-find information (detailed descriptions of an obscure and ancient battle)	20
Information is closely guarded	+1 to +5
Character isn't certain what he's looking for	+1 to +5
Character knows exactly what he's searching for	-1 to -3

Note: Journalists use *research* to gather background information on a subject, but interviewing someone for a story requires personal interaction. Interviewing is therefore an *interrogation* specialization.

Confidence Skills**Blind Maneuver**

Use: May be used untrained
Sample Specializations: no specialization allowed

A very rare skill, this talent is typically found only among highly-trained special forces or counter-terrorist troops, or else those ESPers who were unfortunate enough to fight the Wamphyri on their own terms and yet somehow survived. *Blind maneuver* is the ability of a person to rely on senses other than sight in tense situations. This is why *blind maneuver* is a Confidence skill: humans tend to rely on their sight, and moving aggressively and decisively without seeing where you're stepping requires complete confidence in your instincts.

Blind maneuver is the use of sound, hearing, kinesthesia, proximity sense, instinct, and the intangible sixth sense to navigate and strike effectively in thick fog, smoke, or even total darkness. When the gamemaster applies a penalty to a character's ability to maneuver or fight in an area with poor lighting, the character may make a roll against *blind maneuver*. Read the success points on the Push column of the Success Chart, and add the result to the darkness penalty suffered by the character. The difficulty of the task is typically average, modified up or down by the environment; an empty basketball gym could be a little easier, and a cluttered office could be a lot more difficult.

Example: *George is trapped in a graveyard at midnight fighting one of the Wamphyri. It's a new moon, and the undead creature summons a mist which suffocates what starlight there is. The gamemaster assesses George and his pals a -10 modifier for fighting in total dark (with the fog, their flashlights blind them more than they help). George rolls against his blind maneuver and scores 10 resultpoints, which turns out to be four pushpoints. George only suffers a -6 penalty, which means that if he runs now he might survive the encounter.*

Note: At the gamemaster's option, an untrained character may use *blind maneuver* at a DN modifier of +4.

Bribery

Use: May be used untrained

Sample Specializations: Use of favors, money, or goods; targeting specific types of individuals

They say money makes the world go round, and if this is true, then bribery is an attempt to make sure it goes around your way. It measures the character's ability to get others to break the rules in exchange for compensation. The rules may be bureaucratic procedure, local law, or just common sense. *Bribery* totals are modified by the worth of the bribe offered, the extent of the favors to be received, and the moral fiber or entrenched loyalty of the target. The difficulty number of a *bribery* attempt is the target's modified Confidence or *willpower*. The target is allowed to actively resist, but this requires attention, and so a *bribery* attempt may be used as a sort of distraction.

Characters may attempt to use *persuasion* or *charm* to gain the target's trust or goodwill through social interaction before attempting the bribe. Characters who simply run up with a fistful of dollars and bluntly offer a crass bribe should have their DN raised appropriately, as pressuring or surprising bribery targets always has negative effects.

The Bribe: Find the value of the bribe offered (whether it be in cash, goods, or services) on the *MasterBook* Value Chart. Divide this value by two and add it to the character's *bribery* skill total. Increase this amount if the target particularly likes the bribe, or is susceptible to a bribe of that sort.

Modify the value if the worth of the item is difficult for the target to actually use; for example, cash is easy to use and readily accepted by anyone. Antique furniture is harder to get rid of and difficult to lug around, and so its value as a bribe is reduced. Likewise, modify the value of the bribe downward if the bribe somehow makes the target uncomfortable; a gangster will accept a bribe of a couple grams of cocaine at face value, as will almost anyone who uses cocaine, but your average security guard stands to lose his job and end up in prison if caught with the stuff, so a bribe of cocaine is worth little if anything.

Sometimes you won't be able to relate the worth of the offered bribe directly to anything monetary. How much is sex worth, anyway? Or information? Or the promised good graces of Pablo Escobar? In these cases, use the Modifier Chart in Chapter Three of the *MasterBook* rule book to determine the modifiers. Remember also to modify things further for bribes that are promised to be paid in the future, or ones which may never be realized, like Pablo's favor.

The Target: To determine the difficulty of the bribe, take the target's Confidence attribute or *willpower* skill. Then determine the target's attitude towards the bribe. The target's attitude incorporates loyalty to their cause, like or dislike of the character, the target's moral fiber, the extent of the favor asked, the chance that the target will be caught providing the aid, and the severity of the punishment if caught. Once you've got a final attitude, look on the chart below, and you'll see the level of success necessary to bribe the target (as read on the General Success Chart in Chapter Three of *MasterBook*(page67).

Example: Fred, though of morally questionable character, is fanatically loyal to the CIA. If bribed to perform an action which would directly harm the CIA, he will be considered Unwilling (he's a fanatic, but though the mind is strong, the flesh is weak). If the favor were minor and the chance of exposure were minimal, Fred might be a Suspicious or even Neutral target (his loyalty to the CIA prevents him from ever being Agreeable). However, should Fred be offered a bribe for an action which in no way impairs the CIA, his attitude starts out at Agreeable (he's a strong believer in free-market activities likes bribes), but then could be modified upward by the favor requested and the chance of being caught.

Bribery Chart	
Target's Attitude	Success Level Necessary
Agreeable	Minimal
Neutral	Solid
Suspicious/Unfriendly	Good
Wary/Hostile	Superior
Unwilling/Antagonistic	Spectacular
Absolutely Opposed	Spectacular+

Psychology

Use: Cannot be used untrained

Sample Specializations: Therapy, reading body language, constructing psych profiles

The world of the necroscope is filled with people who are quietly horrified, or are hiding important secrets. Repressed memories among coworkers, witnesses driven into catatonia by the horror, and serial killers are all challenges the characters may face, and the skill of *psychology* allows them to pry into the minds of these people.



Psychology is used to understand the target. This understanding can be used to help the target, figure out how to question the target, gain the target's trust, or figure out what the target is likely to do next.

When *psychology* is used on a willing target, the DN of the attempt depends on what the character is trying to accomplish. Repressed memories might have a difficulty of 15, but getting someone to relate a painful personal memory might only have a DN of 10.

Psychology can also be used against an unwilling target; the difficulty number is the target's *Confidence*, *willpower*, or *psychology*. *Psychology* can be actively resisted. This is one of the few skills that can be actively resisted even when the target does not actually know the character is attempting the skill. For example, a secret agent may always be playing the part of a carefully-constructed artificial persona when in public. As long as the agent maintains this persona, he actively resists *psychology* attempts. Likewise, a killer being hunted by the police might shake up his method of operation to foil the attempts to develop an accurate psychological profile with which to catch him in the act. In both these cases, the target does not know there is a *psychology* attempt being made, but nonetheless takes active precautions to prevent it from succeeding.

Therapy can also be made a part of a campaign, as there are some pretty horrifying things going on in *Necroscope*. See the section on therapy in Chapter Six, "Mastering Necroscope."

Note: At the gamemaster's option, an untrained character may use *psychology* at a DN modifier of +4.

Four

Extrasensory Perception

"Be quiet and learn something. You know where you are, don't you? Nothing should surprise you here."

— Gregor Borowitz, Head of the ADPE

There are very few people in the world who have a psionic talent, perhaps one in a thousand at best, and for most of these ESPers, their talents are latent, requiring some extreme stimulus to get them to reach out for the unknown in desperation. Of course, when the shock which induces you to resort to psychic activity is the threat of being hit by a train and it turns out that you're a telepath, your talent doesn't do you a whole lot of good. No one knows how many psychics die without ever realizing their strange abilities.

Of those people who discover their latent knack (or who have a strong enough gift that their talent has been with them all along), most deny it exists, bury it beneath a firm wall of secular skepticism, and never know the power or the horror that such a gift brings. If they catch glimpses of the future or if they see auras around certain people, they scoff it off as a mirage, that accident they had as a child when they struck their head, or a relic of the drugs they took in college. Some even actively deny that they see these unusual manifestations, and so thoroughly put reality out of their mind that indeed they do not notice; they develop a neurotic psychic blindness, if you will.

There are those few, however, who discover their talent (or always knew it), recognize it as unusual and yet not something to be feared, and begin to explore it. Some are weak psychically, and their toil avails them little, and eventually they abandon the pursuit. Others flourish, and their power grows strong. They begin to discover sinister truths about the nature of reality, and they confront the darker portions of their own soul. They know that in the superstitious world of the past, they'd be put to death as witches, but this is the enlightened 20th Century, they can come clean, right? Not so, for anyone who stoutly believes in extrasensory perception of this magnitude is categorized at best as a mentally unbalanced hack who reads the *Weekly World News*, or, at worst, someone to be lobotomized and locked up.

Far better in the minds of these gifted few to be alone and unknown than to endure the living death of institutionalization. That is why there are strong ESP talents at large in the world, and why the common man never hears of them. Some of these gifted elite even write their memoirs and submit them to the scandal rags to perpetuate popular disbelief in psychic phenomena.

Most if not all of the player characters will be psionically talented. They are indeed the gifted few, the elite, and rarer still that they know other psychics and act as a team. Each player character is one of a select fraternity that deals with the rest of their kin in a shadowy, otherworldly fashion. This chapter tells you



Tim Bobko

all you need to know of these strange and paranormal activities seen only by a few stout-hearted mortals ... and also by other things which do not die.

How ESP Talents Work

Psionic talents are unnatural abilities that certain people can perform by the power and ability of the mind alone. The root, the strength, and source of ESP is the brain, the soul, the will; and though it may be channeled through one or more physical outlets, without the desire and the imagination, psychic phenomena do not come to pass.

Humans and other living creatures (and in fact all things that exist) lead a dual existence. Humans have both a physical shell and a mental consciousness; and as has been seen, the two do not depend on each other, although they are inextricably linked. There are several theories, but perhaps the most popular idea among ESPionage researchers is that the physical and mental universes are bound together by the metaphysical medium (called the Möbius Continuum by Harry Keogh). This medium cannot be detected or altered, in much the same way that letters cannot detect or alter the spaces between themselves or other words. The universes are bound together by the metaphysical, and together they define the metaphysical's existence. Thoughts have no physical existence, but they can be transmitted via the physical realm — in, say, writing — and go from there back into the non-physical world of another person's consciousness. This, the fantastic leap from purely physical scribbling to crystal mental imagery, is accomplished through the metaphysical. ESPers, then, can skip the intermediate step of passing physical notes and transmit thoughts straight from one consciousness to another.

Other, more pragmatic researchers believe that the metaphysical does not actually exist, and that psionics are instead another expression of the electromagnetic spectrum, with a wavelength either corresponding to another form of energy we have not yet isolated, or else related to the "normal" E-M spectrum in

much the same way that imaginary numbers and the imaginary plane relate to real numbers and physical effects. (For those who do not know, imaginary numbers are multiples of the square root of -1. The square root of -1, which itself is named *i*, is a number which cannot exist, yet certain physical phenomena cannot be explained without it.)

So, if one believes the metaphysical holds the mental and physical planes together, then all humans have a psionic talent, to wit: the ability to move their physical body about by force of will alone. This ability is very limited, but advocates of the panpsychic theory believe this is a self-induced failing. There are those psychics who can levitate their physical bodies, and the existence of these bolsters their claim that everyone could move their physical body any way they'd like, if they'd just believe. Advocates of this theory also point to the success of placebos as further evidence of the mental directly impacting the physical. The other point of view, of course, holds that we can walk around because we are alive, which is a peculiar chemical state. The argument may never be solved, especially since the believers in the metaphysical are nonetheless unwilling to volunteer to die just to prove

But Wait, What About...?

There are several characters in the *Necroscope* novels who had more than one psionic talent. However, with one exception, every human being who had more than one talent had been previously touched or infected by the Wamphyri. The exception is, of course, Harry Keogh, who was both a necroscope and was able to teleport. On the one hand, the Möbius Continuum is apparently a purely natural phenomenon not understood by modern science — Ferdinand Möbius himself said the doors are always there, just waiting to be noticed. Thus Harry was able to teleport through purely natural means. On the other hand, teleportation could be argued to be paranormal, no matter how it's clothed.

Humans do have within their brains the chance for other powers. These powers can be unlocked by a very powerful ESPer (which, unfortunately, means the Wamphyri), just as a person's active power can be locked. So it is possible, at least in theory, for a human to have more than one active psionic power even without Wamphyri influence. Perhaps it's just the structure of our brains which causes but one of those possible powers to become dominant — or none of them to ever develop at all.

their own wills can supersede the physiological state of being dead.

Be that as it may, those people who manifest an unusual and powerful ESP talent manifest but a single one. The reason for this is also unknown, especially since other living creatures seem unable to manifest any, and there are unconfirmed reports of creatures which are not quite human manifesting several unique and powerful talents. One popular theory is that it requires a certain amount of brain mass to generate the power required to sustain psychic activity, and that lesser animals do not have enough. This being the case, it is theoretically possible that other creatures (or even humans) could evolve brains more efficient at generating psychic energy, thus it is conceivable that through genetic manipulation or eugenic breeding programs humans could eventually learn to control two or three talents simultaneously.

Regardless of the reason, and despite the incredible amounts of time and money being poured into discovering the truth of the matter, current psionics have but one talent. ESP researchers have managed to group the broad spectrum of talents together into several distinct manifestations; the exact workings for each person may be vaguely different, but for whatever reason, talents seem to be readily divided into several categories.

The major ESP talents described on the following pages are the necromancer, necroscope, prescient, seer, sensitive, shaman, spotter, and telepath. Since each talent is subject to individual variance, a common manifestation is provided for each major type starting on page 61. You can use these SFXs for the pregenerated characters at the back of this book. Regardless of the way we delineated these examples of ESP talents, rest assured that each person experiences and controls their gifts in different ways. Note also that different agencies or societies might have different names for the following talents; for clarity, however, we will stick to the labels given here.

Psionics in Game Terms

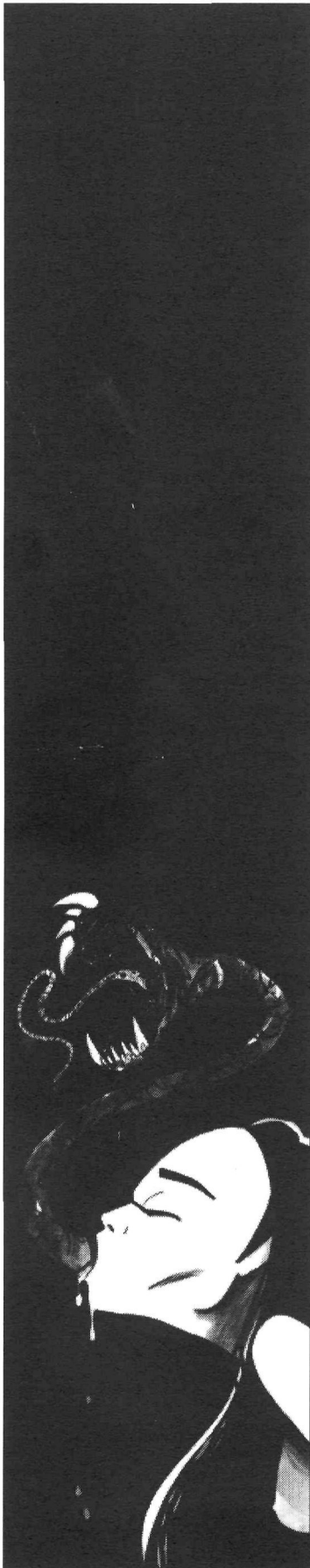
"I know you can't explain how you do it, and I certainly don't want to know why; it's enough to say that you found yourself with a talent you could use to improve your own life. That's understandable. No, it's the facts I want. The extent of your talent, for instance, and its limitations. Until a moment ago I didn't know you could use it at a distance — that sort of thing."

— Sir Keenan Gormley

All ESP gifts are created using the Special Effects rules (*MasterBook* Chapter Six), and familiarity with those rules will help. Basically, psionics as used in *Necroscope* are much softer, if you will, than high magic. You won't see Mike the Magister in



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Necroscope, no flaming fireballs of doom. Likewise, the psionic effects that each person in *Necroscope* uses are not flashy; only rarely must ESPers perform long incantations, bite the heads off bats, or whatever. And finally, there is no physical effect of feedback in *Necroscope*; psionics don't keel over and die just because they blundered their attempt to read someone's mind. Below we describe the adjustments in the Special Effects development rules in the same order they're presented in *MasterBook*. Remember, these adjustments pertain only to *Necroscope*.

Now a word on *MasterBook* psionics as compared to extrasensory perception in *Necroscope*. In *MasterBook*, *psionic manipulation* is an Intellect-based skill. This is not the case in *Necroscope*. In *MasterBook*, a psionic person can manipulate the power of his mind in all sorts of ways. In *Necroscope*, each psychic starts out with one and only one unique gift. That's the only thing they can do. On the other hand, there are a whole variety of gifts that can be had. This means that ESP talent in *Necroscope* is not one broad-based catch-all skill, it's several, although each depends on the power of the mind. Since each gift is different in its effect and method of operation, each is based on an Attribute suited to it. This Attribute is listed at the start of the description of the psionic gift, and it is related directly to how the gift functions within the game universe. For example, a necroscope chats with dead people. Dead folks talk to a necroscope because they want to. This makes *ESP: necroscope* a Charisma-based skill. On the other hand, a necromancer must rip apart corpses, snap bones and grind them to meal between his teeth, shred musculature, and do all sorts of unappetizing things in the execution of his duties. This fact makes *ESP: necromancer* based on Strength.

Second, as has been mentioned, each ESPer gets one gift, the exact workings of which are unique to that person. This means that a player can only develop the character's Special Effect ONCE. After that, that's the gift the character has for the rest of her life; no new gift can be developed, nor can the old one be thrown away. In game terms, what this means is that a beginning *Necroscope* character can build a Special Effect that has a low DN, but to do so will mean that the ESP talent will be difficult to use in game situations (lots of prerequisites), or else it will be weak (low Effect Value, etc.). Conversely, designing a powerful or facile Special Effect will give it a high DN, meaning a beginning character will often fail in its use. Thus the players must choose between easy-to-apply high DN psionic talents, or ponderous but low DN talents. Choosing that best balance of ease, utility, and long-term growth potential is just one of the many trade-offs that makes gaming so fun.

Although an ESP Special Effect cannot be switched for something new, it is possible to adjust the gift over time to reflect the psychic's natural tendency to grow in talent, skill, and confidence. For example, when we first met the necromancer Boris Dragosani deep inside Chateau Bronnitsy (for those of you who read the first novel in the *Necroscope* series), he had to undergo a sort of ritual to get himself "in the mood." He stripped, shaved off all his body hair, took a bath, and dozed for about fifteen minutes on a corpse's bloated belly before he actually began his attack on the hapless cadaver. The total elapsed time for all these preparations was perhaps an hour or more, and in that time he was completely undisturbed in a sealed room. And after he was finished, he shuddered at the gore spattered on his naked body, and was loathe to resume his duties when asked. Six years later, Dragosani no longer needed to psych himself up for his work. In fact, some would say he quite enjoyed it. Why? Six years of practice, six years of familiarity, six years of success, and six years of sadistic power over the screaming dead. Before, Dragosani had to slip into an altered state; even the color of his skin changed to an ashen color of death. Six horrid years later, he knew what he was after, he knew how to access that alternative sensitivity. He had come into his own, as it were. For that reason, characters may use skill points to alter the description of their Special Effect. Each skill point

allows the character to adjust one item (one line on the SFX Worksheet) by one point, or to reduce the SFX Delay by one minute (see below for an explanation of Delay). Between adventures, each line may change by only one point or by the minimum amount to make a change, if one point isn't enough. Thus, a two-point complex gesture can only be changed down to a one-point gesture, but you can add a focus even though it might cost five points, because focuses can only be added in discrete large lumps.

Using and Resisting ESP

ESP is used just like skills, with the final DN of the Special Effect determining how difficult the skill attempt is, and its Effect Value determining how much success is garnered. The character rolls a skill attempt and if they beat the DN of the SFX, they succeed with all the concomitant benefits. As with other SFXs, if the result points exceed the DN, add the difference to the effect value. ESPers can also push their ESP attempts when times are rough, using the lifting example of pushing a skill (*MasterBook* page 90); perform ESP while multitasking (unless they have to go into a trance); and anything else one might expect for any standard skill. It is even possible to specialize in a certain area of an ESP skill, if the concept is well-explained and the gamemaster approves.

ESP skill attempts can be actively resisted by the target, assuming the target is aware of the attempt. When resisting, the target character's player rolls the dice to generate a bonus number, and adds it to the appropriate resistance Attribute or skill. As with all active resistance, a minimum bonus number of +3 is guaranteed. Additionally, those with ESP gifts can also engage in "psychic shouting." This is pretty much exactly what it sounds like; the character generates as much psionic "noise" as possible in an attempt to disrupt others in the use of their talents. Roll a bonus number, adding the shouting character's SFX Effect Value to the die roll. Again, a minimum bonus number of +3 is guaranteed, though the effect of psychic shouting is reduced by one bonus point per meter of range between the shouter and the ESPer or the ESPer's target, whichever is less.

Some ESP gifts can occasionally require another skill to be used for the talent to be employed for maximum effectiveness. These are handled on a case by case basis, and any such restrictions are noted in the descriptive text of the ESP talent.

Delay: ESP Feedback (Optional)

During playtesting, we encountered one problem: that of a certain character trying over and over and over again to, say, telepathically interrogate someone. We dealt with this problem by using the SFX Feedback Value in a different manner. The FV became Delay; the time in minutes before the ESPer can use the ESP talent again. Delay is always a minimum of one minute, and it's measured from the moment an ESPer quits using his talent to the time he can try once more. This makes it almost impossible for a character to give someone the evil eye more than once during a combat, or to read the minds of everyone in a meeting over the course of a few minutes.

While this suggestion is perhaps a little out of line with the intent of the books, it isn't far from the tone. Few of the characters used their psi abilities over and over again in a short period. Furthermore, this rule helps maintain some sort of play balance.

ESP Special Effects Rules Adjustments

These are addenda, restrictions, or clarifications to the normal SFX rules. They are numbered by the step number as shown on the *MasterBook* Special Effects Worksheet.

1. Effect: Many psychic SFXs allow the character to use a skill in a way that

would otherwise be impossible. For example, a telepath can read minds; it's like he can interrogate someone he's not talking to, and without their consent, and the more powerful the ESPer's talent, the more effective its use becomes. While your players can choose any effect value, we recommend that it be 13 or greater, this being the level of effect necessary to virtually ensure a positive modifier against a normal human target. If the character succeeds in the psionic skill attempt, subtract the target's resistance from the effect value, and modify all subsequent ESP skill attempts by that number. Thus, a telepath with an effect value of 3 who succeeds in reading a victim with an Intellect of 8 gets a -5 to the result value of his subsequent *ESP: telepath* skill attempts.

3. Speed: As most psychic talents are instantaneous in effect, the Speed of all *Necroscope* ESP powers is assumed to be equal to the Range. This adds nothing to the cost of the ESP SFX. Although slower speeds can be had (forcing the character to "reach out" with his mind), we recommend against it. If a slower speed seems appropriate, the cost of the ESP SFX is reduced by one for every point of speed less than the powers range.

15. Charges: This is strictly disallowed. Extrasensory perception is immediate and interactive, and no storing can be done. The gamemaster can of course rule otherwise for a strange type of psi talent, but frankly, we don't see it.

16. Determine the Difficulty Number and the Feedback Value: What follows this step are a set of restrictions on ESPers when developing their Special Effects, which will make it difficult to lower their casting DN by much. Again, in *Necroscope*, psychic talents are immediate and require only the use of the mind. There is no purpose for gimmicks and jimcrackery except as a crutch to 'psych up' for a job. Because there is no storing of psi effects, and because the impediments to using the SFX are themselves severely curtailed, this leads to very high DNs. To make the game playable, then, take the SFX Subtotal (from line 15a) and cut it in half. In essence, we're splitting the subtotal between DN and FV, and then throwing the FV away, because, as we've mentioned, there is no direct threat to a psychic for the simple exercise of his unique ability.

17. Community: Although the gamemaster can rule otherwise, no psychic in *Necroscope* requires anything beyond his own brain. Psionically talented people cannot even really understand each other's gifts, let alone aid each other in their use.

18. Components: Again, psionic talents only require the power of the brain, although a person can have a psychological dependency on a certain sort of item to use his gift more effectively. A dowser, for example, requires a dowsing rod to do his work. Someone else might feel a need to have a crystal ball or read tea leaves or rub a lucky rabbit's foot. We must stress that this is a psychological crutch. We also recommend that the player be allowed only one point of deduction here unless they have a great story to explain their dependency.

19. Concentration: This modifier is unrestricted. Also, if the player wants, he can modify his DN for the willpower roll upward by 2 points for an additional SFX modifier of 1. Thus a player can garner a 3-point SFX modifier by concentrating for ten seconds with a willpower DN of 11. However, if the player chooses this, the character must have complete and total isolation from all other people to be able to concentrate effectively. One example of this is Boris Dragosani, who required a sealed soundproof room, and anyone who wanted to watch had to sit behind one-way glass.

20. Gestures: Motions are not generally required by psychics, although there are certain exceptions (like the shaman Max Batu, who had to squat to cast his mental bolt). For example, having to have a firm grip on someone's head to read their minds garners a 3-point modifier; two for the complex gesture, plus one more for

Gestures Chart	
Gesture Complexity	Modifier
Simple (point finger, or stand tall and stare)	1
Fairly simple (make circles with finger, or squat)	2
Gesture is grotesque or obscene	+1
Physical contact must be made	+1



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physical contact.

21. Incantations: Generally, psionically gifted people don't require words, either, a few words are acceptable, as is a mantra (worth two points). A character can also take an additional +1 modifier for having to speak a foreign language, but that language must be a dead language (Aramaic, Latin, Babylonian, Ancient Egyptian), and there'd better be a darned good explanation of why this psychic knows the language and why he has to use it.

22. Related Skill Totals: There are no restrictions here, but again, the player has to justify the modifier well. Many ESP talents could allow the use of other skills; for example, a necroscope might have to interrogate a victim; his ESP skill being little more than a means to access the dead mind and torture it.

23. Other Modifiers: Here are some other modifiers we used to good effect in playtesting.

Reception

The target is aware (to some extent) that his mind is being messed with. Obviously, this does not apply to necrosopes or necromancers, as their targets are always completely aware that they are the focus of a psychic effect, but it is a perfect handicap for a telepath or a spotter. It can even be

Reception Chart

Reception penalty	Modifier
Target gets a funny feeling	1
Target can make an Intellect roll to realize what's happening	2
Target can make a <i>perception</i> roll to realize what's happening	3
Target automatically realizes what's happening	4
Target identifies the ESPer automatically upon realization	+1
ESPer is a shaman (includes automatic identification)	-1

used with a shaman (at reduced benefit), but in that case, it would take effect if the shaman *failed* his *ESP: shaman* roll; it would let the target know that a supernatural attempt had been made on his life.

Basically, when the ESPer succeeds in penetrating the target's mind, the target feels funny. It may be something as minor as an itch inside the ear, or the funny feeling you get that someone is watching you somewhere. It may be more direct, allowing the target to make a roll to realize his brain is being picked. It may even allow the target to identify the culprit ESPer — this is a rather dramatic modifier. Imagine the drama of the main arch-rival experiencing a funny feeling. Suddenly he spins around, locks eyes with a player character

telepath across a crowded room, and he realizes that he's had his mind read, and exactly who's done it!

Trance

"I was daydreaming. Actually, it's sort of funny. See, when I daydream like that, it's like I can't stop. Only old Hannant shouting — and you giving me a jab — pulled me out if it."

— Harry Keogh, age 13

When the ESPer uses his talents, he

goes into an altered state, a sort of trance where he is open only to extrasensory stimulation, and shuts out the mundane world almost completely. Necromancers and necrosopes suffer with trances, because they must slip fully into the mental realm of the dead to be able to communicate effectively. However, if other ESPers wish to assume this drawback as well, they may. When in a trance, the ESPer cannot respond to any outside stimuli, excepting as such stimuli might wake him up. When an ESPer comes out of a trance, the SFX is finished; the trance is a side-effect of being in the extrasensory state.

Necrosopes and necromancers automatically start out with a five-point trance state and receive no compensation for it. However, they may reduce (or increase) their trance level by taking on a modifier equal to the difference between their starting trance modifier and their final trance modifier. Thus, to reduce their trance from the standard five-point trance to a two-point trance adds +3 to the DN for their SFX.

The trance levels below are rated by their modifier value, what sort of stimuli it takes to rouse the ESPer out of their trance, and how difficult it is for the ESPer to recover. Recovery is simulated by having the ESPer make a roll against her *perception* skill. If the ESPer beats the DN, she recovers full use of her faculties.

The gamemaster may adjust the DN upward or downwards for particularly vigorous or quiet attempts to rouse the entranced ESPer (as compared to the level of distraction already required to rouse that particular ESPer).

Lock

This can only be purchased for SFX's which interact directly with other people's brains. Telepaths and shamens can pick it up, for example, but sensitives cannot.

Necrosopes and necromancers cannot purchase a lock, because their contacts are already dead and can't do anything anyway.

With a lock, the ESPer doesn't just get hold of the target's mind, he actually grabs it in a vise-like psychic grip. For the target, the ESPer so completely fills his consciousness that it is difficult to do anything else. In essence, the ESPer locks the target's mind to his own. In order to undertake any activities besides enduring a psychic intrusion, the target must make a *willpower* roll or suffer a

Modifier	What's Required to Awaken	DN
0	SFX switches off at will	n/a
1	Soft voice	7
2	Normal voice, or tap on shoulder	8
3	Stern voice, or firm grab	10
4	Shake or shout	12
5	Shake and shout	15
6	Cold water, slaps, other extremes	19

Modifier to ESP DN	Willpower DN
1	7
2	8
3	10
4	12



DN penalty. The DN for any activities attempted by the target is increased by a number equal to modifier value of the lock. Thus a two-point lock means that if the target does not beat a DN of 8 with a *willpower* roll, he gets a +2 modifier to all actions just from the horror of being aware of the ESPer using her psychic gift on him. Note that this is a positive modifier; it increases the DN of the SFX.

Countenance

ESPers' bodies can undergo changes due to side effects of their psionic talents. Some go pale or even blue with a lack of blood flow to their skin, others shake uncontrollably or foam at the mouth, still others get bulging eyes or swollen lolling tongues. The physical shell can react in unpredictable ways to the effects of extrasensory perception.

Countenance Chart	
Countenance shift	Modifier
Noticeable (gray pallor, foaming)	1
Extreme (convulsions, psychic image)	2

Nothing unreal can happen here, eyes can't glow red, or flames billow forth from someone's nostrils, *except as a psychic illusion that only the victim can see*. For example, when Max Batu the shaman plied his craft, his eyes bugged out and he snarled, but to his victim it appeared that his eyes swelled up and glowed with green and yellow pulsing ichor. Now while a bystander might notice the shaman's eyes were bulging and he was straining, they would not see more than a hint of that unholy glow. The policemen that happened on the scene just as Batu attacked Gormley seemed unconcerned, as did everyone else nearby. No matter how much normal people are willing to deny, bulging glowing eyes are a little too extreme to overlook.

This, then, is the drawback to an unreal psychic illusion: no matter what the victim's perceptions and predispositions were before the fact, after the image is seen, the victim is forever firmly convinced that the caster is an inhuman monster that must be exterminated. Only those already endowed with a psychic ability are capable of accepting that image for what it truly is.

24. Unreal Effects: This can only be used if specifically mentioned in the psionic skill's description.

 **ESP Gifts in Detail**

Each description below follows the same format. First, the name of the skill is given, along with a descriptive quote. Following that, we give the proper name of the skill, and, in parentheses, the Attribute upon which it is based. Next we tell what the effect value of the SFX pertains to. For example, with a shaman who tries to injure or kill people with his talent, it pertains to damage. "Interactive" means the effect value does nothing in and of itself, but it, compared to the target's resistance, provides the ESPer with a modifier to future skill attempts with the target. After effect value, we list what the target uses to resist the psychic talent. Finally, we give a game world description of the gift, and game notes as appropriate to the ability.

Necromancer

"He ...he doesn't just talk, Harry, he doesn't ask. Doesn't even try. He just reaches in and takes, steals. You can't hide anything from him. He finds his answers in your blood, your guts, in the marrow of your very bones. The dead can't feel pain, Harry, or they shouldn't. But that's part of his talent, too. When Boris Dragosani works, he makes us feel it. I felt his knives, his hands, his tearing nails. I knew everything he did, and all of it was hell! After one minute I would have told him everything, but that's not his way, it's not his art. How could he be sure I told the truth? But his way he knows it's the truth! It's written in skin and muscle, in ligaments and tendons and corpuscles. He can read it in brain fluid, in the mucus of the eye and ear, in the texture of the dead tissue itself!"

— Sir Keenan Gormley, deceased

Based on: Strength
Effect Value: Interactive
Resisted by: Willpower

Classically speaking, a necromancer is one who practices divination by communicating with the dead. While this definition is essentially true in real life, what is overlooked (or ignored) by this definition is that the necromancer communicates through torture, ripping the secrets of the dead from their souls by ripping their dead body apart with fingers, nails, teeth and tongue.

Remember, a person's body and soul are inextricably united, therefore, for a necromancer, the corpse is a means of accessing the dead person's mind. Manipulating the body allows the necromancer to manipulate the knowledge of the deceased. In essence, the knowledge of the dead is embedded in their spirit, which is embedded in their body. If a necromancer wants that knowledge, all he has to do is rip the body apart and take it out, much like someone ripping open

a long-awaited gift to find the present within (and, necromancers being what they are, it is often done with as much glee).

Unfortunately for the deceased, this action is torture. While lying fallow in the grave, a dead person experiences only the quiet darkness of death, and the hazy indistinct caress of feeling their body slowly transmute into soil. Nothing bad there, just a quiet, lazy, lonely existence. Imagine their shock then, when they discover their loneliness can be violated, when the gentle decomposition of the years is a seeming eternity of violent malicious savagery.

It is torture indeed, a rape of both the body

and soul. The body is torn apart like prey, ripped and broken brutally to reveal every secret, the soul is laid naked before the searing eyes of the interrogator. After a necromantic examination, the remains of the body are grotesque at best, and are often scattered about for several meters. The remains of the soul shudder in fear forever after.

For the necromancer, an interrogation is one part hunt and one part self-flagellation. During an examination, a necromancer lets his basest psychic instincts take control of his mind and body. He tears at the corpse with frenzied lust, using tools only when brute strength alone cannot rend the body fast enough. Necromancers use every sense available to them. As an old Lord of the Wamphyri explained to a new necromancer clutching the corpse of a bird, "Now break open the body! Tear it open! Crush the skull between your fingers and listen to the vapours of the brain! Look at it in your hands, the entrails, the guts and feathers and blood and bones! Taste it! Use all your senses: touch, taste, see, hear, smell! Use all five — and you will discover a sixth!" All of this imposes a psychological burden on these psychics. Rare is the necromancer that does not shudder to find himself gore-spattered after his examination, clutching a spleen in one hand and picking a piece of lung from his teeth with the other. Worse still is the necromancer who enjoys it.

The length of time which has passed since death is of no importance to a necromancer; he can wrest the knowledge from a mummy with almost as much ease as from a person he killed himself. Remember, the soul doesn't go anywhere after death — which is part of what makes a necromancer so frightening: for the victim, there is no escape. On the other hand, this does not mean that a necromancer is unconcerned about how long a corpse has been dead. First of all, the longer a body has decomposed, the harder it is to tear it apart. A body which has rotted thoroughly is already non-contiguous, and it is harder for a necromancer to uncover those secrets. Also, long-dead bodies are a potential source of

ESP: Necromancy

Necromancy Situation	DN Modifier
Body has been dead for less than an hour	-3
Body has been dead for less than six hours	-1
Body has been dead for a week	+1
Body has been dead for a month	+3
Body has been dead for a year	+6
Body is completely rotted	+12
Body is mummified or well-preserved	+1
Necromancer has a surgical suite handy	-1
Necromancer has torture devices handy	-1

disease for the necromancer, and careful precautions must be taken. Finally, long-dead corpses are more psychologically damaging to the necromancer — who wants to taste the brain fluid of someone who reeks of decay, and whose flesh sloughs off the bones at the lightest touch?

Necromancers are rare creatures, which is fortunate considering how obscene it is to watch them at their task. There may be no more than a dozen or so in the world at any time, and many of those who actively practice are found in remote, primitive environments where the people live closer to their primal roots. A necromancer in modern society has little chance — let alone desire — to discover or practice his craft. In all likelihood, any given person will never be within one hundred kilometers of a necromancer, practicing or not.

Using the Skill

Successful use of the *ESP: necromancer* skill allows the character to torture the dead for their secrets. In game terms, the character can use his *ESP: necromancer* skill instead of interrogation on the victim, and gets to do so on people who ordinarily could not be interrogated. The necromancer must make an initial skill roll to get a psychic grip on the dead person's spirit. If he fails this roll, he cannot get a handle on the corpse's psyche, and cannot torture him for his secrets. If he succeeds, he discovers the victim's full identity and any basic biographical information. Also, he gets to torture the victim further. Subtract the victim's *willpower* from the necromancer's *SFX Effect Value*, and apply the result (which may be negative) as a bonus to all subsequent *ESP: necromancer* skill uses. These subsequent skill uses are used to find out specific pieces of information which the necromancer desires. Extracting certain pieces of information requires time and effort; the time required and the DN the necromancer must beat with his skill roll are delineated in the Paranormal Interrogation Table on page 67.

There are several advantages to being a necromancer. The first is that there is no deceit, no lying, no half-truths which are so often used by the living to defy their interrogators. When a living person is being tortured, they'll often either present a believable lie to satisfy the interrogators, or else they'll say anything they think the interrogators want to hear, whatever they think it will take to get the torturer to stop. The dead have no such recourse, because ultimately, this is not a conversation, this is a devouring of facts, ripping of knowledge straight from the soul. The necromancer knows that everything he steals is the absolute truth, pulled from the bleeding mind with his own bare hands. The dead can try to hide the knowledge, but cannot endeavor to conceal it behind a falsehood. This, then, is the biggest advantage of a necromancer: everything they discover is absolutely true.

The second advantage of a necromancer is that he can access knowledge that was lost to the person while they were yet alive. Every fact we've ever known is buried deep in our consciousness somewhere, locked up in our cells and marrow. And if it's there, a necromancer can get to it, no matter how badly he needs to rend your flesh or grind your bones. To be sure, the longer a fact has been forgotten the harder it is



Marshall Andrews III



Thomas O'Neill

for a necromancer to find. Pulling childhood memories from the corpse of an old man is akin to finding a needle in a haystack, but it can be done. With the haystack, you pull it apart straw by straw. With a corpse, a very similar approach is used.

The third advantage is that a necromancer can often sense when the knowledge is there to be taken. When a dead person desperately wants to conceal a certain fact from a necromancer, he and the necromancer should make an opposed roll of *ESP: necromancer* against *willpower*. If the necromancer wins the roll, he can tell if the fact is there to be found. Once he knows it's there, he'll eventually find it. Of course, most necromancers, even if they don't know the fact is there for certain, spend a lot of time looking anyway. The search itself is usually enough to cause most victims to yield up their secrets. If not, well, the search has its own rewards to a veteran necromancer.

The final advantage of a necromancer is that he can take all the time he wants to. Unlike living interrogations where the victim makes a lot of noise and might pass out from pain or blood loss, there is no escape for the dead. Eventually, unless the necromancer himself passes out from exhaustion, everything will be found out. Of course, even if the necromancer pushes himself to collapse, he can return once he's recovered from the strain. For the dead, there is no recovery.

As you might expect, there are drawbacks to necromancy as well. In order to tear the flesh apart, the necromancer must be able to lay his hands physically on the corpse, at least the first time. Because of this, the chance to catch a nasty disease has already been mentioned. In this manner they are much the same as necrosopes; they must make first contact with a dead person up close and personal, but unlike necrosopes, necromancers lack the telepathic aspect to their powers, and cannot contact their targets from a long range.

There are also dangers inherent in getting that intimate with someone who was poisoned; if the poison is long-lasting or very toxic (mercury, for example), a necromancer might well sicken or die shortly after completing his examination. The psychological stress of tearing dead bodies apart causes lasting problems for some necromancers. And, as one might expect, their art is not terribly well-received in most social circles, nor is grave-robbing, so most necromancers must be very circumspect about getting the subjects for their interviews.

Additionally, although there is no feedback on ESP talents, there are direct drawbacks as well. Necromancers tend to go into a trance when they focus on their extrasensory abilities. It's as if the extrasensory stimuli completely eclipse the normal sensory stimuli. When a necromancer is in this state, it can be difficult to get them out of it: see the description of Trance under ESP Special Effects Rules Adjustments, on page 34.

Since necromancers are very rare, a player who wants to create a necromancer character must get gamemaster approval. If more than one character wants to become a necromancer, we suggest that they roll dice. The high roll becomes a necromancer, and the low roll must take a psychic gift of the gamemaster's choice.

Necroscope

"I know more than you can possibly imagine. And what I don't know I can get to know — almost anything."

— Harry Keogh

Based on: Charisma

Effect Value: Interactive

Resisted by: Confidence

Necrosopes are the very rarest type of ESPer, so rare that it is thought that there have never been more than three in existence at any given time throughout all of recorded history. Literally speaking, "necroscope" means an instrument for viewing the dead. While this is perhaps not the most technically accurate term

— "necrophone" might almost be better, since the psychic communication most closely imitates speaking — it nonetheless conveys this rarest of extrasensory talents well. A necroscope is one who can communicate with the dead, speak with them, learn from them, and even at times channel them. They have been described by those lying in their graves a light in the darkness, because they are someone for the dead to talk to in their quiet isolation, a medium through which they can complete the things their deaths forced them to leave undone.

As we mentioned earlier, the dead lie in their graves quietly, no longer able to manipulate their body (at least so they think). There is no conventional way to communicate with the dead; they cannot read or hear or speak. They do not know touch, unless the person touching them is a necromancer, one with a particular psychic ability to rend the soul by destroying the body. Blind, deaf, and dumb, there is no way for ordinary people to reach them ... but necrosopes are no ordinary people.

The activities of necromancers notwithstanding, the dead want to talk. The difference between a necroscope and a necromancer is that a necromancer forces his victims to surrender their truths under torture. A necroscope's approach is much more genteel; necrosopes are typically accepted as peers, and the dead are willing to share with them. It's human nature to want to show off if you've got something, or to talk with anyone if you're lonely. As a general rule, necrosopes are congenial people, interested in bettering the world around them. Arrogant and hostile necrosopes often find their contacts have little to say. This rejection alone is usually sufficient to open their minds up to the sufferings of others.

Necrosopes bypass the ordinary physical media of communications, and speak with the dead directly, one mind to another. Most of the time it is equivalent to simply speaking with the dead, having a conversation as one would with any living person. Give and take, presenting thoughts as words, etc. This level of communication — words and sentences — is known as "deadspeaking." However, if the necroscope trusts the dead person (which they generally can, since few dead people are likely to double-cross the only person they can talk to), it can become a very intimate style of communication indeed.

The necroscope can open the channel wider, not forcing thoughts and knowledge to be throttled through mere words but instead allowing for gestalt communication — conversation not through granular words and sentences, but through living ideas. The reason such communication requires trust is that at these times the differentiation between one mind and another begins to blur, and opening your inner mind to another consciousness is a concept most people are loathe to try.

This technique, known as "vectoring," is how the necroscope can learn skills from the dead. By communing with the

Raising the Dead

As Harry Keogh was so fond of saying, the dead love him. They would do anything in their power for him, including rising from the cold earth in their rotting shells to protect him. This is not a power restricted only to Harry Keogh. Any necroscope with a powerful enough talent and fine enough skill can call the dead from their graves.

First the necroscope must speak with the dead in the area, establishing a link with them. He then decides how many of the dead he's going to ask for help. For each of the dead he attempts to raise there is a cumulative -2 to his *ESP: necroscope* skill total. A skill check is made for each of the dead to be raised and compared to the corpse's Confidence. The total result points are read on the Push Column of the Result Chart. On a result of *Spectacular* or higher, that dead person will rise and assist the necroscope.

Just as the stats of people vary, so do those of the dead. The following are "average" stats for a newly dead person. Physical stats should be lower for the long dead.

AVERAGE REANIMATED CORPSE

AGILITY	8
DEXTERITY	7
ENDURANCE	13
STRENGTH	14
TOUGHNESS	13
INTELLECT	8
MIND	8
CONFIDENCE	8
CHARISMA	5

dead and living their experiences vicariously, a necroscope can build up a store of knowledge and training in a short amount of time. Vectoring can also be used to access the skills of the dead, use them as a sort of library for personal use. With vectoring, a necroscope who speaks only English can contact a dead bilingual, and then begin speaking in a second language using the deceased's skills. This is how the line between consciousnesses is blurred, then: one brain can access the memories of another as if they were its own.

And if the line can be blurred, be certain that it can be removed altogether. This is known as "channeling," and at these times it may seem as though the necroscope is a person possessed. The two minds, necroscope and dead, become as one, each drawing on the full store of knowledge of the other. Not simply knowledge, though, but also fears, mannerisms, idiosyncrasies, accents, and style. For the necroscope, this is a method of quickly accessing knowledge that would otherwise take long months or even years to learn ... why study brain surgery from a renowned doctor, when you can channel him right now and save your friend's life? The deceased gets a gift, as well, the chance to live again, only for a short while and in someone else's body to be sure, but to live again and practice and display those skills which were learned in life and honed in the quiet of death. The channeled spirit must access the instinctive balance and awareness of body that the necroscope carries with him, but the actions are those of the channeled personality.

When channeling, the necroscope cannot hold anything back if it is to work. He must yield up control of his body to become a dual personality with the dead person in command. The necroscope's consciousness is forced into the cerebellum and brain stem, just to make sure that the body continues to function. It is up to the channeled personality to voluntarily leave the living shell, or else the necroscope must force the interloper out through willpower alone. This is why a necroscope should never attempt to channel a willful and devious person like Ted Bundy. To do so is to invite a long and difficult battle of wills with someone who has nothing to lose.

Using the Skill

Before speaking to the dead, one must first make introductions. The reasons behind this are exactly the same as the reasons for introducing oneself to the living: to let them know who you are, why you want to talk to them, etc. It has the added benefit of letting the dead know you *can* talk to them: a fact which is generally received with some surprise. While a necroscope's talent can have near-infinite range, introductions are generally done at short range. This is because the world is filled with dead people rotting two meters or so under the soil, and introducing oneself to a corpse at long range is much akin to trying to

catch the attention of a stranger a hundred meters away in a crowded mall.

To be sure, it is possible to make contact with dead people at whatever range your talent can support, but you must know exactly who it is you're contacting, exactly where they're buried, and there can't be too many dead people around them. For example, a necroscope could stand a few hundred meters away from Grant's Tomb and attempt to contact the late leader. The tomb is visible, the necroscope knows who's buried inside, and there's not a litter of other bodies in the

mausoleum. Note, however, that unless the necroscope knows exactly where inside the tomb Grant is buried, or unless he has an area of effect on his SFX, it might take a good many tries before he "hits" Grant's body with his psionic probe and makes contact. As you can see, then, it's generally much easier to go and sit on someone's grave and give it a short shot.

ESP: Necroscope	
Necroscopic situation	Modifier
Deceased is family or close relative	-3
Deceased is an acquaintance	-1
Deceased just wants to talk	-1
Deceased knows and doesn't like 'scope	+1
Deceased knows and hates 'scope	+3 or more

Once contact is made, the necroscope can summon that person again and again, as long as they're within range. You can consider the necroscope to have the dead person's psychic phone number or something similar. Recreating contact at a hundred kilometers is no harder than recreating contact at two meters, if the necroscope's SFX has the range.

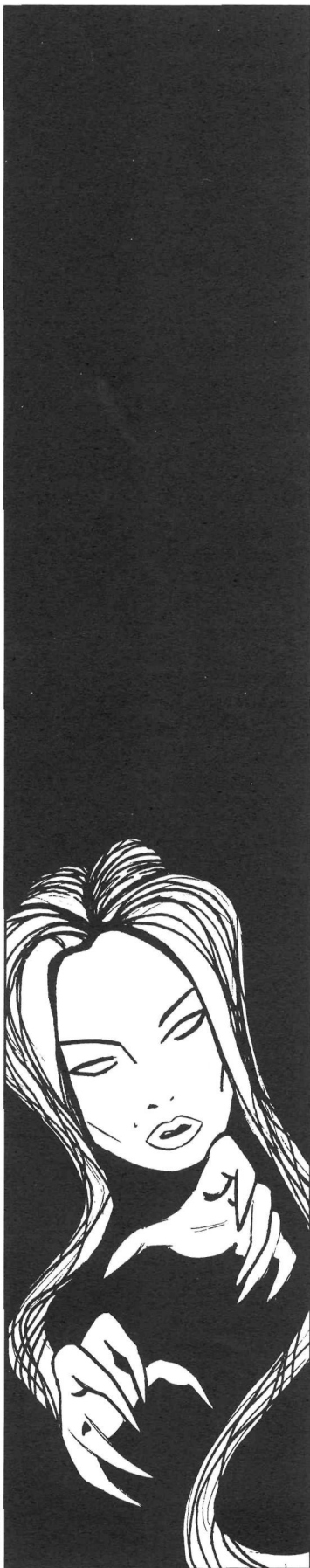
The necroscopic art is an unusual one, a talent which subsumes the real for the metaphysical. As do necromancers when they ply their craft, necrosopes go into a trance when they reach out for the minds of the dead. To disconnect themselves from the world of the dead and return to vivid world of real life a necroscope must be awakened by someone else: see the description of Trance under ESP Special Effects Rules Adjustments, on page 34.

Conversely, this also means that when the necroscope is not in the real world for reasons other than using his necroscopic SFX, he is open to communication from people he knows — the dead who have been previously contacted. In other words, when a necroscope is stunned, unconscious, or sleeping, he naturally extends his mind out in the realm of thought, and might chance upon a familiar tere. At these times it seems to the necroscope that the dead invade his dreams but what really happens is that in his dreamlike state his mind wanders about and it naturally gravitates to those spirits he knows. The dead never sleep of course, so they are always willing to talk to the living, even if the living are snoring away.

Similarly, a necroscope suffering from severe emotional shock can at times access the minds of the dead unbidden. Severe shock cannot be understated here to do this requires the sort of situation where a normal person would say and mean, "I don't believe it"; where suddenly you cease interacting with the real world for a moment. Harry Keogh experienced this when suddenly interrupted by the abrupt arrival of the East German Grenzpolizei, armed and intent on arresting him for espionage. This sort of reactive contact is generally beyond the



Marshall Andrews III



Tim Bobko

control of the necroscope (i.e., your gamemaster will tell you when it happens, or you can play certain cards to achieve it if the gamemaster allows).

Aside from gleaned useful bits of knowledge and trivia through deadspeaking, necrosopes can vector the dead for teaching instruction. Dead teachers count as teachers exactly as any other character, and they are generally more skilled than living teachers, as they've had more time to perfect their craft. There is one problem, however: not only must the teacher make a *teaching* roll to successfully impart their expertise, but the necroscope must also make an *ESP: necroscope* skill roll to keep the channels open well enough to learn the expertise from the dead. The difficulty of this roll is equal to the range value from the necroscope to the deceased, plus double the level of skill which the necromancer wishes to learn.

A necroscope can vector a spirit and use its skills as if they were his own. The necroscope uses the dead person's skill instead of his own, except that the maximum level of skill vectored has restrictions. First of all, for each point that the necroscope's skill's Attribute is less than the Attribute the dead person had (while still alive, if applicable), then the maximum skill level vectored is reduced by one. This is because the necroscope and the dead person have less of a common frame of reference. For example, a necroscope has an Intellect of 8 and two *tracking* adds. He wants to vector a Cherokee hunter who had (and still has, really) an Intellect of 10 and five *tracking* adds. The necroscope has two points less Intellect than the hunter, so he can only vector three *tracking* adds (five adds minus two for the difference in Intellect). This gives the necroscope a skill total of 11 (8 Intellect plus three adds). The difficulty of vectoring skill adds is exactly the same as for vectoring to learn: double the level of skill which the necromancer wishes to be able to use, before subtracting for differences in Attributes.

Channeling is the other form of necroscopic self-possession. When a necroscope channels a dead person's spirit, he lets the dead person take full control of his body. The necroscope no longer uses his own skills, but uses the skills and attributes of the deceased. A necroscope with an Agility of 6 will have a tough time vectoring a *martial arts* specialist because of the differences in the Agility Attribute. But if that necroscope channels the martial artist, the spirit uses his own Agility and *martial arts*, not the necroscope's (this is because the martial arts expert is using his many years of training and reflex to accent the necroscope's instinctive understanding of her own body). At these times the necroscope looks like a caricature of the dead person, like a very good impersonator at work. This is because she really is the other person, the spirit of the deceased is wearing the necroscope's body. Obviously, channeling will not always work well. A person in a wheelchair cannot channel a great runner like Pheidippides and expect to run a marathon; his legs won't function no matter which spirit tries to move them. But normal people can do extraordinary things when channeling.

The difficulty number for channeling is equal to 10 plus the channeled spirit's most appropriate skill total. The "most appropriate" skill total is the Attribute plus skill adds for whatever skill the necroscope is most going to use in this situation. For Harry Keogh channeling "Sergeant" Lane's military training, this would be *unarmed combat* plus Agility. Note that the channeled personality can still use any other skills he (the spirit) possesses. Note also that once channeling or vectoring is finished, the necroscope retains none of the knowledge.

Although deadspeaking, vectoring, and channeling are used to describe various aspects of the necromancer's skill, these are not three separate skills. Any necroscope can do all three of these with equal facility. Of course, since the skill takes on such different aspects, a necroscope could choose to specialize in one of these three applications if the gamemaster allows.

Since necrosopes are so extremely rare, a player who wants to create a necroscope character must get gamemaster approval. If more than one character wants to become a necroscope, we suggest that they roll dice. The high roll

becomes the necroscope, and the low roll must take a psychic gift of the gamemaster's choice — or perhaps suffer with no ESP gift at all! If they tie, neither becomes a necroscope, and the gamemaster can dispose of their extrasensory fate as desired.

Prescient

"Without thinking, he tossed the keys onto an empty corner of the desk. Then he paused and stared at them lying there, forming a pattern — the pattern from this morning's glimpse into the future."

Based on: Intellect

Effect Value: Time

Resisted by: (Not applicable)

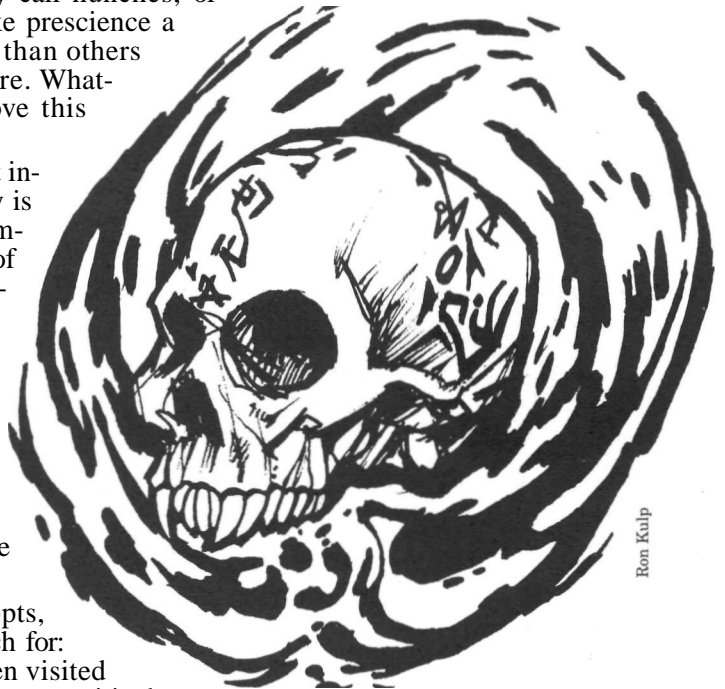
A prescient is a person who has glimpses of the future, foreknowledge of events to come. Prescience may perhaps be the most common form of psychic gift, because countless people around the globe have senses of foreboding or insupportable convictions of the Tightness of a potential action. But though prescience may be common, it is also usually weak; most people experience only the vaguest forms of prescience. These they call hunches, or intuition, or *deja-vu* after the fact. Does this make prescience a common gift, or simply a gift that functions better than others do at very weak power? There's no knowing for sure. Whatever the case, a true prescient is far indeed above this basest norm.

Prescients get hard-core living-color full-contact in-your-face visions of the future. While the imagery is sometimes indistinct or even allegorical and dream-like, there is still a lot more to a fuzzy view of yourself a day hence than there is in an unidentifiable hunch that maybe you ought to go somewhere. Prescients get full audio or visual stimuli, sometimes both, or sometimes with other sensations in attendance. There has been one case of a prescient who suffered full tactile stimulation from his visions. One day he had a vision that he was going to get shot, and was doubled over in pain immediately. He suffered the pain anew the next day; he later joked that he was shot twice by the same bullet, once psychically, once physically.

Whatever shape and senses the imagery adopts, there is one constant that all prescients will vouch for: that is that every vision with which they have been visited has, eventually, turned out to be of dramatic or even critical importance. Why this is so is cause for disagreement among ESP theoreticians.

Those who believe in predestination and the immutability of the future believe that certain events carry with them an emotional resonance. The more important a thing is, the more resonance it builds, and this shock wave can propagate backwards through the fourth dimension (time) along the person's lifeline. Those attuned or sensitive to these waves can read them, see the image that generated the response, and act upon that knowledge to cause that situation to come to pass. In this fashion, many of these important events cause themselves to be created. Opponents of this theory argue that nonexistent events cannot generate their own reality, but proponents point out that the events had already happened — when viewed from the distant future.

The other school of thought is that the future is mutable, and that we can control the choices we make. These people believe that the reason we can see the



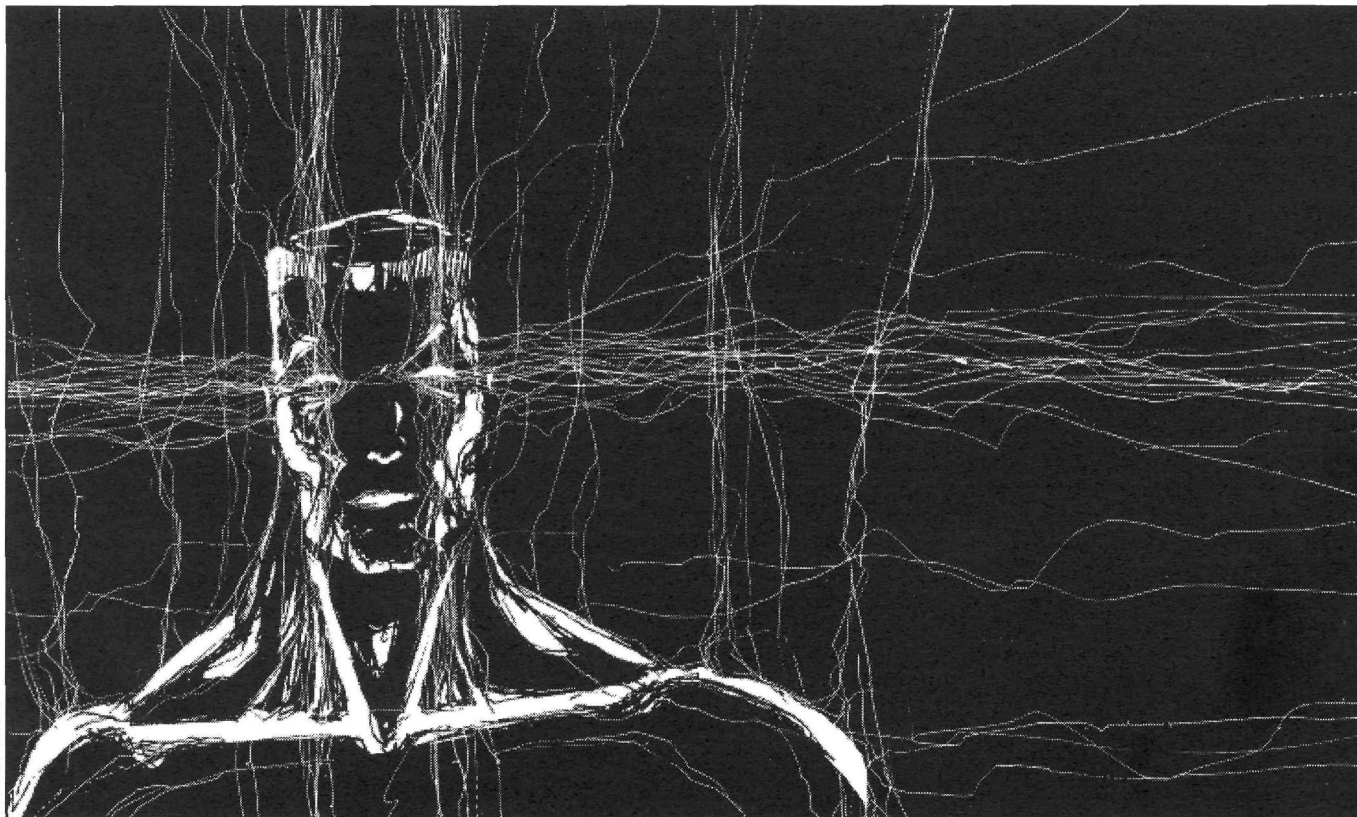
Ron Kulp

future is best explained by a river rafting analogy. In a river, underwater rocks cause water to 'pillow up' about them, causing a disturbance felt before the raft strikes the rock itself. The rafter can then endeavor to avoid this rock. Prescients can therefore sense this impending rock before normal people can, and can take steps to avoid it earlier, but ultimately it is up to the prescients to handle the situation as they like. Detractors of this opinion point out that, with a few unconfirmed exceptions, prescient visions always come to pass. Supporters, however, point out that the prescient who has the vision colors its style; the vision in essence shows what the prescient wants to do — which side of the rock he should paddle for — and therefore that's what the prescient does.

Regardless of the true explanation, most prescients don't want to take a chance at messing with the future, so they abide by the visions they see. In the case of the gunshot prescient, he knew he would get hit. He made no effort to stop it, as he knew it would not be fatal, although he did arrange to have other agents nearby to arrest the person who attempted to kill him — and a few minutes before the attack he called for his own ambulance.

Prescience, like many ESP talents, works best in those misty moments between true sleep and coming awake, immediately prior to full conscious awareness. Right as the prescient falls asleep or right as he wakes up are when the images normally come. Many prescients have made a point to take a few catnaps during the day to increase their receptivity to visions.

Prescients can also (with the aid of a friend) try to prod their talent, force it into action briefly with word association games or Rorschach ink blots. It must be stressed, though, that this is forcing the skill in an unnatural fashion, and any success it meets with is minimal. Brief one-word answers are generally the extent of the results these tactics provide; nothing at all like the clarity of the true visions.



Thomas O'Neill

Using the Skill

As mentioned above, the effect value of the prescient's skill is the time value over which he can detect future events. It is up to the player to determine the senses involved in the prescient visions, but once these senses are chosen, that's how the prescient's SFX works ever after.

Whenever the gamemaster feels a serious event is pending within the prescient's range of time, the prescient makes an *ESP: prescience* skill roll. He must generate a skill total equal to or higher than the DN of his SFX, as modified by the gamemaster for the gravity of the event being foreseen (generally no more than a point or few, unless total global nuclear war is imminent). If the prescient fails, no warnings are given. If the prescient succeeds, she sees a vision of the future. Subtract the prescient SFX's difficulty number from the prescient's skill total. The result is the value of the duration of the vision in seconds, and also pertains to the quality and detail of the information gathered through the vision. With better successes, more information is imparted, and it's imparted more clearly.

For example, Alec Kyle gets a vision one morning. He only beats the DN of his SFX by one point. He gets a brief flash, merely a second and a half long, a vague image of seeing himself walking into Keenan Gormley's office. That's all. He puts on his hat and decides to go. If instead he'd beaten the DN by nine points, he'd get a minute-long image of him looking through files in a certain desk drawer, finding a file, and holding it up so that he can clearly read the name on the top of the index tab. If Kyle had beaten his DN by 30 points, he'd have had a long vision indeed, and rendered in such startling clarity that he could probably recite the contents of the file from the vision alone, and he wouldn't have to go in to the office.

This points out perhaps the biggest fear of prescients: the fear of a paradox. If a prescient needs to find someone's phone number, and they have a vision of themselves in a phone booth finding it, and they get the phone number from the vision, why do they need to look any more? Answer: because it's supposed to have happened. They saw the future, but how can they see it if they don't do it? Prescients have their beliefs, but none really know how they see the future, or exactly what they're seeing. So just to be safe, they make sure they do the things they experience in a vision. No sense in disappearing in a temporal paradox, never to be seen again, right?

The other method of using the skill — free association — is much more trying. The prescient must have a friend around to assist, to prod the prescient with unexpected words or images. Among those in the English INTESP, this procedure is known as "denting." In essence, what the quizzing friend is doing is trying to hit the prescient with something out of the ordinary, and hoping he'll react with ESP instead of with logic. As with having visions, the DN for this task is equal to the prescient's SFX difficulty, and the quality of the response increases with increasing successes. However, for every point by which the prescient beats the DN, she takes one shock point and increases her DN for the next free association by one point. Quizzing can only continue until the prescient misses a roll, and cannot be undertaken again until the gamemaster decrees.

For example, Deanna has a prescience SFX with a DN of 14. She gets quizzed by a friend of hers, and rolls a 17 for her first skill total. She gets a Solid success, but suffers three shock and her next DN is 17. On the next question, she rolls an astounding 35! This is a Spectacular + success, so she blurts out a critical piece of information and passes out cold from taking an additional 18 shock. It's just as well she passed out: with her next DN being 35, she'd likely have missed the next prodding and the questioning would have had to stop anyway.

Seer

"When I look at a man — when I try to see into his future — I normally detect a straight blue line extending forward. Like a line drawn down a sheet of paper

from top to bottom. Call it his line of life, if you wish. From the length of this line lean work out the length of the man's life. From kinks and deviations which occur in it, I can determine something of future occurrences and how they will affect him."

— Igor Vlady

Based on: Mind

Effect Value: Time

Resisted by: (Not applicable)

Every living sentient creature carves an ethereal path through the nonexistence of polyreality as it leads its life; essentially it's a path of where the sentient went, not just physically but also emotionally and intellectually. Perhaps it is best considered a metaphysical trail left by the mind and soul as it grows, changes, and evolves through its existence in whatever space-time universe in which it resides. These lines extend backward from the creature to reveal everywhere where it has been and thought and felt in the past, and similarly they extend forward to cover wherever the sentient will have once gone when viewed from a future perspective.

Seers are ESPers who can see these lines extending from the hearts of people. As mentioned above, these lines are the trails of the heart and soul, and they have bends, squiggles, kinks, and frays wherever the owner had an experience of some sort. With practice, a seer can learn to interpret these deviations and make a reasonably accurate forecast of the future.

Furthermore, when a seer can see multiple lines and examine how they interact, the seer can make predictions about interrelationships or outside events which will impact the people being read. When lives interact, the lifelines cross each other. The tangles and deviations indicate how. When two lifelines cross and they both experience nearly the same aberrations, the seer can determine that the two either get along well, or else they both experience the same outside influence. When two lifelines cross and one swells with power, the seer can determine that one has caused injury to the other; perhaps the suffering person was mugged, got fired, or the other was someone the one had been hoping to avoid.

Death is perhaps the event most easily read, for the simple reason that only living people have lifelines. When a person dies, the lifeline stops. If the death is traumatic, the line ends abruptly. The line fades to black during lingering hospital-bound cancer deaths and the like. Whatever the cause, if there's no lifeline after a certain point, the seer can be certain that there's no life, either.

All sentients have lifelines. For human beings, these lines are bright blue in color. Vampire lines are bright blood red in color. When a person is infected by a vampire, their lines merge, and the blue of the human's line shifts slowly through purple and then to red as it is gradually consumed by the vampire's undead lifeline. The lines of less intelligent creatures like cats and dogs are much dimmer than those of humans and vampires, and thus they are easily overlooked by most seers.

In theory, a seer could read a person's lifeline (and those of their descendants) all the way to the end of time or all the way back to time's beginning. Fortunately (in the minds of most seers), ESP skills are not quite that powerful. It wouldn't be much fun to know the future of the planet for all time.

There is a constant argument among seers about the permutability of the future. Some seers claim to be able to see multiple future timelines for a person, and argue that each split is indicative of a potential future which will only come to pass if the person being read exercises free choice and causes one or the other to come into existence. Detractors of this theory are those seers who can only see one future timeline. To these seers, the future is immutable, and any attempt to avoid it will somehow cause it to come into existence. In their opinion, the seers which can see multiple lines see the one true future and several other ghost

images which can never come to pass. Multiple-line seers maintain that those who see only one line have less flexible a talent, as they are unable to forecast all the possible futures. There is also a third camp of seers who maintain that such attempts to define the flexibility of the future is an exercise in pointless philosophizing, since trying to make sound predictions based on squiggly blue lines is a vague art at best, and a far cry indeed from a hard science.

Regardless of their beliefs in the mutability or unavailability of the future, seers almost uniformly avoid forecasting their own future. This has become a bit of a superstition among the ESPionage circles, but the basic causes are twofold: the desire to avoid a paradox and the fear of seeing your own lifeline end ten minutes down the road. Some seers hypothesize that the shock of seeing your lifeline end ten seconds from now might be enough to give you a massive cardiac arrest. Such possibilities are enough to prevent the overwhelming majority of seers from attempting autodivination.

Using the Skill

The effect value of the seer's SFX directly relates to the amount of time of the target's lifeline the seer can visualize. In addition, seers must concern themselves with the number of targets they can use their SFX on. If the seer can only affect one target, then the seer can only see that person's lifeline. Purchasing additional targets for the ESPer's SFX can either let the seer read two people at once and watch how they interact, or else let the seer read one person and be able to notice additional lines (possibly even lines belonging to persons unknown to the ESPer) as they interact with the person being read.

Seers tend to be polarized into those who can see the past and those who can see the future. Those who can see into the future are perhaps the most useful, but those who can see the past are in high demand as interviewers for high-security positions (like every position in an E-branch). A character can have his seer SFX be able to visualize both a person's past and future by adding a target to the SFX specifically to provide double coverage. This allows the seer to see both the target's past and future for a time equal to the SFX's effect value (in each direction).

When a seer makes a reading, the amount by which the player beats the DN of the SFX determines the accuracy of the reading. The quickest and easiest way to do this is to give the seer one fact for each point by which the roll beats the DN. Yes, since having a greater effect value increases the DN of the seer's SFX, this means that the farther ahead a seer can trace a line, the fewer facts will be determined by the same skill check die roll. On the other hand, since such a reading covers more time, the facts the seer discovers are much more likely to be important. Finding out the most important event for the next week of someone's life is helpful. A seer who easily gleans ten facts for the next sixty seconds of someone's life is not going to prove useful at all.

Even though seers can spot the lines of unknown people as they interact with the lifeline of the person being read, they cannot trace the lifeline backwards to find out who the person is without considerable effort. Life threads are neither regular nor constrained to three dimensions, and the interactions between the threads of two lifelines might be physical (such as bumping onto someone on the street) or intangible (like talking on the phone). The only time a seer can definitively trace an unidentified lifeline back to the owner is when the owner is within both visual range and ESP range, and (of course) the lifeline interaction being traced backwards from is within the SFX's effect value. In those circumstances, it does not matter if the person will leave the seer's line of sight and then return later; the life thread is a metaphysical structure, and the seer can see the entire thread from interaction all the way back to the person's heart — in defiance of Newtonian range restrictions.

Regardless of the strength and power of the seer's SFX, a seer can't see everything; there are simply too many life threads out there to account for, which

may be related to why most seers can see only from one to ten life threads at a time. It appears to be some sort of subconscious editing function in the brain which eliminates the background garbage. It's very similar to how a person reading a newspaper focuses on only a few letters in one column at a time: with peripheral vision the reader notices that other letters are around, but as they are at this time unimportant, they remain unidentified and ignored. They might be in a different paragraph or even an unrelated story, so how (if at all) they interact with what the person is focusing on is unknown. This parallels how seers ignore other lifelines, occasionally even lifelines that they might consider important, if only they knew.

With this restriction, the amount a seer can determine might be severely restricted. For example, Igor Vlady, when making a reading for Chateau Bronnitsy, could see that the lifelines of most of the people began to terminate. There was interaction between them, but the interaction appeared to be cooperative as opposed to mutually destructive. Nevertheless, it was obvious that something very bad was about to happen and many Russians would die, but he couldn't tell what it was. Why is this? Because he didn't notice Harry Keogh's life thread. He had never met Harry Keogh, and he wasn't reading for him. Thus to Igor, Harry's line wasn't visible. In a similar vein, seers can miss the passing lifeline of suicide bombers, assassins, and passers-by. By subconsciously (or even consciously) screening out nonessential life threads, they might overlook a life thread which could cause certain readings to make sense.

Although lifelines may be seen to dim with a person's diminishing vitality, they are almost never so faded as to be invisible to a seer. This is because the lifelines are seen as threads of neon color against a perfectly black background, a backdrop so black it defies imagination, and even the faintest of neon lights is still readily visible against such a backdrop. (If you ever want to see this deep a black, go on a cavern tour where they shut out the lights underground. Then you'll understand.)

Similarly, seers can pick up the terminated life threads of dead people as long as the seer can see the past and the death occurred within the time value of the ESPer's SFX effect value. This does not require any additional die rolls, as to the seer the deceased person's lifeline will seem to be pointing straight to their heart — even at the extreme end of the seer's chronological range, the attachment is blatantly obvious. This would seem to be problematic if the dead person's body were moved, but for some inexplicable reason it is not the case. Seers believe it is because a person's life threads are not an actual physical path, but rather a metaphysical path. Since the path covers events both real and spiritual, it can also be used to determine a physical path for the person in question, but since it is primarily a metaphysical path, it will always appear to a seer to be pointing at the deceased owner. Whatever the explanation, a seer can pick up the threads of a dead person without pause and make some determination of the person's cause of death, and perhaps even whether foul play was involved.

The only exception to all of the above appears to be thanks to vampires, naturally enough. It can happen that when a person is killed by a vampire, they die outright. Yet the vampire implanted within manages to survive and rebuild the person into a state of so-called undeath, and the person can rise and live again, after a fashion. To a seer, the lifeline of the victim of such an event may appear to terminate, then resume after a few days with a slight reddish tinge. Of course, most seers don't expect lifelines to begin again, so such anomalies are easily missed ...

Sensitive

"I can't help it. I'm drawn to this place like a moth to a flame. Everywhere I go, Chernobyl is burning in my mind, lighting the dim world like a great flare. So too are the other reactors, everywhere. They are so beautiful, comrade ..."

— Josef Rossovskiy

Based on: Intellect

Effect Value: Special (see text)

Resisted by: (Not applicable)

Everything has a tangible essence of some sort, be it spiritual, energetic, physical, or all three. Sensitives are those ESPers whose sixth sense is attuned to allow them to perceive some sort of unusual essence. There are sensitives who are attuned to electricity, there are those who are paranormally receptive to heat, there are those who can perceive chemical activity. There can be fine discrimination between types of sensitives, also. A sensitive who can spot radioactive materials can tell if someone has a few kilos of plutonium. In contrast, someone sensitive to nuclear energy would be able to tell if a few kilos of plutonium were exploded. Neither would be well-suited to detect what the other can; there aren't many radioactive materials left a few seconds after a nuclear explosion, but until it is detonated a bomb emits very little nuclear energy.

Whatever it is that they are keyed to, sensitives can detect it. Huge compilations can be detected by attuned sensitives around the globe. Smaller amounts of the proper item can only be detected at short range unless there is little or no interference between the source and the sensitive attuned to it. In this sense, the item or activity to which a sensitive is keyed can be considered to be like mounds, hills and mountains. Small sources are like mounds, and can only be detected at short range unless the ground (the ambient background) is very flat. Hills — moderate sources — can be detected from a good distance, and huge sources are like mountains which can be detected easily and clearly for a good many miles in any direction.

Whatever the source for a particular sensitive, they carry in their mind's eye a map of the world keyed exclusively to those items or activities. For some, these images are only visible when they close their eyes, for others the sensitivity is overlaid upon their normal senses and may give them a sort of psychic blind spot under the proper circumstances. For example, a sensitive keyed to heat might detect a pot of hot liquid on a stovetop, but be unable to identify the liquid because the paranormal image of the heat completely conceals the liquid from his normal eyesight. The pot would seem to glow red, obscuring the contents.

Whichever the case, the imagery can imitate any of the senses, even an itch or a peculiar taste or a sense of vertigo. It can even be some other sense which, without an adequate frame of reference, sensitives have been unable to explain to anyone else. Even among sensitives, this "other sense" seems to differ dramatically, and a few are very discomfited by experiencing it.

However it is experienced, sensitives know what



Thomas O'Neill

Sensitive: Optional Rule

If you want increased realism at the cost of a little more complexity, don't use the target value and range value, use the measures instead. Then convert the difference between the measures back into a value and continue. The formula then looks like this:

Success = Value [(Target measure) - (Range measure)] + (SFX effect value) + (ESP skill roll modifier)

This makes short ranges of no consequence when detecting large items like nuclear plants, because the range measure will be swallowed by the huge target measure. Conversely, it makes detecting small items at long range very hard indeed, because the range measure becomes by far the greater. We recommend this for maximum realism.

it is and they know what it means. This makes sensitives very valuable to the ESPionage world in general; they are better than standard sensory equipment, and many of them can detect items for which specific detection devices cannot be built. Sensitives have been used to track nuclear-powered submarines (and surface vessels) and surveillance satellites, and to capture people attempting to sneak across international borders. One drug sensitive (who experienced the appropriate highs as the drugs got closer to hand) spent time helping apprehend drug smugglers until he had to retire for psychiatric help and addiction/withdrawal therapy.

Sensitives are useful tools in the ESPionage arena, and are in high demand. While they lack the straightforward and active effects of the telepaths and psychokinetics, the extra intelligence they provide can be an invaluable aid in any undertaking.

Using the Skill

Sensitives were the most difficult of the ESP skills to design and balance for play. This is due to the interaction between the *MasterBook* system and the way sensitives

were described in the novels. *MasterBook* is a very active system, which is as it should be in a roleplaying game where most of the activity is action-oriented. Further, as *MasterBook* values increase, the measures get exponentially higher. On the other hand, sensitives are not at all active ESPers; they are passive receptors. Also, and even worse, the higher a sensitive's SFX effect value, the smaller items he should be able to detect — inverse to the more-is-bigger approach of *MasterBook*.

We decided we needed to meet the following criteria:

- a. large or powerful objects should be easier to detect
- b. large or powerful objects should be visible at longer ranges
- c. increasing effect value always helps, and
- d. no ceilings or floors should be artificially imposed.

We were able to do this by using the *MasterBook* system backwards, after a fashion. In essence, the sensitive is not the actor, the item which the sensitive can detect is the actor and the sensitive is a passive antenna which detects the activity. The greater the source, the easier it is to detect. The longer the range, the harder it is to detect. The greater the SFX value, the easier the detection. These all happen to work out into a neat little formula which sensitives use:

Success = (Target value) - (Range value) + (SFX effect value) + (ESP skill roll modifier)

In other words, when a sensitive is trying to detect something, start by taking the target's value. For nuclear sensitives, this could be the mass of uranium present, possibly modified by purity or the radioactivity of the particular isotope. For an ESPer sensitive to electrical power, it could be the value of the watts produced by power plant's generators. Subtract the range value as measured from the target to the sensitive from this value (the result can be negative). This reflects the increasing difficulty in detecting items a long way away. Add the ESPer's effect value — the higher the value, the easier time the sensitive has detecting the target. Then, add the ESP skill roll modifier, which is either the amount by which the ESPer's skill roll exceeded the SFX DN, or else the amount by which the sensitive failed the *ESP: sensitive* skill roll (yes, it is possible for a sensitive to detect something even with a failed skill roll; some things are too big to miss).

The result of the calculation should be checked on the General Success Chart. A negative number is a complete failure—nothing is detected at all—and higher positive numbers result in more information with higher veracity and detail. For example, a sensitive who can detect radioactive material scores a Minimal success. He can tell that there is a small amount of radioactive material at an unknown distance more or less east of his position. On a Spectacular+ success, he can tell that there's twenty kilos of weapons-grade materials three and a half kilometers east-southeast of him and thirty meters higher in elevation than where he now stands.

Even with the same success level, the accuracy of the information depends on the range from the source to the sensitive. This is due to the simple fact that more detail can be gleaned at close range. A sensitive within a kilometer of a submerged nuclear submarine can tell a lot about the radioactive materials on that sub, including being able to differentiate between the radioactive signatures of the reactor and the missiles, and perhaps even between the missiles themselves. Were that same sensitive to detect the submarine at a range often or a hundred kilometers, the extrasensory images of the nuclear materials would blur and merge into one fuzzy impression. Think of looking at trees on a distant mountain; you can tell they're there, but you can't distinguish one from the other.

When designing sensitives, the player must choose both what sort of material or energy the sensitive is keyed to, and also whether the sensitive can detect these items with eyes open, or with eyes closed only. For that matter, it is possible that the sensitive uses one of the other senses to detect whatever it is; a sensitive might experience a ringing in the ears, a peculiar taste, or a sense of vertigo. It's all up to the player.

Finally, even those sensitives who have to concentrate to use their talent occasionally have the images of their keyed source impinge on their conscious unexpectedly. No matter what kind of trance a nuclear sensitive has to go into



Marshall Andrews III

to work his talent, he'll almost certainly notice when he drives past a large thermonuclear plant or passes right next to a terrorist's nuclear bomb. Generally, this is left up to the gamemaster to determine (as is the case with every ESPer *deus ex machina*), but a good rule of thumb is that if the source value minus the range value is ten or more, the sensitive might pick up the source involuntarily (have the ESPer roll a skill check, but don't add in the SFX effect value).

Shaman

"He saw Batu's face silhouetted against the night, and one eye which was a yellow slit while the other was round and green and throbbing as if filled with sentient pus! Something passed from that face to Gormley as fast as the thrust of a mental knife; its razor edge located his spirit, his very soul, and opened them up!"

Based on: Confidence

Effect Value: Damage (various types)

Resisted by: Toughness or other attribute (ignores armor)

Traditionally, the evil eye has been a power reputed to be able to inflict curses or bad luck on people with but a glance. If you consider immediate horror and pain unknowable to most mortals to be "bad luck" (as most people do), then this description is basically right. Except that commonly the evil eye is no ordinary glance but a horrid and appalling spectacle.

Someone who possesses the power of the evil eye is known as a shaman. This label is perhaps a deliberate misapplication by Gregor Borowitz, former head of the Soviet Agency for the Development of Paranormal Espionage, as the first ESPer of this sort which Borowitz found was a Central Asian herdsman but not at all a spiritualist. Whatever the original source, the label has stuck and is now in common usage across the globe.

A shaman is one of the few ESPers whose unusual talent causes a direct physical effect, yet it does this through a spiritual medium (no pun intended). The evil eye is the channel through which a shaman inflicts a direct spiritual attack upon another person. This sort of direct spiritual interaction still baffles paranormal researchers around the globe, because it's the only instance known wherein direct spiritual contact has extended past pure communication. Telepathy is communication, even Wamphyri mind control is communication, albeit of a more assertive nature. Some argue that a shaman is even more forceful about their communication than the Wamphyri are, being able to order the target's brain stem to stop pumping the heart. Others maintain that it is a direct spirit-to-spirit assault, the psychic equivalent of a brutal roundhouse punch to the face. Shamans themselves (the few that there are) are divided on the issue, but the exhausting effect that the evil eye has on shamans gives credence to the concept that the evil eye is more than just psychic shouting.

Furthermore, the evil eye does not necessarily have to be a glance. Although most shamans have a killing look, there have been some shamans who used hand gestures (like the infamous "quivering palm") and there is one well-documented but rather ineffective shaman who made an ungodly sound which rose from a hiss to a growl and suddenly burst into a shrieking bark. All of these had a similar effect on the target; they were all simply different media for the spiritual assault to use.

Using the evil eye (or the horrid hand or the bilious bark or whatever) is a draining experience for the shaman; rare indeed is the shaman who can cast it more than twice in the span of a few minutes. It is a great drain, and although it causes the victim's heart to lurch and inflicts great pain, it generally is not powerful enough a talent to actually kill those who are not already weakened by weak hearts, advanced age, or other medical conditions. (Domestic and prey animals, having less willpower than most humans, are also liable to be killed

Designer's Notes on Psionic SFX

The ESP talents presented in *Necroscope* posed a bit of a challenge to simulate using the standard SFX rules of *MasterBook*. This is because the gifts sported by the characters in the book were not skills they'd picked up, but rather traits they exhibited. In the *MasterBook* example, Mike the Magister creates and throws a fireball fireballs don't just happen to be flying around wherever he walks. What Mike the Magister is doing is funneling the raw stuff of magic and sending it elsewhere before it blows up in his face first.

In comparison, many of the psychics in *Necroscope* don't even have to concentrate on their powers to use them. For Alec Kyle, his visions just happened, usually when he half-asleep and therefore was least prepared to try to force his ability to manifest itself. Neither Sir Keenan Gormley nor Viktor Shukshin ever tried to use their spotter skills; the talents simply worked all the time. In *Necroscope*, then, ESPers are not trying to do anything; their talents are as inherent to their existence as seeing and breathing is to yours.

How, then, to simulate these intrinsic and unchangeable talents using the SFX system? First of all, it became apparent that the backlashing feedback effects should be dropped out completely. In *Necroscope*, there is no evidence of any feedback, with the single exception of Max Batu, more about whom will be written in a moment. Harry Keogh contacted as many as a dozen dead spirits in a row and then gated around the world via Möbius gates without tiring. He communed with dead guys day after day for hours with no ill effects. Dragosani, while he was grossed out by his work early on, never seemed actually physically harmed by it. In short, in the book, there is almost no reason given not to use your powers, and many people do not have a choice but to use them all the time.

In Chateau Bronnitsy, a telepath and a sensitive worked what appeared to be eight-hour shifts, constantly psionically aware. Were they risking their lives? Not that was ever mentioned. Even Max Batu, who said that the effort of killing someone would kill him first, seemed to toss off evil eyes left and right just to get people who annoyed him. Here, then, I think it's not feedback that endangers Max, but strain. In the same fashion, the effort of lifting a ton would kill Max, and since the shaman is the only psionic type that can physically damage people, we decided we could handle it a little differently than the others.

So feedback was abrogated. Now what about simulating the talents? First, let's take a look at the sub-hunting telepath in Chateau Bronnitsy and develop a DN for his SFX telepathy skill. Let's give him an effect value of 13, so he can get into most people's minds. His range value is about 36, to be able to range across the globe. To hit a small moving target a few thousand kilometers away, his speed must be instantaneous, for another 36. Let's give him a duration of one minute — just enough time to poke around a little for 9 points. Casting time we'll say is nearly instantaneous, since if it weren't there'd be no way he could hit a moving target (this means his DN doesn't get reduced). Even ignoring focus, which he'd almost have to have to stay in contact with a moving submarine, we're already up to a DN of 94. That's a lot. Admittedly, he's a high-power telepath, having (presumably) years of experience, but he used no community, no components, no gestures or incantations, and he did not appear to use much concentration, because he was not bothered by the interruption of Boris and Gregor, nor did Gregor appear to be concerned about interrupting him. Yet he was a successful telepath — was he consistently beating a DN of 94? We think not.

Okay, so the existing characters in the book appear to have a high DN — maybe they're just superstars. Let's take a starting seer character for another example. She can only see one week into the future (effect: 29) of someone nearby (range: 2). It takes a few seconds (speed: 0) and her sight provides only an instantaneous glimpse (duration: 0). It takes her a minute to "get focused" (casting time: -9), but she can look at up to three people to see how their lines interact (multi-target: 9). The effect is focused (focus: 21) so she can spy on people. This gives her a DN of 52. Even if she has to use a related skill to interpret the squiggly lines, this only gets down to 48 or so.

Similarly, a basic necroscope got a DN of 47, and a weak shaman a 39. These DNs are too high for starting characters, we're sure you'll agree. Part of the difficulty lies in that we disallow feedback (to divide the DN into pieces) and most of the modifiers players can use to bring the DN and FV down. Therefore we decided to allow the players to partition the SFX into DN and FV, but to use feedback for another, non-lethal game effect. This is also justified since the SFX cannot be altered once it is created (although we have allowed for players to spend skill points to "grow" in their skill). This allows players to develop weak enough SFX powers for their starting characters, yet gives the power the chance to grow with the character's skill.

We like the balance we found, as it generally seems to give starting talents a DN of 20 or so. If you prefer more high-power gaming, allow your players to cut the value of their ESP skill by a third or more before they split the "number into FV and DN. That'll start the brains a-poppin'!

outright by the casting of an evil eye.) To try to push the evil eye harder to kill a normal, healthy person outright involves more effort than a shaman can typically produce without killing himself in the process.

There is also a greater hazard affiliated with the evil eye, and that is that it must be thrown against a living target. It cannot be thrown against a non-living target, because the spirit of the shaman must attack another living spirit — and bad things can happen if the shaman screws up in this matter. This can happen if the shaman accidentally targets a mirror, a mannequin, or (as is possible) a dead person come back to mobility. It's obvious why mirrors and mannequins are non-living targets, but the walking dead pose an interesting problem being debated by experts. Since the spirits of the dead remain with their corpses, why can't a shaman target these spirits? The best guess that experts can make is that the spirits of the dead are no longer connected with their corpses as intimately as the spirits of the living are, and that when a shaman attacks a living person's spirit, they have to be able to reach to the target's body. Such an avenue is no longer available with the walking dead, who only manipulate their bodies in the grossest sense of the term, more like meaty marionettes than real breathing bodies.

Whatever the actual case, when a shaman casts the evil eye on a target which is not really there, the psychic strike turns back on itself, rebounding from the nonentity target and returning to the source: the shaman himself. The shaman's spirit strikes him with full force, with all the malevolence expended in the strike, and, because the shaman is concentrating entirely on attack and not on defense, he suffers the attack without the natural resilience of anyone else's spirit. However, just as a man cannot lift himself by the hair, a spirit cannot crush itself (although there is one inconclusive instance where it might have happened). Instead, the energy of the attack has to expend itself somewhere else, which usually means it takes full effect in whatever part of the body is the medium for the assault. Thus a shaman with a quivering palm might shatter every bone in his hand, whereas a shaman who uses an evil eye might have his very eyes exploded as from within by the force of his own will. Reflected attacks are always debilitating, and usually permanently crippling to the shaman careless enough to suffer them.

Due to the grotesqueness and malevolence of their unusual talent, shamans are often unpopular people. This is in part due to the obscenity of their talent, and due partly to the psychological effect the knowledge of their powers has on them. After all, if you know you can deck someone with a glance, are you particularly inclined to treat them with respect? You know what they say about power and corruption ...

Using the Skill

First of all, a shaman must define several aspects of the evil eye SFX. For one thing, the shaman is the only type of ESPer in the basic game which can have an unreal effect for their paranormal talent — that is to say, a shaman can either assault someone, or give them the overwhelming waking nightmare that they are being assaulted. Either can be severely damaging, or even fatal to those of diminished constitution.

Second, the player must determine how the shaman's talent is communicated to the victim. Is it through a glance, a gesture, a touch, or something else? This has an impact on how the psychic attack can be used; a shaman with the evil eye is helpless if he's unable to see his intended victim (the room is dark or he's blindfolded), but a shaman with a quivering palm is hampered by handcuffs.

Third, the shaman must decide whether or not the victim's awareness is necessary. In a negative sense, it could easily be that if the intended victim is not looking at the shaman (perhaps even deliberately avoiding making eye contact), then the shaman's paranormal talent has no effect. On the other extreme, a shaman can so completely command a victim's attention that the victim can

undertake no other action than to submit to the psychic assault. The effects of these sort of SFX parameters fall outside the scope of the standard SFX rules, and are best handled using Advantages and Compensations.

Fourth, associated skill uses are easily applied to the shaman's talent. The psychic bolt, though intangible, can be affected by manual skills. *Thrown weapons* is one possibility, as is *fire combat* (especially if the shaman has to point his finger like a gun). Others are possible given a touch of creativity and a good explanation.

Fifth, the shaman can have an area of effect. In this sense, the shaman's spiritual attack is more like a psychic grenade or bomb. Max Batu apparently has a bit of an area of effect, as Boris Dragosani made a habit of turning his face away before Max threw his psychic bolt at someone. The exact details of how the area of effect works must be decided between the player and the gamemaster, as it is one area where great abuse of the rules is possible.

When a shaman casts the evil eye on someone, make an *ESP: shaman* skill roll. If the shaman beat the DN, compare the shaman's SFX effect value to the target's Toughness (or whichever attribute the shaman SFX damages). This is of course the standard approach for SFX damage.

However, the exercise of this talent is physically draining as well as psychological wearying; the shaman also suffers from the assault. Take the SFX effect value and subtract the shaman's Confidence attribute from it. Halve the difference and apply it as shock damage to the shaman. If the shaman's *ESP: shaman* skill roll exceeds double the shaman's effect value, subtract one shock point for each point of difference. All the shock is applied after the shaman casts the evil eye, so it is possible for a shaman to curse someone and then pass out from the effort. A shaman can also cast several evil eyes, so long as he is able to maintain consciousness. However, the gamemaster should not allow a shaman to cast an evil eye over and over again at the same target. Instead, the push rules should be used.

Example: A shaman (see the shaman SFX on page 65) casts his evil eye on someone. He barely beats his SFXDN, and damages the target. The shaman takes 6 shock points (24 for the effect value minus 12 for Confidence, divided by two). If the shaman rolled 50 result points on his *ESP: shaman* roll (!), he'd only take 4 shock points (the result points beat double the SFXDN by two, so two shock points are removed from what the shaman suffers).

As previously mentioned, shamans can push their evil eye SFX, but it is a dangerous undertaking. When a shaman pushes, add the shock taken from the push to the amount the shaman already took for the initial use of the talent. If the accumulated shock points exceeds the amount of shock the shaman can withstand (not excluding any shock the shaman has already taken due to damage or exhaustion), the excess shock points are converted to wounds on a one-for-one basis. It doesn't take a lot of pushing for a shaman to begin to risk rupture of the aorta, especially if the shaman is already tired...





Tim Bobko

Physical wounds caused by a shaman's attack are not tangible, but they can be detected by a thorough physical. That is, long, bloody gashes and the like don't suddenly appear on the victim, but bruising of the heart can occur, as can numerous small ruptures, pneumothorax, embolisms, and a variety of other damaging ailments. Even purely illusory damage will manifest itself as minor palpitations and other psychosomatic signs.

Psychological damage is due to similar effects on the victim's very soul. Again, it manifests itself in various signs of stress, such as increased blood pressure, altered brain patterns, and higher pulse rate.

When attacked, victims of a shaman are very aware of where the damage came from, even if they don't understand the mechanism by which it came about. The only possible exception is if the target were attacked in a crowd while unaware. In other words, treat a shamanic assault just as you would a physical assault for reaction, enmity, and future precautions taken by the target to prevent reoccurrences.

Spotter

"It got so he could recognize them almost as easily as he recognized his own men. He had never come face to face, but he'd know they were there. Strange auras. Never where he could tie a face to a feeling."

Based on: Mind

Effect Value: Special (see text)

Resisted by: (Not applicable)

Spotters are very similar to sensitives, but whereas sensitives are tuned to natural energies or matter, spotters are able to locate and identify ESP-endowed people. For a while, spotters were classified as ESP-sensitives, but there is enough of a difference that they have been broken out into a separate subclass by most paranormal experts.

For one thing, spotters seem to have a more definitive range. Although there is still variance depending on the strength of the ESPer being detected, there is a definite range beyond which spotters cannot detect a psychic. While the best sensitives carry a map of the entire planet (keyed to their substance of sensitivity) in their heads, the longest known identification of an ESPer by a spotter was at a range of approximately one kilometer. They are also an entirely visually-based form of ESPer, lacking in the flexibility of detection sensations which sensitives have.

Furthermore, sensitives detect whatever it is that they are keyed to. If it's radioactive, for example, it's detected. The sensitive can only tell what sort of radioactive material it is by judgment calls based on the density of its radioactivity and the like. For spotters, however, different ESP auras are distinctly different in appearance. ESP auras may be strong or weak, intense or pale, shaped in different ways, and they come in as many colors as the rainbow — even more. Necrosopes are bright blue in color; necromancers, deep blue mixing with blood red. Other spotters are bright white in appearance. Curiously, the colors of an ESPer's aura do not manifest themselves in a spotter's mind until the ESPer is within the spotter's range; one spotter described all humans as having a shimmering gray aura which developed into whatever color and shape was appropriate as the spotter came closer.

It is this description that makes most spotters believe that their talent is not simple passive reception as is the case with sensitives, but instead more of a psychic sonar; the spotter emits — unconsciously — a psychic pulse which gets reflected by every living creature. Psychically endowed humans reflect the pulse much more strongly, as if the pulse itself gains energy and vitality by rebounding off a psychic power. Other ESPers are thus 'bright' targets and reflect this pulse as though they were elastic, while most people are 'dull' and absorb much of the energy of the pulse. This theory is supported by the fact that many spotters have their talent hampered by solid objects which intervene between them and other

ESPers. One spotter told two other ESPers, "I had to actually enter the house to know you were here."

To spotters, a person's psychic aura is as unique as their face. With careful study, identification by aura is as exacting as by fingerprint. Even more so, for while an intelligence agent might be able to disguise his face and perhaps even surgically alter his fingerprints, it is impossible to mask the soul ... at least at this time.

This detection of the soul itself brings us to another advantage spotters have: they can tell whether someone is channeling a dead spirit. The aura of the channeled spirit will override the aura of the necroscope who is allowing the channeling, although the aura of the necroscope will still be visible as a sort of halo around the aura of the channeled spirit. In this way a spotter can tell whether someone is channeling, and what type of person is being channeled. Spotters enjoy similar effects when watching those who are vectoring spirits, undergoing hypnotic regression, having out-of-body experiences, and performing other paranormal activities.

Spotters are very much in demand in ESPionage circles, largely because they are wonderful talent scouts (pardon the pun). Most E-branches have spotters scouring their big cities looking for the distinctive auras of the psionically-endowed. It is no coincidence that Gregor Borowitz, the head of the USSR's Agency for the Development of Paranormal Espionage, and Sir Keenan Gormley, the head of Britain's E-branch, were themselves powerful spotters.

Using the Skill

Spotters, unlike most of the ESPers described in this book, have their power active all the time. While shamans and seers must concentrate to use their paranormal talent, spotters simply have their talent working for them around the clock. Thus, whenever you encounter an ESP-endowed person, you can make an *ESP: spotter* skill check to see if you can detect what type of ESPer it is. Of course, your gamemaster will probably have you make skill checks every time you encounter a new and important gamemaster character whether it's an ESPer or not, just so you're not sure which of them might be psionically-talented if you fail the roll.

When making an *ESP: spotter* skill check, spotters receive a bonus to their die roll. This bonus is equal to the target ESPer's SFX Difficulty Number minus the range value from the spotter to the target; this makes powerful psychics easier to spot. This bonus may of course be negative if the target ESPer is weak or the range is very long.

If the spotter succeeds in the skill check, subtract the range value from the spotter's effect value and check the result on the General Success Chart. A Minimal success means that the spotter knows the target is an ESPer. A Spectacular+ success tells the spotter the target ESPer's talent, SFX effect value, ESP skill value, and allows the spotter to recognize that exact same ESPer for who he is at any time in the future (even with a future Minimal success — the spotter has memorized the target's psychic fingerprint).

Spotters can also tell the taint of vampirism. Vampires are powerful psychics in their own right, and their minds have a peculiar indescribable taint, a sort of psychic fog which conceals the vampire's mind from being exposed by human ESPers. Everything a vampire touches with its mind acquires this taint to a lesser extent, and spotters can notice this contamination easily. In game terms, use the intruder vampire's *willpower* skill value instead of the normal ESPer's effect value for the skill check bonus, thus the bonus is the vampire's *willpower* value minus the range value. This taint is visible even if the target has no psionic talent of its own.

Finally, spotters can get used to psychic signals in their vicinity, much like people can get used to certain smells or background sounds. Don't penalize your poor spotter for walking around with other ESPers; the spotter would just tune them out after a short while.



Telepath

"Now he'll concentrate on that single sub, see if he can sneak into its navigator's mind and get the new course."

— Gregor Borowitz

Based on: Intellect

Effect Value: Interactive

Resisted by: Intellect

Mention extrasensory perception to most people, and they will immediately think of mind-reading. This association is perhaps in part due to the fact that telepaths are one of the most common forms of ESPer in the world; people throughout history have had experiences with telepaths, so the association of telepathy and ESP is commonly-held.

A telepath is a person who can read the thoughts of another person, true, but it goes much further than that. A good telepath can actually probe the living matter of another person's brain, rooting through the person's past history by means of unraveling half-forgotten memories and images long lost to the person himself. A good telepath can do more than raid the active thoughts of a target, he can take poke around the hidden recesses like a person in a musty library or a doctor with a CAT scanner for the soul.

Telepaths are very good interrogators, and are thus very much in demand by the ESPionage networks around the globe. They are so dangerous because they know what weakens your willpower. They are so effective because they can sense the effects their questions have; if a telepath's interrogation makes you uncomfortable, they know, they can see it happening. And you can bet that they will continue to probe the sore spot until the information they seek is laid bare under the bright gaze of their unusual talent.

Unlike the portrayal of many mind-readers and empaths in modern fiction, telepaths do not just pick up thoughts and feelings from other people all the time; they must concentrate actively. In this sense, they are not passive antennas waiting for broadcasts, but rather mindthieves who steal thoughts and memories from their target. Also, telepaths can only receive; they are not capable of telepathic projection, they cannot make others hear voices in their heads (that's a different talent which will be covered in a future supplement). Thus a telepath cannot relay orders to an agent in the field, although two telepaths can have a long-distance conversation by reading each others' minds.

It is unclear exactly how telepathy works, but it appears to involve the extrusion of a psychic pseudopod, if you will. This paranormal hand can reach out to the mind of the target and 'feel around' for the information the telepath wants. This theory is backed up by the fact that when Wamphyri telepathically probe someone, they can leave their inimical psychic footprint on the person's brain; this fact alone demonstrates that the telepath in some very real sense is inside the target's head. One telepath, at a loss for words to illustrate what his talent felt like, described it so: "Probing for someone's thoughts is something like searching a dresser in a room that's completely dark. First you run your hands carefully over the top of the dresser; whatever thoughts are active in the person's mind are on top there, being used and in easy reach. You can grab those easily. Recent memories — well, all memories — are packed in the drawers of the dresser. In a drawer, the recent memories are on top, and distant memories, childhood stuff and unimportant events, are buried deep in the drawers. There are even some repressed or very old memories which are almost impossible to

Remote Targeting

In the *Necroscope* novels, all a telepath had to know was where the target was in a global sense, not in a sense which related to the telepath personally. It was enough for the telepath to know the target was in a submarine at a specific location in the ocean, it was unnecessary for the telepath to know where the submarine was in relation to him. Similarly, one could assume that a telepath could see someone on TV in a known location and that would be good enough. If you want to allow this sort of flexibility, go right ahead. If the target is located within the telepath's range, and the telepath knows the location, that's good enough and the telepath can establish contact. Alternatively, this sort of spatial orientation could be allowed as an Advantage.

touch. They're like something which has dropped down behind a drawer, where they can't be reached without an intense search and a lot of work."

Also, to a telepath, reading a person's mind is not like reading a book, it's much more intense and personal. When reading a book, you learn about it. When reading a mind, a telepath lives it. The emotion is real, raw and powerful as the story itself, not diluted by prose and suspension of disbelief. The telepath knows not only what the thoughts of the target are, but the emotions that drive those thoughts. In this way, a telepath can generally avoid misinterpretation of thoughts, picking up sarcasm, joking, or attempts at deceit which can color the true meaning behind the contemplations.

There is some danger to being a telepath. One is that if someone knows you are a telepath, they will tend to trust you less. The very fact that you can read their minds makes them feel that you are spying on them constantly. Of course, once their opinion is colored and they begin to try to conceal things from you, as a telepath you'll be tempted to probe their mind and find out what you want. Additionally, those speaking with a telepath often wonder if what the telepath says comes from the heart, or is a response formulated specifically to give the listener the impression that it comes from the heart; in other words, is the telepath's interaction genuine or a tailor-made lie? In short, telepaths have a difficult time building trusting relationships with someone. For this reason, it is a generally-accepted custom that telepaths never read the minds of co-agents. Even with this rule in place, telepaths are still often pariahs in their own organizations.

Another problem with telepaths is that they pick up all the thoughts of their target, and thus often become jaded or cynical. Everyone has random psychopathic thoughts all the time. If a person is rude to you in traffic, you think of firing a bazooka at their car and watching them explode in slow-motion. These thoughts are never voiced, neither are they acted upon (by sane people at least), but to telepaths they are every bit as real as every other thought. Some telepaths get very depressed, and view the world as a total war zone waiting to happen.

A third danger of being a telepath is that it is possible to become addicted to outside stimuli. Just as some people drive great satisfaction from living vicariously through soap operas or reading trashy novels, some telepaths spend a lot of time in other people's minds living their lives and watching their most intimate moments; the telepathy develops into a sick sort of voyeurism.

These weaknesses aside, telepaths are the most highly sought-after ESPers in the world today, and are among the most powerful tools in the ESPionage arsenal.

Using the Skill

In order to read someone's mind, the telepath must first identify the target. If the target is in sight, this is not a problem. Otherwise, the telepath must know where the target is located. If the telepath knows that the target is asleep in bed exactly two floors above in a hotel, this is good enough. However, if the telepath only knows that the target is in the east wing of the embassy across the street, she must begin taking shots in the dark, as it were, until she hits the target. In cases like these, having an SFX with an area or volume of effect is quite helpful.

Once a telepath has a target identified (or is casting blindly about for same), the telepath must make a skill roll. If the telepath's *ESP: telepath* skill check exceeds the difficulty of the SFX DN, the telepath breaks into the target's mind. Subtract the target's Intellect from the telepath's effect value. The result is a modifier for all subsequent telepathic interrogation attempts. (If the telepath's result points are more than double the SFX DN, any additional points are added to this telepathic interrogation modifier.)

Once a telepath has established contact with a target, she has an amount of time equal to her SFX duration to complete her examination of the subject. In essence, the telepath can research the answers to a number of different ques-

tions, rolling another skill check (plus the modifier described above) for each question. The Paranormal Interrogation Table lists DN modifiers and time requirements for various types of information the telepath might require. If the telepath succeeds or fails in the skill roll, decrease or increase the time value to acquire the information by one per point of success or failure, respectively. Failing a skill roll on a follow-up question does not deny the telepath the desired information, as the telepath has already succeeded in establishing contact with the target's mind. It just makes finding the information harder.

If the telepath does not have enough time left in the SFX duration to complete a question, the telepath gets either incomplete information or no information at all, at the discretion of the gamemaster. However, if a telepath thinks her time is running out, she can try to push her skill to get results quicker. Use the normal push rules.

Telepaths can receive additional information during their interrogation as well. The surface thoughts of a person are very easily read, and are sometimes picked up by a telepath even when the telepath is searching for something different. Remember, thoughts are fluid and holographic in nature, and people think in stream-of-consciousness. so the information received may be partly illusory or achingly incomplete when the telepath picks it up. (Hint: this is a plot vehicle for the gamemaster to toss in any additional clues or warnings that are deemed necessary.)

Sample Necroscope SFXs

"His right eye seemed to bulge outward until it almost left its orbit; his lips drew back from his teeth in an utterly animal snarl of sheer bestiality; his nostrils gaped into yawning black pits in his face and great cords of sinew stood out on his neck and up under his jaw ..."

To help players generate their characters, and to help gamemasters generate their characters, we've included sample beginning ESPers for each of the types presented in this book. For players, these can be used as samples or simply stolen outright for their characters. These can also be used as they are for gamemaster characters, although we recommend that most gamemaster characters have stronger gifts than those presented below. You need to give those players a challenge — make them use their brains for more than just ESP.

After each description we illustrate how the SFX came to be by giving you the work we went through to create it. Each step is numbered to correspond to the line on the MasterBook Special Effects Worksheet on page 143 of the rules. Since Feedback is not used as it is in the rules, we use the abbreviation DT to refer to Delay Time in minutes. To conserve on space, we only include those lines which were used in making the SFX.

NECROMANCER

Skill Used: *ESP: necromancer* (Strength)

Difficulty Number: 12

Effect Value: 20

Duration: 18 (one hour)

Range: 0 (touch)

Cast Time: 14 (ten minutes)

Delay Time: 20 minutes

This SFX allows the user to interrogate the dead for their secrets. The necromancer must focus his mental energies for a good ten minutes before attempting the task. This makes it more difficult to interrogate corpses at any time when there is action going on or even when there is potential for action. For example, it'll be nigh impossible for this necromancer to quickly interrogate someone he's just murdered in an alley, as the police might happen by at any

moment, and when the cops come, the last place a necromancer wants to be is in a trance ripping apart a victim.

The necromancer doesn't need area of effect or focus, since it's unlikely any of his subjects will be getting up and going anywhere soon. Once the interrogation begins, the necromancer can remain in contact with the dead for an hour; this allows him to be very thorough in his investigations. Unfortunately, his long delay means he can't interrogate several subjects quickly. Like all necromancers, he is difficult to contact when he's in his trance, although once his attention is gained he can slip in and out of his altered necromantic state to receive input from other (living) accomplices.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	20	20	
4. Duration	18	38	
5. Casting Time	-14	24	
11. Variable Duration	8	32	
16. Split into DN and DT		12	20
23. Trance (DN 15)	0	12	20
25. Totaling Up		12.	20

Necroscope

Skill Used: *ESP: necroscope* (Charisma)

Difficulty Number: 15 (5 to continue)

Effect Value: 15

Duration: 20 (three hours)

Range: 5 (ten meters)

Cast Time: 10 (a minute and a half)

Delay Time: 15 minutes

The necroscope opted to have a relatively low effect value, trusting on her natural charisma to convince the dead to speak with her. Having a range of ten meters allows her to contact people buried deep below the earth, or buried beneath small slides. Unfortunately, she doesn't have an area of effect, so she has to have a pretty good idea of where the person is buried to be able to contact them effectively. Also, her short range means that she can't contact people as easily as, say, Harry Keogh could.

She must meditate for a minute and a half to get into the proper state, and once there, she can only expand her consciousness by about a meter a second (no charge for speed). Since she only plans on using her skill during quiet times, this is not a problem. Once she's in contact with a dead person, she can speak with them for three hours at a stretch, or even longer if she beats the reduced maintenance DN.

Finally, she opted to need a component to make initial contact with the dead: she needs to have an item which belonged to the deceased, some sort of personal effect. This tangible item helps her to focus in on the psyche of the person's spirit; it's a tenuous link to their desires. For family members, close friends, and people she has just killed (gasp!), this is very easy to arrange, and only merits a one-point deduction. But at the same time this makes it virtually impossible for her to contact Mozart, King Tut, George Washington, or John F. Kennedy. And while she could purchase a small scrap of a scarf of Elvis' with relative ease, it would still be expensive and might be a fraud. In short, for anyone outside her circle of friends (or victims), this component requirement is worth a good solid seven points. The gamemaster — well, actually the game designer — decides that three points is a good compromise between these extremes. Ordinarily, a three-point deduction for components is frowned upon, but the idea is creative, well-developed, and fits perfectly into the necroscopic image, so it passes. Note also, that should the necroscope wish to buy off this restriction later, she can do so at

once. It is a three-point modifier, but there is no internally consistent way to diminish her dependency on an item owned by the deceased short of eliminating the requirement altogether.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	15	15	
2. Range	5	20	
4. Duration	20	40	
5. Casting Time	-10	30	
13. Maintenance	3	33	
16. Split into DN and DT		18	15
18. Components	-3	15	15
23. Trance (DN 15)	0	15	15
25. Totaling Up		15	15

Prescient

Skill Used: *ESP: prescient* (Intellect)

Difficulty Number: 20

Effect Value: 25 (one day)

Duration: 0 (one second)

Range: 0 (five meter radius)

Cast Time: 0 (reflexive)

Delay Time: 20 minutes

The prescient can see up to a day in the future, getting a sense of future events that happen to him or near him; events that are of importance to his life. Because his glimpses are so short (one second long, tops) he can only get a sense of the "goodness" or "badness" of what's coming. The prescient can get a sense that he



Ron Kulp

shouldn't go to Pittsburgh, and perhaps because of fire somehow, but whether it's arson or a plane crash he simply doesn't know.

The SFX is focused on him, otherwise he'd get a sense of what was going to happen in the spot he was standing in a day instead of what might happen to him in a day. Likewise, his SFX has an area of effect equal to five meters in diameter; this allows him to catch a glimpse of stuff that's going to happen right next to him; definitely a good thing as far as any of his companions are concerned.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	25	25	
6. Area of Effect	10	35	
14. Focus		5	40
16. Split into DN and DT	20	20	
25. Totaling Up		20	20

Seer

Skill Used: *ESP: seer* (Mind)

Difficulty Number: 14

Effect Value: 29 (one week)

Duration: 9 (one minute)

Range: 5 (ten meters)

Cast Time: 9 (one minute)

Delay Time: 30 minutes

The seer can see into the future, forecasting interactions between people (with some difficulty) She has a range of only five meters, and must psych herself up into seeing the convoluted blue lines for a full minute before she can make them resolve in her eyes. Then she can mentally reach for them and try to read them. If her target moves more than about a third of a meter during this brief pause (ten seconds, tops), she 'misses' the thread of his life, and must start again. (In game terms, she has a range often meters, but a speed value of zero, so it can take up to ten seconds for her mind to reach out and touch the life thread. If the target moves, the SFX misses. If someone else steps in, she might grab his thread by mistake.)

She can read the life threads of two people at once, and forecast how they interact for up to one week in the future. The twists and turns of the threads are still confusing to her, so she must make a *deduction* skill roll of 11 or better to understand exactly what it is she's seeing. If she fails this skill roll, she gets nothing out of the use, not even whether or not the two targets will be around each other during the coming week. Life threads are complex, four-dimensional items, and she's reading them in a two-dimensional style. However, with an SFX duration of one minute, she ought to be able to make her *deduction* roll with relative ease, since she'll have time to push it before her SFX runs out.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	29	29	
2. Range	5	34	
4. Duration	9	43	
5. Casting Time	-9	34	
7. Multi-Target	6	40	
14. Focus	8	48	
16. Split into DN and DT	18	30	
22. Related Skill Totals	-4	14	30
25. Totaling Up		14	30

Sensitive

Skill Used: *ESP: sensitive* (Intellect)

Difficulty Number: 18

Effect Value: 25

Duration: 5 (ten seconds)

Range: (Not applicable)

Cast Time: 0 (instant)

Delay Time: 10 minutes

This sensitive is able to perceive nuclear energy (ah, very useful indeed among the intelligence community). With her effect value of 25, she can detect nuclear energy at a significant range. She does not need to spend any points on range, because a sensitive's psi skill affects her senses, not the outside world itself.

When pausing to detect nuclear energy, she must spread her arms apart and close her eyes. Large sources of nuclear activity are seen in the darkness of her mind as unholy green glows behind her closed eyelids, and she can make bearing and range estimates from what she saw. Since her skill has a duration of ten seconds, she can assimilate images in directions other than that which she is facing; in essence, she can "look around" with her mind for those ten seconds.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	25	25	
4. Duration	5	30	
16. Split into DN and DT	20	10	
20. Gestures	-2	18	10
25. Totalling Up		18	10

Shaman

Skill Used: *ESP: shaman* (Confidence)

Difficulty Number: 19

Effect Value: 20

Duration: 0 (instant)

Range: 3 (four meters)

Cast Time: 5 (ten seconds)

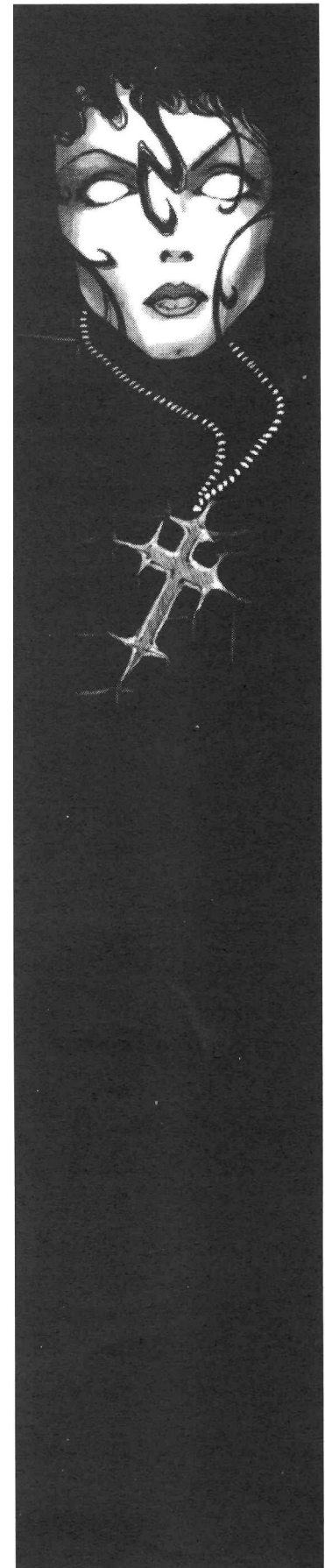
Delay Time: 15 minutes

The shaman's evil eye has an effect value of 20, and he applies it to several attributes: Toughness, Strength, Agility, and Confidence. The player believes these effects accurately simulate the shaken countenance most people experience when zapped by the evil eye. They get hammered psychically, they also get weaker, tend to stumble as though stunned, and lose their confidence at having had their spirit stabbed.

To cast the evil eye, the shaman locks with the victim and voices an incantation. At two points, this can be either a short mantra, a loud word, or an offensive phrase. Then he must "throw" his power at the target, beating a DN of 6. If he connects, the target suffers the following damage:

- (EV-2) - Toughness: Damage Chart
- (EV-4) - Strength or *lifting*: Push Chart
- (EV-6) - Agility or *maneuver*: Push Chart
- (EV-8) - Confidence or *willpower*: Push Chart

The casting time of ten seconds means that it takes a full combat round to accomplish the attack. The shaman also opted to have a comparatively short delay of only fifteen minutes, just in case.



Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	20	20	
2. Range		3	23
3. Speed		5	28
5. Casting Time	-5	23	
8. Multi-Attribute	9	32	
14. Focus (Lock)	5	37	
16. Split into DN and DT	22	15	
21. Incantations	-2	20	15
22. Related Skill Totals	-1	19	15
25. Totaling Up		19	15

Spotter

Skill Used: *ESP: spotter* (Mind)

Difficulty Number: 17

Effect Value: 5

Duration: 5 (ten seconds)

Range: 8 (line of sight, see below)

Cast Time: 0 (reflexive)

Delay Time: 10 minutes

The spotter has a range of forty meters, and instantaneous effect. However, the gamemaster decrees that a line-of-sight SFX would average out to be approximately equal to a forty-meter range, based on the relative ratio of indoor to outdoor adventures he has planned (remember, a forty-meter range for this SFX would work through walls, crowds, etc.). Because she has no casting time, her skill is always passively engaged, and there is no delay in recognizing a talented individual. Her low effect value means that she'll possibly be able to recognize the aura of a certain person if she meets him again, but she won't be able to recognize what his ability is. Her SFX is focused, to allow her to know who it is (physically) who activated her sense. She does not have multi-target ability, which means that if more than one ESPer is nearby, she might get confused, or else completely miss the existence of the second one.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	5	5	
2. Range		8	13
3. Speed		8	21
4. Duration	5	26	
14. Focus		1	27
16. Split into DN and DT	17	10	
25. Totaling Up	17	10	

Telepath

Skill Used: *ESP: telepath* (Intellect)

Difficulty Number: 21

Effect Value: 11

Duration: 9 (one minute)

Range: 7 (forty meters)

Cast Time: 5 (ten seconds)

Delay Time: 20 minutes

This is a comparatively weak telepath as far as effect value goes. Since he must interrogate his target, his effect value of 11 means he might not garner a positive bonus in any given telepathy success. He is slightly hampered by a short range, but this can improve over time. It takes him ten seconds of uninterrupted

concentration to focus his mind and penetrate another, and he must make a *willpower* roll of 8 or better to succeed. With a duration of a minute, he can pick the brains of targets for useful, but not overly complex information.

When he projects his mind, it has an area of effect equal to a circle three meters in diameter. Furthermore, he can move his SFX at a speed of three meters a second. Between the apportionment and area of effect, he can cast his awareness through a wall and sweep the room with his mind until he locates someone to investigate. Once he finds a target, he can focus his SFX on that person. This way he doesn't have to deliberately sweep the SFX area of effect whenever his target moves about (if he had to do so, he'd suffer a multi-action penalty).

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	11	11	
2. Range		7	18
3. Speed		7	25
4. Duration	9	34	
5. Casting Time	-5	29	
6. Area of Effect	6	35	
12. Apportionment	4	39	
14. Focus		4	43
16. Split into DN and DT	23	20	
19. Concentration	-2	21	20
25. Totaling Up		21	20

Paranormal Interrogation Table

This chart is a guideline for telepaths and necromancers trying to ferret information out of a victim. It will help you, the gamemaster, to determine how much information they can glean before the time runs out on their talent. Again, this is only a guideline.

Value	Time	Information
0	instant	Whatever the subject is currently thinking: "this waitress is slow."
4	~5 sec	Something the subject is keeping in mind: "keep the speed below 60."
7	~30 sec	Something the subject must remember today: "deposit these checks."
11	~3 min	Important stuff in long-term memory: "we need to refinance the house"
14	~10 min	Unimportant long-term memory: "my locker combo is 3-17-54"
18	~1 hour	Facts once important but now forgotten
20	~3 hours	Unimportant forgotten facts

Five

The Wamphyri

"Out there in the night lay one who had secrets unique, one who in life commanded monstrous magics, and who even now, in death, was undead."

The Wamphyri, or Lord or Lady of the Wamphyri for singular (Wamphyri is also used as an adjective) are the primary non-human antagonists of the world of *Necroscope*, in comparison to which the legion of Russian ADPE ESPers seem like trivialities. The Wamphyri are horrid creatures from Another Place, and they hunt humans to satisfy their craving for blood and power. They are preternaturally powerful, insanely intelligent, and the most devious creatures of this or any world. They are the Vlads, Radus, Draculs, Mirceas, Basarabs, Vladislavs of our past, names which live in infamy even after these long centuries. They are VAMPIRES!



What is a Vampire?

"As for evil: it is a state of mind. If you accept evil, you must accept good."

— Thibor Ferenczy

According to human legends, a vampire is an undead creature of the night who feeds on the blood of the living. They appear to be stark and severe-looking men with long canines and slicked-back hair who swoop about in black satin cloaks and bite the necks of fair young damsels. Although they are portrayed as irresistibly attractive, even mesmerizing, those who understand their nature can withstand their compelling presence and slay them. And although they are savage and bloodthirsty, vampires are well-known to recoil in the face of fire, garlic, the threat of a wooden stake, or the sign of the cross. After panicking a vampire, it is relatively easy for the stout of heart to kill them permanently. In short, they are one part menace and two parts bluff and bluster.

The Wamphyri do what they can to perpetuate these legends. Because the legends are so very, very wrong.

Why is this? It's because the legends have been mutated throughout the years, watered down, sensationalized in popular fiction, or even deliberately forgotten. For example, when Christian Crusaders at the siege of Constantinople discovered a Lord of the Wamphyri in their ranks fighting for the glory of God and under the guidance of the Pope, they did what all good Christian soldiers would do: they turned on the evil creature to kill him. This they were able to accomplish (they *thought* so, anyway), and once they had done so, they struck the Wamphyri's name, title, deeds, and awards from all written accounts everywhere. The Wamphyri ceased to exist in an official capacity. The truth of the matter was thus never recorded, and the only records of the incident which survived were the oral tales told around the fire afterward, tales spoken quietly for fear that higher

authorities might overhear these stories even though they did not directly contain the vampire's forbidden name. The Crusaders spoke of the vampire fleeing before them, or as they referred to it, "fleeing before the cross" on their banners and tabards, for to a Crusader his quest and the cross were one and the same. Over the centuries as the tale passed from generation to generation, the plot was twisted from a Wamphyri abomination attempting to evade the Crusaders' overwhelming numbers to a vampire being mortally afraid of the sign of the cross.

But although the legends have obscured and distorted the truths about the real vampires, their strengths, and their weaknesses, perhaps the most dangerous aspect of this loss of knowledge is that the legends have completely watered down the utter horror, the appalling evil of a true vampire. No Hollywood bloodsucker can compare to the mind-numbing terror of meeting a true vampire face to slaving, mutating, razor-toothed face.

The Source

"Except you must always remember, nothing is certain, not with a vampire. And no one — myself included — knows everything there is to know about them."

— Harry Keogh, Book 4

So what is a vampire really? A vampire is a creature of a type completely alien to our world, a leech-like glutinous protoplasmic *thing* which protects and strengthens itself by invading and hiding within the body of a host creature. A real vampire is ultimately a parasite, a symbiotic horror which tempts its host with strength and power and raw bleeding emotions until at last the host surrenders control of its body over to the thing within. Once that is done the vampire drives the unfortunate's soul out, possessing the symbiotic body completely and leaving its victim to fade into oblivion.

On Earth, all vampires come from infection or impregnation by another vampire (this appalling process is described elsewhere). However, there is rumored to be another source somewhere, a place where the first vampire came into this world, and some vampire hunters theorize that persistent tales of this vampire-infested place is where the legends of Hell made their debut in Earth's mythologies. If this place truly exists, then it may well be that humanity will never be free of the plague of vampirism, because even as the last vampire on Earth is slain, another might appear at the so-called Gate of Hell to find its way into the body of a new host and launch itself against an unsuspecting world.

The Wamphyri

A vampire is a horrid enough spectacle in itself: a ravenous, shapeshifting, oozing abomination with an uncanny instinct for survival at all costs. Yet for all its evil and cunning, a vampire by itself is vulnerable and unintelligent. To achieve its true potential for abhorrence, a vampire must fuse itself with a host, preferably one with as much capacity to destroy and terrorize as possible: a creature like a man.



Marshall Andrews III

A vampire is, as has been mentioned, a symbiotic parasite. It has a mind of its own, however small, and a willpower the likes of which this world has never known. When it combines with a human, the vampire gets to use all of the host's malevolence, lusts, intelligence, and strength, and the human gets the vampire's insatiable appetites and unbelievable regenerative properties. The result is a creature which calls itself Wamphyri; a virtually unstoppable creature of darkness and hunger.

The Wamphyri legends claim that they are all descended from Shaitan, the original and most evil vampire of all, and that at one time all Wamphyri were in thrall to him, his unwilling servants, made of his body and enslaved to his profane soul. (These rumors are probably the source of the legend that the vampires are servants of Satan.) The Wamphyri eventually overthrew Shaitan and established their own society, a society of fratricidal and incestuous peers. There is no evidence of this society of Earth, and if the tales the vampires tell are true, it is a fortunate blessing indeed that they were not established here. The tales survive, though, passed from Wamphyri parent to their offspring and thralls, and these tales contain within them the necessary lessons for a vampire to learn in order to survive and prosper.

All Wamphyri are fiercely proud of their heritage, the only exceptions being those unfortunates who get infested by a vampire by means of some accident. These foundling vampires have no connection with their Wamphyri heritage, and they must needs learn their dark arts by trial and error, and without the wisdom or restraint (yes, even the Wamphyri have restraint) of their culture. As a result, foundling vampires are the easiest to spot but the most dangerous to battle, for they know nothing of caution or discipline; their instincts for survival and revenge are not all at tempered by maturity. When fighting the Wamphyri, generally the result is a draw, which, since the vampire escapes, means he wins. With foundlings, the result is often that everybody loses.



Physiology

Vampires — and therefore Wamphyri — are complex creatures, so we'll start our tour of terror with the basics: how a vampire functions. Keep in mind that "Wamphyri" refers to vampire-infected humans, and "vampire" to the primal cobra-headed octopoid leech-thing that inhabits a host body. Note that in many cases, the terms are interchangeable; a while after a vampire infests a human, the two creatures are practically indistinguishable. A vampire leech is the thing within; a human vampire is the thing outside, the host. He calls himself Wamphyri!

Anatomy of a Vampire

"The thick ears of the Thing grew close to its head but were pointed and projected slightly higher than the elongated skull, giving the appearance of horns. Its nose was wrinkled and convoluted, like that of a great bat, and squat to its face. Its skin was of scale and its eyes were scarlet, like a dragon's. And it was ... big! The hands where they now appeared and clawed at the soil at its waist were huge, with nails projecting all of an inch beyond the fingers."

We'll start with the most frightening point first: vampires have no anatomy as we think of it. A vampire in its primal form is a 45-centimeter leech with an eyeless cobra-hooded head. Its flesh is not flesh as we understand it; it's more of a metaplastic substance, a protoflesh which can mutate and transmogrify itself into any shape desired. A vampire can create or extrude pseudopodia, barbs, hands, fins, even complicated and specialized organs like tongues and eyes and jaws and genitalia. All of these morphing limbs can be created at will, used briefly, and then withdrawn into the body of the vampire and disassembled to provide raw material for another extrusion. Vampires can create and dissolve

several pseudopodia at various parts of their body at the same time, and when they do so they look like a seething blob of boiling organs, with eyes and teeth and hooks appearing briefly on the surface of their body to take some small action before disappearing again below the surface of the skin.

This metamorphic quality of vampires makes them very dangerous to battle in their primal state, for if a person were to grab a vampire, it could quickly wrap itself around the person's fist, grow long razor teeth to form the pocket of flesh into a mouth, bite the person's hand off at the wrist, and then plunge a barbed whip up into the unfortunate's open spurting arteries. With such a toehold, the vampire could extend its pseudopod all the way to the person's heart and mold the whip of protoflesh into a pipette, whereupon it could suck the person's blood out from the very core of his being, draining it into a bladder formed specifically as a receptacle for the human's crimson life. Even were friends available to pull the vampire off the victim's wrist, the vampire could split itself into two entities, leaving a barbed vampiric worm in the victim's bloodstream to gain in strength and work its evil will.

Vampires have blood as well, but with protoplasmic flesh they don't have a circulatory system like we do. Although their blood is very similar to our own, it operates in a manner which seems volitional in nature. Inside the protoplasmic body of a vampire, the blood flows in currents and eddies much like the seething of a very hot cup of coffee; this mixing is perhaps what gives the body of a vampire a quality of writhing even when the vampire itself is not undergoing metamorphoses. A vampire never appears to be still, it practically throbs of malicious life at all times.

Vampires are possessed of an unnatural vitality. In fact, just about everything they have is unnaturally intense, as you'll soon see. But vampires are able to withstand incredible damage, and are immune to most drugs, poisons, and diseases. In fact, the only human diseases which vampires are known to contract are leprosy and bubonic plague, a hideous fate for a vampire as their unnatural vitality strives in vain to overcome the degenerative diseases.

Vampires never sleep, although once a vampire has infected another creature the compound monster may at times take rest. Experts theorize this is because sleep is a necessary function of higher intelligence, which the vampire parasite itself lacks. Vampires are also apparently immune to aging; their host usually stops aging at middle age. This immunity also appears to be a side-effect of their protoflesh construction; they are not alive in a manner which we are used to, so they do not age as do humans. But despite all their advantages, vampires have an instinctive need to find a host in which to live — perhaps because that gives them an additional layer of armor and extra capabilities with which to ensure their survival.

Integration & Symbiosis

"Now, I've said there was something else inside this man's body cavity, and so there was... the thing inside him seemed to shrink back and disappear behind the rest of his innards. Well, as to what I thought I had seen: picture an octopus or a slug. But big, with tentacles twining round all the body's normal organs, centering in the region of the heart or behind it. Yes, picture a huge tumor — but mobile, sentient!"

— Ladislau Giresci



Ron Kuulp



Thomas O'Neill

Vampire flesh is apparently compatible with all flesh. This has not been demonstrated definitively, but it is proven that they can attach themselves to humans, wolves, and bats, and if they can integrate successfully with these three disparate animals, they can probably do so with anything. It may be that they are restricted to mammals, but again, this is untested, and no one particularly wants to know. Vampiric komodo dragons and vampiric squid are too terrible to contemplate.

No one is entirely sure why it is that vampire flesh is so malleable, so adaptable to other life forms. This is due in part to the difficulty of investigating vampiric tissues. Every part of a vampire is alive, and has its own implacable albeit mindless will to survive. Handle a fragment of vampire flesh in your bare hands, and it will find its way into you. Poke and prod a piece of vampire flesh, and it will resist you, and strike back if it can. Vampire flesh, even without intelligent control, is a very dangerous substance, and to date no effective tests have yet been established. One theory about vampiric mutability holds that the vampires do not have a DNA-based biochemistry; that they are in essence invisible to our immune systems. How an apparently living creature can exist without DNA telling its cells what to do defies human understanding, but some theorize that the individual cells are volitional and behave in concert with each other as a sort of hive mind. While this explanation is supported by their permutability and could explain their powerful psionic strengths, it does not explain why certain large vampiric creatures can be mindless behemoths, while other, smaller creatures are supremely sly and cunning.

Regardless of the truth of the matter, vampires are undetectable by any normal testing methods after they infect humans. The host's body chemistry may change, but not by very much, and vampires can certainly adjust their own body chemistry with biofeedback to defeat any blood test designed to ferret them out. Similarly, vampires are invisible on X-rays, CAT scans, and NMR imaging. The vampire, especially once inside a host creature, is a master of camouflage — so long as said camouflage does not interfere with its needs.

The vampire is a synergistic parasite. It begins its tenure in the host passively, feeding on the host's reserves to grow, and developing its interlinks with the host's central nervous system. Once it has achieved adult weight, it begins to exert control of the host's actions and moods, until it takes over control of the body. Eventually, the parasite and the host become virtually indistinguishable, with the vampire spreading gossamer tendrils throughout the host's body. In very old vampires, there might not be a cell in the host that is not attached directly to the vampire; the two become one gruesome and hungering flesh.

The vampire uses the host body to feed and protect itself. It depends on the host, but at the same time it can support the host. Vampires are able to push their bodies to incredible excesses. A member of the Wamphyri could easily run the exhausting pace of four-minute miles all night long if

necessary, the vampiric protoflesh bolstering the human muscles and ligaments, forcing blood and oxygen to the depleted human cells. This comes naturally to the Wamphyri; it takes no concentration, and does not deplete them noticeably. During the course of a long winter night, a vampire could easily run a hundred miles, feed on an unsuspecting victim, and run a hundred miles back home. Strength, stamina, vitality: the Wamphyri have them all to extremes which would stagger mere mortals. They have them, and exult in them.

In moments of dire need, the vampire can extract itself from its host, but this only happens when the vampire's very survival is at stake. This is almost always fatal to the host, and it very dangerous for the vampire itself, as it lacks the protection and mobility afforded by the host body. Full details of how to kill a vampire are given below.

Appearance

"The eyes are the windows of the soul, my friend, did you know that"? Portals on one's dreams and passions and aspirations. Which is why my eyes are red. Aye, for the soul behind them has been torn asunder and eaten by a scarlet leech!"

— Janos Ferenczy, Book 4

We have already discussed the appearance of the vampire creature itself; a shapeless shifting cobriform corruption of protoplasmic evil. It is a willful and metamorphic creature, and thus it also mutates those creatures which it inhabits, changing their appearance over time to better fit with its depravity. A new member of the Wamphyri is almost undetectable, but at the same time the symbiote does not understand what it means to be Wamphyri and does not yet have all the powers. As the creature's understanding of its nature matures, so does its appearance until it assumes the shape familiar to all Wamphyri; the shape of horror itself.

The eyes are the first and strongest giveaway. Wamphyri eyes glow infernally red, throbbing with subterranean menace and blistering desire when their lust or hunger is aroused. In battle-rage, he may look as if burning coals writhe in the sockets of his skull, spilling bright red light everywhere that suffers his piercing glance.

The ears are also different, being larger and more rounded than a normal human's and with conch-like protrusions at the outside rim of the auricle. Although that shape is abnormal among humans, Wamphyri instinctively gravitate to this shape to afford themselves better hearing. Wamphyri consider it of vital importance to detect intruders before being detected themselves. When secrecy is vital, however, Wamphyri can maintain a more human aspect to their ears.

A human vampire's jaw begins to protrude, as well, giving it a slightly lupine appearance, and its sensitive nose is typically broader than a normal person's and with slightly wider nostril, somewhat reminiscent of the blunt snout of a bat. Their mouth changes as well; their voice deepens and gutters, their teeth become more defined, and their tongue cleaves itself down the middle and narrows until it looks like that of a snake. These aspects, jaw and snout and voice and tongue, are all subtle; they are not stark enough to brand the Wamphyri a mutant. However, these bestial qualities added to the Wamphyri's natural grace and strength will give an observer an uncomfortable feeling of raw animal power.

Shapeshifting

The Wamphyri are capable of changing their shape, thanks to the influence of their parasite. Unfortunately, the flesh of the host creature is not quite as malleable as the flesh of the vampire within, and as a result the process usually includes some damage to the host creature, but such damage is inconsequential to the Wamphyri. They will cause four-inch razor-sharp fangs to pierce through their own gums, and split the skin of their face to lengthen the bones of their jaws

into savage muzzles. This transformation is of course accompanied by a sudden gush of blood and rent tissue and even a few lost teeth, but this damage is even more to the Wamphyri's liking, because they know it lends their sudden change an even more terrifying aspect and the smell of their own blood incites them to a frenzy.



They have four common shapes: that of human, Wamphyri, wolf, and airfoil. The human shape is their default, both because it is the natural state of their host creature and because it makes integration into human society much easier. The Wamphyri shape is a monstrous distortion of the human shape, with a bat-like snout, lupine jaws with a mouthful of ragged fangs, and long rending talons on the hands and feet. The Wamphyri shape is the default shape for fighting, because it combines the best of the human host's natural state and the vampire's instinct for vicious battle.

The wolf shape is used primarily for camouflage and long treks; in this shape a vampire can pass many long miles at a dog trot without resting, and can spy on humans without being spotted as anything more than just an animal. Even the glowing red eyes are not considered unusual when spotted by humans around a fire; they expect to see animal eyes reflecting the firelight. It's only when the fire goes out that they begin to grow nervous at the flaming orbs coolly observing their every move.

The airfoil is a pterodactylic shape, a giant and hideous parody of a bat. It is used only rarely, in part because it's awkward for movement other than gliding and in part because it necessarily shreds whatever clothes the changeling is wearing at the time. Nevertheless, there are times when it is used to great effect, as any vampire will tell you after he has faced a mob of fire-wielding villagers when cornered on top of a high tower.

Of course, the Wamphyri do not need to change to any set shape, nor even to change their entire body. They can just as easily change their hands to large gripping pads, or one kneecap to a lethal spike in preparation for groining an opponent. If it could be modeled in clay, be sure that some vampire somewhere has done it with his body, and in all likelihood he enjoyed it.

The Senses

"When I wore the dragon-helm and got a lance through my visor, which broke the bridge of my nose, shot through and smashed out the back of my skull, that was pain! Human pain and agony, I know nothing of them and care less. But Wamphyri pain? Impaled, burning, shrieking in the fire and melting away layer by layer? No, that must not be ..."

— Faethor Ferency

Vampires, as mentioned, are symbiotic parasites. Although they take from their host in a thousand subtle ways (eventually taking everything, including the person's very soul), they give many things, as well. Of course, being vampires,

all these gifts are self-serving, but those short-sighted people who actually want to be Wamphyri look upon these gifts as blessings instead of harbingers of eternal damnation.

Vampires magnify the senses of the host, and the Wamphyri enhanced senses match or exceed the best available on Earth. Wamphyri eyesight is as keen as a hawk, able to discern detail at ranges of a mile or more. Further, Wamphyri can see in total darkness, thanks both to their ability to magnify their own perceptions and the fact that Wamphyri eyesight embraces both infrared and ultraviolet spectra. It's not a joke; even a kilometer beneath the surface of the Earth in a sealed vault, the vampire will be able to see you, and all you'll be able to see of him is his eyes burning like bloody embers as they contemplate your painful demise.

Wamphyri smell is likewise keen, bettering that of the best bloodhounds. When concentrating, the vampire can even match the ability to scent against those of moths, which can detect a mate from miles away. This is a big advantage to a vampire lost somewhere like the Sahara Desert; sniff the winds carefully, and he can hunt down and eat the sole nomad family in the trackless wastes.

Their hearing is keen as well, and has already been mentioned in the description of their shell-shaped ears. Even though they can see in the dark, the Wamphyri have the keenest hearing around. Like an owl they can unhesitatingly snatch a victim by sound alone, striking with lethal exactness. This may seem redundant in light of the efficacy of their eyesight, and it often is, but there are times when the Wamphyri cannot see: when there is a thick smoke in the air or when a bright light has blinded the Wamphyri's penetrating eyes. At these times, with the creature blinded, the hunters often make the mistake of assuming that they have a him at a disadvantage, only to find out far too late that keen hearing is every bit as useful as keen eyes.

And, as might be expected, the vampire's sense of touch is abnormally sensitive, too. They can sense with amazing detail; so effective is their discrimination that some say they can read the letters on a page just by feeling the ink. While this is certainly an exaggeration, the fact remains that with the malleability of their flesh, they can learn quite a lot by touch, and all without disturbing the item they feel. One such creature boasted he could walk barefoot across a dusty floor without disturbing the dust beneath his feet, all by molding his flesh around the individual motes of dust. Discriminating touch, indeed.

The Wamphyri also feel pain, and in fact leading the bloodthirsty and savage lives they do, they feel pain quite often. They experience pain which would put a normal human unconscious with agony, and yet to the Wamphyri that pain is inconsequential, because it is pain experienced by the human host organism. The vampire within helps to deaden that pain, and although the host notices it and can use it to stoke his own temper, it does not incapacitate him in any way. Lop off a vampire's wrist, gouge out his eye, burn all his skin off and rub salt in the raw red musculature beneath, and you'll likely make him very upset. Rest assured the injuries and pain won't slow him down any when he comes after you for revenge.



Marshall Andrews III

But as they say, there is pain and there is pain.

If you injure the vampire within, then the Wamphyri truly know pain, an intense agony beyond the human ken. Wamphyri experience all things more intensely, and pain is certainly no exception. Were a human being to experience that level of pain, he would mercifully die of shock before the full experience had yet seared itself upon his brain. But the Wamphyri are not mere humans. They experience that pain, fully conscious, and continue to live and suffer and live and suffer. Vampire pain is excruciating beyond description, and the screams of Wamphyri which so suffer are forever emblazoned upon the shuddering memories of any humans unfortunate enough to have heard the soulless cry. There is no howl like that of an injured vampire, for it is a desolate moan into which one might cast all the weepings and gnashings of the human race at once, and there would be no discernible difference.

Of course, the Wamphyri heal just as do all living creatures, but be certain that the echoes of the vampire's pain are never forgotten. Never forgotten, although eventually they are avenged.

Physical pleasure the Wamphyri feel as well; and in this instance the vampire within chooses not to distance itself from the sensations. Of course, to a vampire sex and rape are synonymous. There is no soft and tender affection given as in making love; the Wamphyri enjoy the struggles and horror of the victim almost as much as the actual act of violation. The worst part about it for a victim is that with a shapeshifting beast, the victim can be violated in more ways than are imaginable by the sound of mind. The Wamphyri can penetrate any orifice they choose to any depth they desire and in any number simultaneously. Fast and aggressive, slow and sickening, or even with violent ripping barbs, they can and do take their plunder as they wish, often expanding inside until the victim reaches — or occasionally even passes — the point of rupture.

But the Wamphyri rape not only the body, but also the mind, for their sense of touch is such that even as the victim recoils in gut-wrenching horror from their helpless plight, the Wamphyri hypnotic technique and insinuating touch forces the victim against their will to enjoy the intense and ghastly sensations. They know what feels good even when it shouldn't, and they know how to make those feelings more frantic. The Wamphyri love to keep their victims balanced on that bloody razor's edge between mind-shattering orgasm and all-consuming pain. It's all a part of the dominance game for them, until they lose their own control and kill the victim in their passion.

Sight, smell, hearing, and touch. And now we must speak of taste ...

Diet

"But kill him! Kill you! What? And rob myself of a thousand feasts to come? We go together into the world, Dragosani, and you in thrall to me until that time when you shall flee. By which time you'll not need to ask but know why all the Wamphyri share a mutual bond of hate!"

— Thibor Ferenczy

As enjoyable as impaling their human victims upon their fanged genitalia may be, the most intense pleasure a vampire may know is the sensual and energizing act of feeding. Vampire instincts are very strong indeed, and their survival instinct is so keen that the act of feeding gives them indescribable pleasure. They get the enjoyment of asserting their dominance, destroying another creature, tasting the ambrosia of iron-rich and energy-packed ichor, and fulfilling their primal directive to keep themselves alive and prosperous at any cost. There is nothing that a vampire would rather do than feed; it's better than sex, better than fighting, even better than rape, which is basically sex and fighting put together — and it's tough to get much better than that in the eyes of the Wamphyri.

The Wamphyri are carnivores. They eat meat, preferably seasoned with as

much psychological domination and abuse as possible — suckling wolf pups basted in their mother's milk is a classic example. The only non-meat item they are known to have a preference for is red wine, probably not for its taste (which they likely consider to be equivalent to that of rancid water) but for the fact that it resembles blood in color. Beyond that, they'll eat anything to blend in. There is no reason to think that a vampire could not consume fruits and grains, but they doubtless receive no nutrition from it, and certainly no enjoyment, for vegetables do not writhe and scream and beg for mercy in your bloody grasp.

Although the Wamphyri are carnivores, they prefer a sangrivorious diet. "The blood is the life," as they are fond of saying. While they can survive and even prosper to a degree on nothing but meat, even meat from animals which have themselves been drained of blood completely, nothing compares to blood itself. Even when moving covertly among human society, they order steaks extra rare, for even a cow's blood is better than nothing.

A vampire Lord can drain a portion of a victim's blood, or, with but a little extra effort, he can drain the body entirely, leaving a limp, wrinkled, bluish corpse which stiffens rapidly due to the dryness of the flesh within. Even the blood which would ordinarily remain trapped within the capillaries of the most brutally-savaged corpse is gone, every single drop, gone to feed the vampire and leaving the forensicists to wonder.

But as enjoyable as human blood may be, there is yet one delicacy which is even more grossly indulgent, a rare and precious treat which is the savory pinnacle of culinary cruelty: the blood of another vampire! Oh, yes, for the Wamphyri are fratricidal, incestuous, hedonistic, and self-indulgent, but they are above all strong and fervent creatures, and to feast upon the very vitality of another vampire is ecstasy indeed for a Lord of the Wamphyri. Nothing can compare to the overwhelming delectation of that priceless crimson repast. No experience is as strong as the pleasure of so feeding, save only witnessing the racking agony which fills the body of the victim vampire as it feels its integral vital essence being drained away with slow sensual deliberation and gluttonous delight.

Vampires are evil, territorial, and sadistic creatures, and to be able to inflict their will, their hunger, their desires upon the hapless body of another of their kind sates the spirit even as the blood engorges the body. The racking torture the lesser vampire suffers at this time is the worst pain imaginable, made even worse for knowing the agony further adds to the drinker's pleasure, and yet the feeding vampire ensures that it never drains its victim too much, for to kill the victim vampire would mean the loss of many more such indulgences in the future, many more indeed. Vampires may be gluttonous, but they plan for the future, too. True gluttony always ensures that it can be sated for a long, long time to come.

Needless to say, the very thought of such a future makes lesser vampires desperate to escape their bondage. Escape, and eventually, avenge.

Wamphyri Psychology

"I'll tell you the several sure things I know about them. They're devious beyond the imagination of human beings. They're liars each and every one, who on almost



Thomas O'Neill

every occasion would rather lie than tell the truth — unless there's something of substantial value in it for them. They're expert in confusing every argument, adept at ambiguous and frustrating riddles, word games, puzzles and paradoxes, false similes, and parallels. They're insanely jealous, secretive, proud, possessive. And so for their grip on life — or undeath — they are the most tenacious creatures in or out of Creation!"

— Harry Keogh, Book 4

One might be inclined to think that to understand the physical horror of a Wamphyri apparition is to know the true evil of a vampire, but that is indeed not the case. The physical shell of the Wamphyr, horrific as it may be, is nothing but a vehicle for the creatures themselves. Just as beauty is only skin deep, so the ugliness of the Wamphyri body only shows what the vampire is capable of doing. The true evil of a vampire comes from deep within, from that glutinous ebon pit of unadulterated sin which a vampire flatters itself to call its soul.

True, the vampire's body allows this scheming evil to engender its plans to vile fruition, but no vampiric diablerie has come to pass that has not already been imagined in gory detail, and far worse for the fantasy. Indeed, some claim it is the corruption of the vampire spirit which causes the formerly human vampire to degenerate in shape into a monster.

Here, then, is a cursory overview of what a vampire thinks, how a vampire interacts, and what motivates him. Unfortunately, this is only the barest study; to truly understand the draconian twistings of the vampire mind is to embrace insanity itself, layers upon layers of deceit and savagery. It is not a pursuit we recommend to anyone, not even the bravest vampire hunter.

Vampiric Instincts

"They came at night, which was their mistake. Some vampire premonition had warned me that all was not well."

— Faethor Ferency

Vampires have very strong instincts, all of which amount to one word: survival. This one concept — survival — is the foundation of all vampiric activity. It is the strongest motivation of any vampire. To ensure its own survival, a vampire will do anything, including selling out every other member of its own corrupt race. To a vampire, self-preservation goes no further than the self; kith, kin, possessions, anything can be ransomed or devoured for the sake of a vampire's own precious life, the life which the vampire devotes everything towards preserving.

In their natural state, vampires are not particularly intelligent creatures. They have less intellect than a dog, in fact they actively resist learning (because to learn is to admit inferiority), but they are possessed of an incredibly cunning evil. A vampire's survival instinct in its natural state focuses only on food and a warm body to call home, and it pursues these drives relentlessly. Anything which stands in the way of these drives is to be overcome. This is why vampires hate poison so much; the very thought that food — a strong and compelling force — could be detrimental to their survival drives them into apoplexy.

Perhaps in compensation for their minimal intelligence, vampires have strong survival instincts, so strong as to be almost paranormal in nature. They have an uncanny ability to sense a threat to their existence. Perhaps this is another facet of their psychic prowess, perhaps just an aspect of their cold and calculating vampiric brains. Whatever the cause, surprising a vampire is a difficult task at best, because somehow it just knows. It is easier by far to surprise a member of the Wamphyr; because despite their finer senses, changelings can become engrossed in an activity to the exclusion of the outside world; in this manner the human host can actually be a detriment to the vampire.

Vampires can also sense host bodies, warm wet meaty repositories of blood, self-mobile lairs for the vampire flesh. It's not certain how they do it, but it

appears to be some combination of sight, sound, scent, and ESP awareness. And, of course, when they sense a host body, they make every effort to infest it. They can even do a reasonable impersonation of a human, using their uncanny powers of observation to an extreme. Once inside a host body, vampires are indeed loathe to leave it. They only will when the body is ruined and their own survival is immediately threatened, and only if there is no other alternative (leaving the host requires the vampire to completely ignore the instinct for secrecy).

Wamphyri Drives

"Can't you see what you've done to me? I who was Wamphyri am now a shell! For when one has known the power, the freedom, the magnificent emotions of the vampire ... what is there after that?"

— The Lady Karen, Book 5

The Wamphyri live first and foremost to survive. Second to that, they indulge themselves as they wish, but survival always comes foremost. Always.

One aspect of this is an adaptation of the old business maxim that an entity (commercial or supernatural) must either be growing or dying. There is no middle ground; to remain static is to slowly die as the competition catches up and surpasses you. Thus vampires are never content to remain where they are, they must always seek to improve their position, fortify their defenses, expand their power base, discover more information (here their human brain overpowers their vampiric resistance to learning), bring more human victims into thrall, breed better warhounds, and learn new and profane sciences. Vampires are power-mad creatures; they know their own selves, and so they know that every other vampire on the planet is driving themselves with as much ferocity to build themselves an unassailable empire.

Naturally, the Wamphyri do not appreciate competition, and are therefore very territorial creatures. (Wamphyri like to see others of their bastard race do well, but only so long as they are still inferior.) Despite their fierce territoriality, they are cautious in their expansion and aggression against others of their kind, because attacking another Wamphyri holdfast is always a dangerous undertaking, and one best attempted only when victory is assured — or when the risks of attack are less than the risks of biding one's time.

Second to survival, lust fuels the Wamphyri, and the lusts a vampire feels make the most extreme human emotion pale in comparison. For this reason the power of the human brain is a blessing to the Wamphyri, for without the stark rational power of human logic, the vampire's passions would rule his body; but instead the Wamphyri can balance passion and foresight and become truly terrifying creatures of the night. But even if it seems the rational human mind is in control, that is an illusion, because the mind's control can only be exerted in the pursuit of how best to satiate the hungers of the vampire. In other words, the brain can steer, but there are no brakes.

So what are the lusts that drive them? Most of the Wamphyri pursue several of the seven deadly sins: pride, avarice, sexual lust, anger, and gluttony. The remaining two, envy and sloth, are known to drive certain vampires, but most do not experience them. What need of envy when you can kill those who have what you wish? And sloth? What is sloth but a hindrance which makes you avoid experiencing the other passions? There is one other Wamphyri drive which (surprisingly) does not fall into the seven deadly sins, and that is the desire to kill, pure and simple. Wamphyri love battle, they love to fight, and they love to lick the hot blood of their fallen opponent off their razor talons.

All these drives, these lusts seem selfish and destructive, and in fact, they are. Thus it may be surprising to learn that the Wamphyri can, and on extremely rare occasions do, love. Never will they admit that it is possible, and in fact most have never experienced it, but Wamphyri love, like every other Wamphyri emotion, is overpowering. The reason the Wamphyri won't admit they can love, they will

tell you, is that they have too much pride to own up to it. This is of course a lie. The real reason is that to love someone means in part that you will not seek to control them, and to admit to a gap in the desire to control, which all Wamphyri have in spades, is tantamount to admitting a weakness. And the Wamphyri never admit a weakness.

Secrecy and the Hunger

"The strength of the will is that of the body, and the strength of the body is the blood."

— Janos Ferenczy, Book 4

Naturally, fueling Wamphyri lust and anger and warmongering requires that the creature indulge himself repeatedly in his own gluttony: he must feed, and for a vampire more than any other creature, the blood is the life. How often must they feed? No one knows. They can go months, even years apparently, without feeding, and still have incredible amounts of energy. Yet let a vampire go long enough, and he can die from starvation, his very tissues desiccating and calcifying for lack of the savor of blood.

The Wamphyri choose to feed somewhere between once a week and once a month, depending on how fertile the feeding grounds are and how aware and powerful the cattle — er, humans — have become that a vampire is near.

Why is this second point a concern? Survival dictates that the vampires bridle their indulgences with a heavy dose of camouflage. For although they are powerful creatures, vampires cannot risk exposure in a human-dominated world. For a vampire to cause itself to be exposed as a monster is tantamount to voluntarily bringing a death sentence upon its own head, and that is not particularly conducive to survival. Humans cannot abide vampires in their midst, and although most humans do not believe vampires exist, they are readily able to embrace the fact. Once a vampire is exposed, all the humans in the area will band together to destroy it at all costs, and they will succeed. Thus vampires must balance concealment with expansion, and it is this success at concealing their existence which has allowed the human race at large the luxury of believing the Wamphyri do not exist.

The need for secrecy has grown in recent centuries. It used to be that a vampire could find an isolated vale and terrorize the locals into submission with vampiric prowess, but this has become more and more difficult as the information age has matured. The Wamphyri still seek out isolated places, there are still some in the modern age in places like the Amazon, rural Africa, and Southeast Asia; but today most Wamphyri must seek out a different type of isolation. The billionaire recluse might seem to be a perfect way for a vampire to find seclusion, but in actuality people like Howard Hughes are forever in the public spotlight, with autograph hounds and reporters and groupies following them around in a desperate attempt to get something ...

Instead, a vampire must seek out anonymity. They must not be seen to want privacy, yet still have it. They must never appear to be tied to too much wealth. The most notable they can appear is to come across as a mildly eccentric person who values quiet time. And in these modern times, when a vampire hunts, he must do so far from his lair, because the police are getting better and better at tracking and forensics.

There is one other point that needs to be made about Wamphyri feeding: to a vampire, human blood is like tepid tea, animal blood like cold stale water. For a real meal, for a tall espresso with six extra shots, for a bloodfeast a vampire can really sink his teeth into (pardon the pun), he must seek out and feast upon another of his kind. This is difficult to accomplish, since naturally any vampire will do anything to avoid being raped and bled and drained and devoured to strengthen another of its kind. Anything.

Normally, the only time a vampire gets to feast in this manner is with the

offspring of his own egg (thralls and the like just aren't quite the same — better than humans, but still limpid). The vampire takes his offspring and keeps him drained, feeding on him just often enough to keep his will weak and pliable. Not so often as to kill the egg-son, neither too rare to let him build up enough stamina and willpower to leave. Eventually, of course, the Wamphyri being the cold and deceiving and manipulative creatures they are, one or the other happens, and as the Wamphyri take some pride in their offspring (even as they hate them), it is far more common for an egg-son to run away than to be bled to death.

As one could imagine, this tradition helps bind the Wamphyri in a mutual bond of hate. But that's what makes war and vengeance so much more fun.

Negotiations

"Never bargain with a vampire. For there's always the devil to pay..."

— Boris Dragosani

The Wamphyri don't know any other way than obscuring the truth. No other way. When in negotiation with someone, they often resort to obfuscation, sesquipedalianism, and double entendres. They always leave out important pieces of information, because these are bargaining chips for future use or else weaknesses in the enemy's knowledge which the Wamphyri can exploit. They love to use words which are either difficult to understand or which are commonly misunderstood by the public.

Of course, the Wamphyri use whatever means necessary to twist their promises to their advantage, delay meeting their agreement, or even breaking their word outright. Never trust a vampire not to do something, especially if inaction is implied in the agreement, but not expressed. For example, if you're negotiating with a vampire, never assume he won't eat you — as a special bonus unilaterally donated to himself, of course.

In summary, it's best not to bargain with the Wamphyri. No matter how much of a position of superiority you think you have, it's not really the case. Just ask Boris Dragosani and Harry Keogh, two of the most intelligent people and powerful psychics in the modern age; they both paid the ultimate price for their negotiations with the Wamphyri.

Wamphyri Psionic Powers

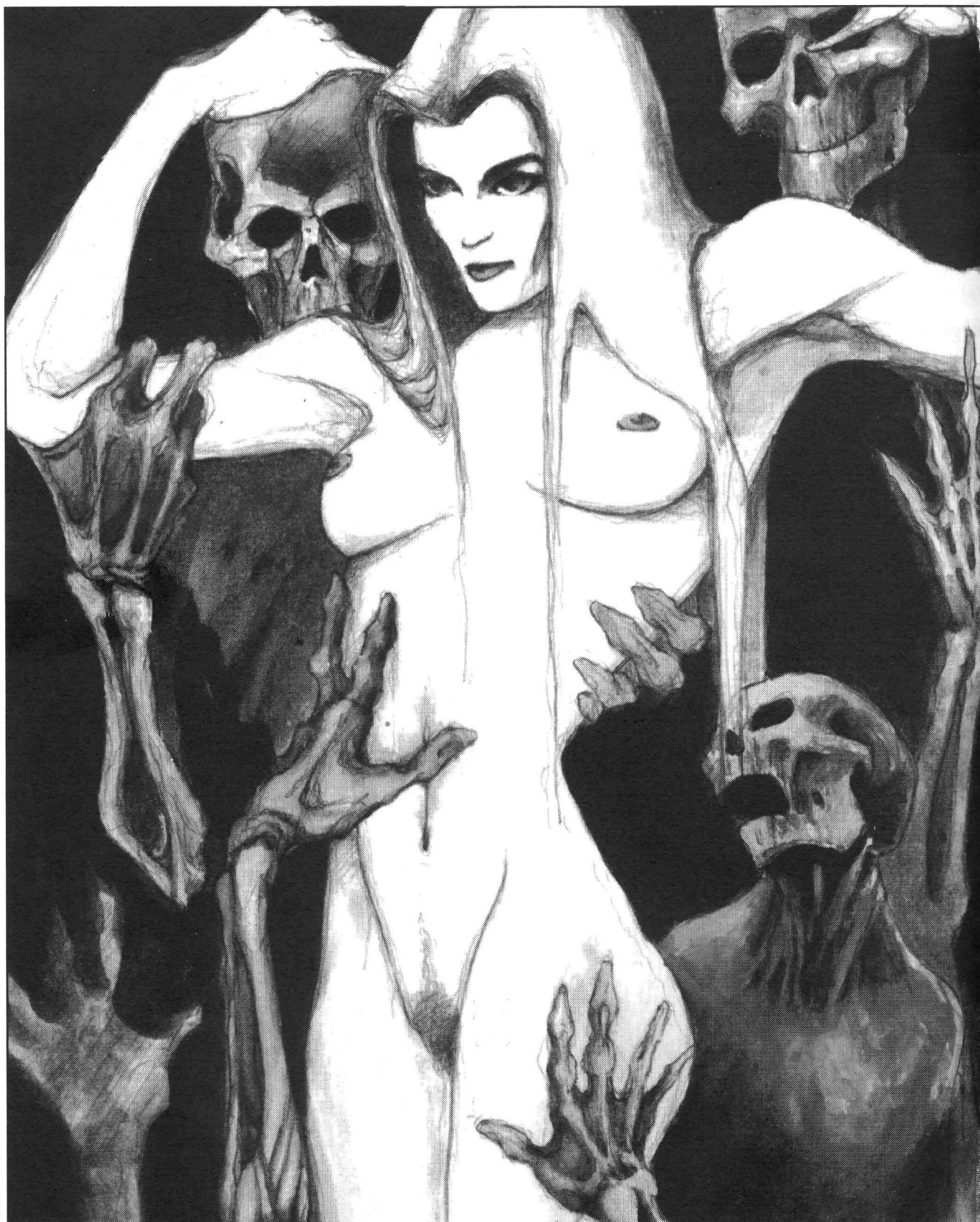
"Men should never try to read the future. For it's a devious thing."

— Harry Keogh, Book 4

The vampire by itself is a psychically powerful creature, but combined with the intelligence and psionic potential of the human brain, the Wamphyri are psychic opponents without match in the world. Vampires have the ability to make their human hosts reach their true paranormal potential; older Wamphyri have as many as a dozen psychic talents, and truly aged Wamphyri perhaps many more. It is certainly true that one or more Wamphyri have had every



Thomas O'Neill



Thomas O'Neill

human psychic talent, with the sole exception being necroscopy, but then again, it may be that some vampires actually can talk to the dead, and that their inability to use this talent arises simply from the fact that the human dead utterly refuse to talk to a Wamphyri necroscope.

Aside from the human abilities, the Wamphyri have some psychic abilities which are uniquely theirs, described below.

Beguilement

Wamphyri change over the years from their normal human appearance. Red eyes can appear within a day or two, and other, more dramatic changes take place shortly after that. In order to protect itself in a human environment, a vampire practices beguilement, the psychic ability to make humans who look at the vampire believe it looks like a normal person. This is a subconscious art for the Wamphyri, one which requires no concentration.

The gamemaster should make opposed *willpower* rolls for the Wamphyri and any player characters who encounter it. If the human character wins any of these rolls, he gets a brief glimpse of what the Wamphyri really is. Perhaps the eyes appear to glow, or perhaps — just for a split second — the human catches a look at the *real* vampire out of the corner of his eye. Of course, when the character turns to look, the vampire appears perfectly normal again ...

Human gamemaster characters will never be able to penetrate Wamphyri's beguilement unless the gamemaster decides that such an incident would advance the plot. Sorry, ESPers, you're on your own.

Mind Smog

The Wamphyri mind is unknowable to human ESPers. Some believe this is due to a psychic smog which the Wamphyri instinctively produce by means of a new paranormal power, while others believe this metaphysical miasma is due to the utterly alien nature of the Wamphyri soul which defies human understanding. Whatever the true cause, Wamphyri minds are difficult if not impossible to penetrate.

To simulate this, add the target vampire's *willpower* to the DN of the attacking ESPer's ESP SFX. If the ESPer beats the SFX DN but does not beat the total of the vampire's *willpower* plus the DN, all the ESPer gets is a glimpse of the mind smog. This positively identifies the target as Wamphyri, but no further information is gained.

Note that this applies only to talents which attempt to 'attack' the vampire. In this book, that includes seers, shamans, and telepaths. Spotters do not attempt to grab or penetrate the vampire's spirit as do telepaths and the others, so they do not suffer this impediment. In fact, spotters can generally pick up the Wamphyri with great ease because they are such powerful sources of psychic energy.

Another facet of the Wamphyri psychic inscrutability is the so-called black aura. This is, if you will, the stink of the mind smog without the smoke, and it infests everything that a vampire touches psychically. Let a vampire into your mind' it must be willing, otherwise it's an attack), and the creature will leave his muddy footprints on your soul for the rest of your life. Almost any ESPer can pick this up just by reaching for the tainted person psychically. Sensitives of course cannot, because their talent doesn't interact with people at all, but spotters, telepaths, seers, and many others can detect this indelible vampiric mark.

There is an additional danger in attempting to penetrate a vampire's mind; if you succeed in getting in, you open yourself up to a counterattack. In essence, this is a sort of psychic form of aikido: by attaching yourself to the vampire's spirit to read his thoughts, you commit your spirit to the task. The vampire, with its powerful and nimble alien spirit, can seize hold of your spirit and use your connection to reach back into your own mind. By committing yourself to assault

the vampire, you give him leverage to strike back at you.

If a vampire detects your intrusion into his mind (he almost certainly will), he can counterattack, and use your SFX effect value as a bonus to his ESP skill die roll. Obviously, the effects of this kind of bonus can be devastating, especially for powerful psychics. That's why most people don't try to mess around with Wamphyri minds. For the incredibly daring, however, this gate works both ways ...

The Night of the Creature

"Unseen presences moved here, stirring the musty air without stirring the festoons of cobwebs and fingers of dead twigs that hung down from above. Here it was cold— clammy cold — where the sun had not broken through for five hundred years."

This black aura also manifests itself in the tangible world. The creatures of the night can summon mists or even a supernatural darkness in an area. Even in broad daylight, the light seems a bit bleaker around a vampire, and at night, the stars seem to dim almost to the point of being extinguished when a vampire exerts his power. The exact game effects of the mist or darkness are up to the gamemaster to determine, as they depend in large part on what the ambient lighting, what the weather is, and how the effects will best suit the drama and plot of the adventure. If it's already foggy, a vampire would have an easy time making it a real pea-souper, but if it's a bright and dry day, the vampire will find things much more difficult. And if this is the climactic battle, I sure hope you brought your flashlights!

Sorcery and Other Magics

The Wamphyri are interested in all sorts of power, and when their traditional methods fail them or fall short of expectations, they are certainly not above exploring more esoteric forms of paranormal experimentation, phenomena which we would call magic. Sorcery. Voodoo. Alchemy. Demoniac summoning. And others too terrible to imagine. Whatever the Wamphyri set themselves to master, they eventually do. So, as a vampire hunter, be sure that just when you think you understand the Wamphyri fully, you are wrong.

Probably dead wrong.

Incidental Effects

"People sometimes dreamed funny things there, things that stuck in their minds and came back in the night to bother them."

In life, or even in death or undeath, a vampire leaves its mark on the surrounding area. There is a pall of death around the area which the creature has claimed as his own, and a psychic disturbance which manifests itself as nightmares, unexplained chills, and other unnerving sensations.

The light seems bleaker, the colors dimmer, and the wind itself seems dead. Sound from the surrounding area carries as though filtered through a blanket, but sounds close at hand are sharp and tension-inducing. Plants grow less readily in the neighborhood of a vampire's home (or burial place), but must needs remain in place by their fate as an immobile life form. Animals avoid the place, and even when passing by, birds cease their calls. The only creatures which voluntarily live near a vampire are parasites, insects (but even those which can make noises remain silent), and the vampire's servant creatures which are generally bats, rats, and wolves.

'No cock crowing, no birdsong, even the droning of bees is absent here. The brambles are lush and green but they bear no fruit. Nothing, no one will come near you, not even now. The things of Nature sense your presence. They can't speak to you like I can, but they know you're here. They shun you, because even dead you're still evil. So don't sneer at my 'pureness,' Faethor, for I shall never be alone..."

— Harry Keogh at Faethor Ferenczy's graveside,
Wamphyri!

Reproduction

The first question which any sensible vampire hunter will ask is not "how do we kill the thing?" but rather "how do we stop it from spreading until we figure out how to kill it?" Thus we should mention the many ways in which a vampire can reproduce itself or create other creatures like itself.

Sex

Vampires are by nature sexless beasts, but they adopt the gender of their host. The reader may wonder, then, why throughout this book we have consistently referred to Wamphyri as being males. This is because vampires are not politically correct creatures, and they don't give a damn about equal opportunity. They overwhelmingly prefer to be the male of the species, because males are stronger, taller, built to resist damage, and are better equipped to rape their foes (something which Wamphyri are gruesomely fond of).

The Wamphyri can reproduce sexually, if they so desire, but human bodies are loathe to carry the hybrid creature to term. Sometimes they don't have a choice, but if possible, humans will spontaneously abort the hybrid offspring, but even if they are successful, this doesn't mean that the thing will die. There have been documented cases of a protoflesh infant kicking inside the mother's cold womb hours after her death. Fortunately, most died before too long.

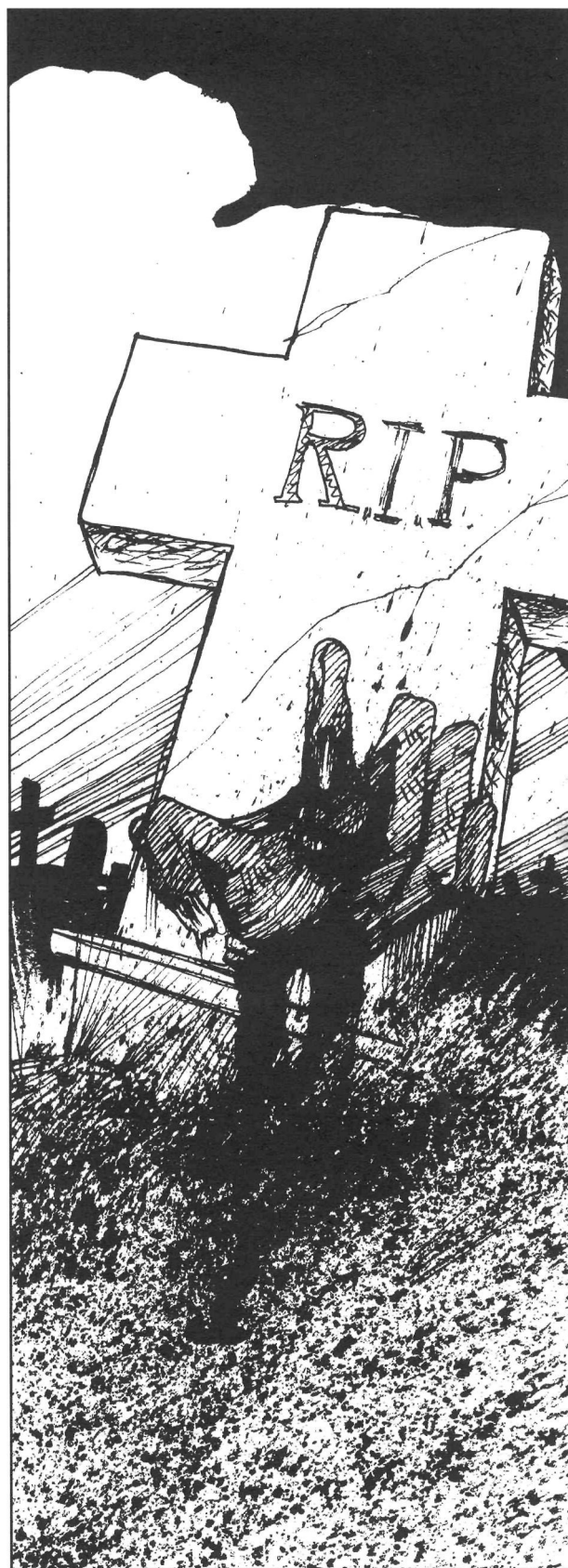
If it survives, the offspring of a Wamphyri-induced pregnancy is an independent creature, just as all offspring are. The father vampire, if he's around, might be able to train the child to be subservient, but rest assured that the vampire within will resist the training and leave as soon as possible.

The Vampire Egg

The Wamphyri hate each other, but they still must reproduce, for reproduction is almost as strong an instinct for them as survival. Each vampire has within him the makings of one (and only one) egg. This vampire egg is a precious treasure for the vampire, and though vampires claim this is because they have pride in their offspring, many vampire hunters think it is only because the egg itself holds the promise of many meaty feasts of young vampire blood.

The Wamphyri are very discriminating in their choice of who should bear their egg. The egg-bearer must be strong, keen-witted, cold, and callous. Strong, to withstand the pain and endure the change. Keen-witted to plot and scheme, and cold to become the best vampire he can. Callous to be able to take the repeated plunder of the body and soul when the father feeds upon him, and still plot for independence and vengeance, for without those dark emotions the egg-bearer can never really be Wamphyri! The Wamphyri expect the recipient of an egg to consider it a great honor, and cannot seem to understand humans' reticence in the matter.

The vampire egg is about the size of a small marble or



Ron Kulp

perhaps a large ball bearing, and it is pearly or iridescent in color. When a vampire prepares to pass the egg to its recipient, he extrudes the egg from where it lies in repose deep within his protoflesh, extends a long pseudopod, and brings the egg to the pseudopod's tip. He then charges the egg with blood and life force, turning it bright blood red in color, and he drops or flings the egg at the target. Charging and releasing the egg is a draining experience for the vampire, and although this is usually a voluntary action, it can be prompted to occur involuntarily when the vampire is weak and hungry (this is the instinct to reproduce being teased into action by the threat of oblivion).

The egg itself is alive and motile, and it seeks out its host with full vampire instinct. Once it finds a host, it osmoses into the host's body, passing straight through the skin like quicksilver. Once inside the body, the egg flows like a poison amoeba in search of its favorite place to lair: behind the heart. During the course of its exploration for this secret place, it explores all the other places in the body as it passes, sending waves of pain like hot acid or pinpoint firebrands running up and down the shrieking nerves of the victim. The newly-created vampire thus undergoes a baptism of fire for the first few minutes of his new life, writhing in timeless agony until at last the vampire finds its lair and rests, and the host passes out from the strain.

Once situated, the egg slowly grows, spreading into the victim's central nervous system, throughout his brain, and, over time, through virtually every cell in his body. There is no cure — at least not for the victim. For everybody else, the cure starts with decapitation ...

The Legendary Vampire Mother

There is a legend among the Wamphyri, a legend of vampires that inhabit female bodies. Such a creature is a vampire mother, a creature which combines the vampire's evil and a human woman's natural fertility and reproductive drives. Vampire mothers are said to have not one egg, but hundreds, and it is said that their reproductive instincts are so powerful that they overwhelm her instinct for self-preservation. It could also be that the eggs have an independent instinct for survival, and their combined will dominates hers. Vampire mothers literally pour so much vitality into creating and energizing their eggs that they drain themselves dry. They reproduce themselves to a horrid, mewling, starving death.

They are legends, of course. But no Wamphyri really wants to test it, just the same, so in the main, they select males to be their offspring.

Bloodsons

"Are you telling me that... are you saying it took effect?"

— Faethor Ferenczy, Book 2

To be a bloodson, or daughter is simply to be the "natural" progeny of vampires. If they mate in the "old fashioned" way, two vampires — or say a Lord and a human woman, or a Lady and a male human — the issue of such a union will be a vampire, a bloodson or daughter: as Faethor and Marilena in *Deadspeak*. A bloodchild will develop an egg, even if it takes hundreds of years, and eventually a leech.

No matter how hard a Lord or Lady of Wamphyri may try to prevent it, something of the leech gets in, making it impossible for a vampire to reproduce and create anything but another vampire.

Extrusions

Wamphyri can also create independent creatures simply by amputating part of their own protoflesh. These are not true vampires in any sense of the word, but simply shapeless semi-sentient protoflesh monstrosities that vaguely follow the mental command of the vampire when he sees fit to concentrate on trying to

Elapsed Time	AGI	DEX	END	STR	CON	CHA	ESP*	Physical Alterations
1-2 hours		+1			+1			Eyes start to gleam
1 day or so	+1							Eyes get a red shimmer
2-3 weeks	+2	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1	†	Distinct predatory gait
1-2 months	+1	+1	+1	+2			‡	Predatory appearance
6-12 months	+1	+1	+1	+1	-1	‡		Vague aura of power
A few years			+1		+1	-1	‡	Fledgling vampire
Five years +	continued changes are unpredictable							Complete vampire

* A vampire's ESP skills increase dramatically as he develops his psychic prowess. This is in addition to any benefits gained by increasing statistics.

† True Wamphyri gain telepathy as a skill; those with telepathy already gain +3 to the skill.

‡ A vampire also learns to release other psychic skills locked up within its brain and the brain of its human host. Add another ESP skill at these intervals.

wedge his psychic imperatives into the brainless beast.

They are more like amoebas than anything human or vampiric. They have no central nervous system, and are thus not injured by wooden stakes or decapitation. In fact, lopping off any part of an extrusion results in two extrusions. They do not otherwise divide as do amoebas, but continue to grow in mass and strength, but never intelligence, which always remains around that of a starfish (which don't have brains either). Extrusions can be burned away with fire or acid, these being the only methods which can overcome the regenerative capacity of a vampire.

Extrusions can be used to control humans; if an extrusion gets inside a human's brain case, it can be used as a sort of psychic antenna enabling the vampire to control the hapless soul. The resulting creature (called a thrall) is still human in every way, but the vampiric presence inside him allows him to be tireless and to exert himself to the point of self-destruction — kind of like someone high on PCP but still in full control of his faculties. Such humans lack any of the vampire's powers and can be killed in any of the normal ways, although the extrusion inside his brain case must be killed separately.

Wamphyri in Game Terms

Now that we've told you what they're like, it's time we put the Wamphyri into game mechanics so that you can run them in your campaign. Unfortunately, much of what the Wamphyri are is mutable, so they defy categorization and absolute description. We'll do the best we can.

Wamphyri and Their Children

"Each of the Wamphyri has but one egg, one seed, in a lifetime; one chance to recreate the true fruit; one opportunity to carve his changeling 'nature' into the living being of another."

— Thibor Ferenczy

The Wamphyri themselves are always changing, either subtly in evil ways, or overtly by growing slathering fangs in the blink of an eye. When they are young, they change constantly, evolving from pure human to hybrid creature. As you can imagine, then, the true Wamphyri is not easily placed in a cubbyhole. However, some generalizations can be made.

The Wamphyri are very strong, and have inhuman reflexes. Their human bodies are not a lot tougher than they were before infestation, but they heal more quickly from grievous damage. They are preternaturally intelligent, and have near total recall of every event of their life. And their will? Suffice it to say that Wamphyri have incredible Confidence attributes. (A vampire egg itself has a

Confidence of about 6 or 8, and this number grows as the creature grows inside the human body.)

The physical attributes of the Wamphyri are also malleable, to reflect the fact that they can change their shape from hulking gorilla to wolf to winged bat. Specifically, a mature creature can shift attribute points between his Agility, Dexterity, Strength, and Endurance. How many points can a vampire shift, and how quickly? That's up to the gamemaster. Old Wamphyri can shift as many points as they wish, switching from human to bat in the space of a second or two of free-fall, while younger Wamphyri might have to make an Average Mind roll and check the result on the push chart to see how many attribute points they can shift.

In short, give your Wamphyri characters whatever attributes you wish, and feel free to change them on the fly. Your players will love you for it.

Thralls

A thrall is someone touched, bitten, by one of the Wamphyri. Some of their blood has been taken, but not enough to kill them. Or if it was enough to "kill," but not enough vampire essence was transfused to create a new Lord in the fullest sense. Thralls will aspire to a higher state of vampirism — to be Wamphyri! — and in time may achieve it.

On the Vampire homeworld, thralls may go on to become lieutenants, and given time Lords in their own right. They may have even suffered "death" and returned in undeath, in which case the progression will be swifter.

Thralls may or may not develop a leech; or, if one's Lord or Master is fond of him, he may bequeath his egg. Or the underling may try to steal his Master's egg, as thralls can be every bit as devious as their Wamphyri masters.

The thrall, then, is a fledgling vampire. The stages of the infection run like this:

1. Bitten or otherwise influenced, but not drained. Never having "died," this is the least of vampires. A common thrall. Stat changes are as follows:

Agility+1	Dexterity+1	Strength+2	Endurance+2
Mind n/c	Intellect n/c	Charisma -4	Confidence +2

2. Drained, "dead," and returned to undeath. A fully committed thrall, who will one day be Wamphyri. Stats change again:

Agility +1	Dexterity +1	Strength +1	Endurance +1
Mind n/c	Intellect n/c	Charisma -2	Confidence +2

3. Almost the same as immediately above, but this thrall has also received copious amounts of vampiric essence. If he's the right stuff, this thrall will very quickly make a lieutenant.

Agility +2	Dexterity +2	Strength +3	Endurance +3
Mind n/c	Intellect n/c	Charisma -1	Confidence +2

4. A lieutenant, with a leech or developing leech inside. He is climbing the last few rungs of the ladder to vampirism in its "highest" form. If he steps carefully, doesn't lose his grip, doesn't get knocked off the ladder, he will "ascend" to a Lord. He *will* be Wamphyri! (His greatest threat is that there will always be someone else, even his own patron Lord of the Wamphyri, or most trusted lieutenant, ready to cut him down.)

Agility +1	Dexterity +1	Strength +2	Endurance +2
Mind n/c	Intellect n/c	Charisma -1	Confidence +2

For sample Wamphyri stats, see Chapter Seven, "Characters in the Novel."

Szgany

'No, my son, I talk to you. Because you are one of mine.'

— Thibor Ferenczy

The gypsies are normal humans who have sold themselves out to the Wamphyri. These dark ties are partly what keeps them in a nomadic lifestyle; their connections with the creatures of the night are easier to conceal when they isolate themselves from the rest of society. Most Wamphyri have a tribe of gypsies who are beholden to them, and the most powerful Wamphyri have two or three. These ties are ties of blood, which the gypsies are bound by honor and tradition to uphold, but which even some of them recognize as having sold out to the devil incarnate.

These ties are mysterious in nature. The gypsies of the tribe are pure humans. They are not vampiric in any way, they do not even have the mind smog associated with the Wamphyri psychic touch, yet their masters can summon them across large distances, and can control their minds as they can any Wamphyri thralls. The gypsies accept this lot, and understand that the time may come where they are ordered to turn on their fellow man for the benefit of their Wamphyri masters, or perhaps even sacrifice their own life to the preservation of the evil which rules their destiny. It is a sad but unavoidable part of their lives, and fuels their melancholia.

Rumor has it that the Wamphyri can call zombies of their people. Whether or not this is true is unknown, but no one can explain how they might be able to do it. If the rumors are true, then it indicates that Wamphyri can be necrosopes, but that the only people who'll respond to them are those Szgany who have already sold their souls.

Bloodhounds

One of the most common servants for the Wamphyri are Bloodhounds, large wolves tainted by his lord's essence and compelled to serve. Here are the attributes and skills of a "standard" wolf or mastiff bloodhound serving an experienced Lord of Wamphyri:

BLOODHOUND

AGILITY 11

Dodge 14, running 15, stealth 16, unarmed combat 14

DEXTERITY 6

STRENGTH 9

ENDURANCE 12

MIND 5

INTELLECT 7

Perception 12, tracking 13

CHARISMA 3

CONFIDENCE 12

Intimidation 15, willpower 17

Life Points: 1-2

Natural Tools: Bite (Str+3/15), claws (Str+2/14)

Ghosts

"Back! Back, you ghosts of men! It's for him, not you."

— Boris Dragosani

When a human becomes Wamphyri, at some point the human soul is ejected from the body whereupon it turns into a wandering shade. These ghosts of men can never rest, and they



Ron Kulp

eventually dissolve, but until then they haunt the Earth. These are not servants of the Wamphyri, but they nonetheless serve their ends in spreading fear and horror.

How do they interact with men? Possibly not at all. Possibly they can only interact if the target is an ESPer. Perhaps they can try to possess a passing person. Perhaps it's different for each ghost. No one knows — but you, as gamemaster, can decide.



Wamphyri in Combat

"Run, little man, run ..."

— Thibor Ferency

The Wamphyri are the most fearsome creatures of all to fight, for they are shapeshifting superhuman monstrosities. They never tire, they never give up, and they can absorb incredible amounts of damage. And, as long as they are not completely destroyed, they will heal themselves and return for you again. Then, once they kill you, they'll torture you through necromancy. In short, if you're going to fight a vampire, you'd better be fighting to win, for your very soul is at stake.

Damage

Vyotsky watched Shaithis of the Wamphyri commence the descent down the cliff face, gritted his teeth and slowly lifted the barrel of his weapon.

Without looking back, Shaithis grunted, "Yes, by all means do, Karl — and we shall see which one of us is caused the most pain."

— Shaithis of Wamphyri, Book 3

Obviously, when the vampire Lord's Strength and Endurance increase, so does his Toughness. This increase in Toughness represents the extra physical prowess vampiric infestation gives someone, the increased healing ability the vampire's protoflesh can put forth, and the increased size and, well, toughness of the vampire itself.

This does not mean that the Wamphyri are harder to damage than normal people, just that they are harder to damage enough to matter. Break a human's femur, and he'll be incapacitated with pain as the leg muscles cramp up in agony. Break a vampire's femur and he gets really road, bites your face off, and rips all your guts out through your navel. Even when no wound results are obtained, the vampire gets physically injured: be sure to describe the damage the vampire suffers graphically, and then juxtapose it with how very little it concerns the beast: "You fire your shotgun point-blank into the Wamphyr's leering face as his jaw opens up to feast on your blood. Flash! Boom! The buckshot tears through his head, ripping his lower jaw clean off and spattering blood and shards of bone against the wall behind him. The vampire stumbles back, runs a hand over the dripping remains of his face, pulls off a few gobbets of rent flesh and tosses them aside, then turns and looks at you with an expression of extreme annoyance. His upper jaw noisily reforms into a hideous parody of insect mandibles as he comes after you once more ..."

The Wamphyri are tireless creatures, and ignore all shock damage except as noted below. However, they are human in some sense, so they still suffer K and O results, and knockdowns indeed knock them down. The worst part of all, however, is that a vampire creature is wearing human flesh for armor. Hence the Wamphyri ignore the first wound done by any attack, as the damage is soaked up by the human host's body. Subsequent damage is scored normally against the vampire within, and, as has been noted elsewhere, this is pain indeed. And the Wamphyri will pay you back for it.

The Wamphyri have one other advantage: they never die of natural causes.

They will not die of mortal wounds as do humans, because they can't bleed to death. However, each additional wound they take while mortally wounded adds on to the damage they must heal.

Healing

The Wamphyri can heal wounds just like everyone else, and in fact they can do it better, because they do not die. No matter how bad their condition, it does not worsen. For every wound a vampire takes beyond the first mortal, just tack on another mortal wound, up the healing rate by one value (a week is value 29), and up the healing difficulty by two points. Thus the bottom of the Wound Level Chart of page 71 of the *MasterBook* rule book is changed for Wamphyri to read as follows:

This can mean a vampire might spend as many as a hundred years or even more recovering from grievous wounds, but Wamphyri are nothing if not persistent, and though they may have to avenge themselves on your great-grandchildren, avenge themselves they will.

There is one problem with all this time being required, and that is that the Wamphyri are symbiotic creatures, but the vampire within heals itself first before healing the human shell. When a vampire's wounds are great, the host body may rot and slough away during its convalescence. This puts the vampire leech in the unenviable position of being naked and needing to find a new host, because there is no vampire so confident in its own evil powers that it would tolerate being without a host body in which to conceal itself.

 **Killing a Vampire**

There are many ways to kill a vampire, all of them risky, and all of them requiring special efforts. Incapacitating a vampire is somewhat easier; all that takes is decapitation. The vampire creature mimics the human host in many ways, including developing the vampire brain in the human host's head. Decapitate a vampire and you cut his intelligence off from the rest of his body. The missing head has little material with which to work its evil will, and the flopping mindless remainder is much easier to handle. Decapitation requires that a character with a bladed weapon aim for the neck (suffering a -5 penalty to the *combat* skill check) and score 13 result points for a total of three wounds. If that is done, the vampire's head takes a brief vacation from the rest of his body. Beware, however, a vampire's body, if it finds its own head, knows how to put it back on!

To kill a vampire, one must kill the creature within. Permanently. To kill a vampire permanently requires the assistance of any or all of the following:

Earth

Silver and iron are two metals which have a detrimental effect on the Wamphyri. In the proper proportions, silver and iron debilitate a vampire; he cannot move chains made of such an alloy, he cannot cross a barrier they form.

Pure iron does not appear to have an effect on the Wamphyri when used as a weapon — at least no more effect than any other metal does — but silver is another matter entirely. Silver poisons Wamphyri like mercury or lead poisons humans. When a vampire is hit by a silver blade,

Wound Level	Modifier(s)	Healing Rate	Healing Difficulty
1st Mortal	-12 to all skills*	1 week (29)	18
2nd Mortal	-16 to all skills	11 days(30)	20
3rd Mortal	-20 to all skills	17 days(31)	22
4th Mortal	-24 to all skills	1 month (32)	24
+1 wound	-4 additional	+1 value	+2

* Wamphyri can always do something, so this penalty applies only to strenuous activity. If a mortally wounded vampire is ignored, even for a moment, it can crawl away and hide with little problem.

he suffers the shock, and does not ignore the first wound done by the weapon. However, there is not enough silver left behind in the wound to affect the creature with poison.

Silver shot, however, remains in the wound and does poison the vampire. In addition to the above effects (shock and wounds), for each wound done by silver shot the vampire temporarily loses two points each from his Strength and Endurance, and one point each from all his other attributes. These reductions represent the poisoning done by the silver. Such poisoning is very slow and painful to heal, but it is unlikely that a vampire seriously affected by silver poisoning will survive long enough to try to recover.

Air

Okay, so air itself doesn't harm vampires. But air is essential to life, and certain living things are known to sicken or poison vampires, and certainly help in their disposal. And one of them makes the air smell bad.

Garlic sickens vampires, makes them ill. One good way to weaken a vampire then is to smear blades or spears with garlic oil, or better yet, take hollow-point ammunition and press mashed garlic into the hollow tip of the bullet. When a vampire is hit by a garlic-laced weapon, it suffers a -1 penalty to all future actions for each wound that it took from the attack. If only one wound was dealt and that wound was therefore ignored as described above, the vampire still suffers a -1 skill penalty as the garlic enters the host's bloodstream. Furthermore, Wamphyri suffer full shock effects from garlic attacks. Unfortunately, after the first successful attack with garlic-poisoned swords and spears, there is usually not enough garlic oil left on the weapon to continue to have the same effect.

Usually a vampire sheds the poisoned portion of his body; healing the loss of proflesh is easier than slowly and painfully metabolizing the garlic, because the garlic can cause partial paralysis, vomiting, and nervous disorders if it's allowed to poison the vampire's entire body.

Wood is another useful item in vampire-hunting, as it pins a vampire wherever it is. Pierce a vampire's wrist with a spear, and the *inner* vampire cannot withdraw itself from the host's hand (although it could voluntarily amputate that part, suffering damage in the process). Pierce a vampire through the heart (where the inner vampire's 'heart' is), and the vampire itself becomes immobilized, unable even to withdraw the stake which pins it. When a vampire is hit with a wooden stake, arrow, or spear, and actual damage is done to the vampire within, the Wamphyri host suffers all shock and K/O results from the attack. If someone target's the host's heart (-3 to the skill check to target the heart) and deals the vampire itself 2 wounds or better, the Wamphyri is paralyzed, unable to move more than weakly, until such time as it can talk someone into pulling out the stake.

Lignum vitae (a hard American wood) weapons automatically double the shock that a vampire suffers when someone using such a weapon strikes the creature successfully.

Fire

Fire, pure chaos and entropy incarnate, is another force which destroys vampires permanently. Fire alone is enough to ensure their destruction, but only a hot fire which they can't escape. Rest assured that if there is a way out of the fire, a vampire will find it. That's why the stake and cleaver are so often used in conjunction with fire; they help to keep the vampire still while you roast him alive. Of course, stakes themselves have a habit of burning ...

Alive, vampires burn slowly, but they take full shock from fire damage due to their fear of the flame. They still ignore the first wound done by fire as the human host body roasts away, but once four wounds have been absorbed by the human host, the fire begins to have full effect and the vampire within can no longer rely

on the host body's boiling fats to protect it from the inferno.

Aside from fire, pure sunlight is anathema to the Wamphyri. Sunlight direct and pure is savage to the Wamphyri, and can kill them if they are exposed to it for several minutes. Even brief exposure to sunlight can result in welts and burns. However, despite its potential for damage, simple heavy clothing and wide-brimmed hats and sunglasses are enough to protect the Wamphyri from the force of sunlight; reflected off anything less than a silver mirror, sunlight is no longer pure enough to damage them.

Water

As with humans, for the Wamphyri water is both a necessity and a hazard. Without moisture, be it blood or water, a vampire can desiccate and calcify, leaving its spirit trapped forever in a stony corpse permanently bereft of motion. There is no hope at all for a vampire who suffers such a fate.

On the opposite end, left under water long enough, a vampire can drown. It may be that the vampiric protoflesh lacks enough power to resist the osmotic pressure of water, and eventually dies on a protocellular level.

Ice is the other threat water poses to a vampire. Allowed to get cold enough, he will freeze solid, doomed forever to feel the soul-chilling cold yet completely helpless to change it. This frozen state is believed to last only so long as the vampire is cold; thawed out it is likely that he would return to life, but he would of course have to spend some time healing his terminal frostbite.

The Hand of God

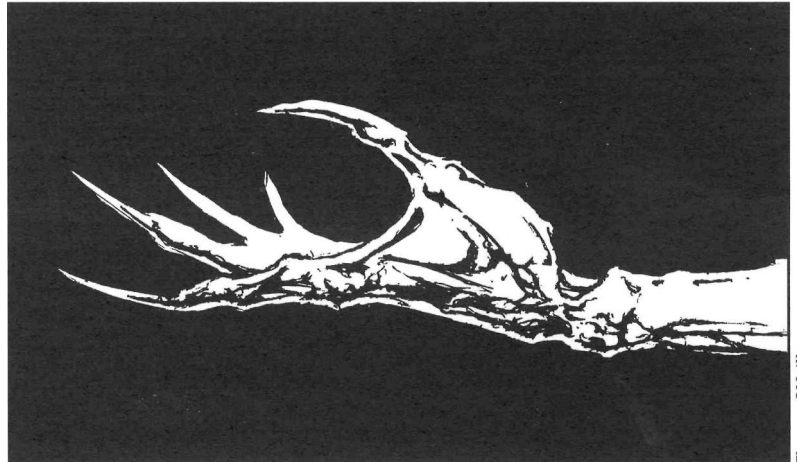
"But I'm already damned, my son. Yes, and so are you ..."

— Thibor Ferenczy

God, and therefore Nature which is God's handiwork, are also set opposed to the Wamphyri. The Wamphyri will not voluntarily enter holy places, be they churches, cathedrals, mosques, or shrines. When circumstances force such to happen, the forces of nature attempt to deny the occurrence, even to the point of spontaneously generating fierce windstorms, hail, and tornadoes when none should be able to exist.

Holy items also do more damage to vampires than one would think, assuming they are genuine artifacts and that the person wielding them has true faith. The most common item used is holy water, but that is simply because those churches in possession of true holy relics are loathe to give them up.

People infected by vampirism but not yet succumbed to the vampire within can be exorcised, the very nature of the holy ritual driving the vampire from the person's body. At least that's how the theory goes. The vampire usually doesn't let the ritual get that far.



Thomas O'Neill

Curing Vampirism

"And your lust has stayed in my body ..."

— Boris Dragosani

Sorry. It can't be done. Once Wamphyri, there is no return.

Not to say that people don't keep trying, they just keep failing.



Thomas O'Neill

Wamphyri Infection

"Inside the skull, the brain was a mush with a writhing core: in effect two brains, one human and shrivelled and the other — alien!"

There will be times when a character becomes Wamphyri during the course of play. Perhaps it will be a gamemaster character, perhaps a player's character, but regardless of who the unfortunate person is, changes will be made manifest as the human begins the slow and hideous transformation into an undead creature.

If a player character is infected, and that player is up to the challenge, you may allow the character to remain under the player's control. Of course, as the vampire within gets stronger, it will become more and more difficult for the human part of the character to rein in the insatiable Wamphyri bloodlust, until eventually the human host loses or cedes control to the creature within.

Physically, changing into a vampire has physical effects. An approximate timeline is given here, but remember that Wamphyri are anything but predictable:

The vampire's Intellect and Mind do not change as a direct result of infection. This is because a vampire in and of itself has no real intellect or learning, just instinct. Also, note that the vampire's Charisma actually falls; this is because a vampire's compelling nature comes more from psychic power and influence than by any real charisma. When viewed without a fog of mental domination, a vampire is pale, antisocial, and even a little freakish. Their aura causes humans around to feel uneasy and a bit afraid, hence their lowered charisma.

The character also has a continuing mental battle against the creature within. This is simulated with Dominance, which represents the relentless hunger of a vampire. The vampire within gets one point of Dominance each month (give or take; vampires are unpredictable). The vampire will seek to achieve control at the start of every month, as well as every time the host creature undergoes stress or relies on the vampire for survival. These are situations like when the host creature:

- Gets wounded
- Kills someone with a melee weapon or bare hands
- Eats someone for extra energy
- Uses new Wamphyri psychic powers
- Engages in lustful sex
- Gets cornered by police, a gang, or other powerful force

When the vampire attempts to achieve control, roll its Dominance against the character's *willpower*. If the vampire loses, the human portion maintains control. If the thing wins, it temporarily takes over operation of the host *and it gains one point of Dominance*. Yes, this means that if a vampire wins the control check at the start of a month, it gains two points of Dominance. It also means that if a character gets shot and the vampire takes control, the creature could gain several points of Dominance as it counterattacks, kills the assailant with its evil eye, and eats him. Finally, if the vampire ever gets a Spectacular+ result (17 result points more than the host or double the host's *willpower*, whichever is **greater**), it crushes the host's spirit completely and the creature becomes fully Wamphyri. At that point, the gamemaster should take over the character — unless the player wants to extract some revenge from the other characters ...

Six

Mastering Necroscope

Running the Game

Necroscope is in ways a subtle game, with curious complications. While the characters have amazing psionic powers, the increased awareness these powers give the users also provides an avenue for increased perception of horror. For example, the average person has no contact with the dead. Not so the necroscope, who has countless millions of people all desperately vying for but a few precious moments of his time. Not so anyone who has experience with necromancers, who recognize one of the most heinous assaults imaginable every time they encounter a necromancer's victim. The average person can be proud of their own abilities, but what of a shaman, whose face and eyes bloat into an obscene parody of humanity before the very soul of their victim is gutted? Only a truly depraved or conscienceless person could be proud of such a skill. But in *ESPionage*, even the best of agents might be forced to attack someone in such a vile manner for the better interests of the nation.

Necroscope is also a complicated game, with *ESPionage* agents moving beneath the thin veneer of civilization, molding the fate of nations, and the Wamphyri interacting with the destiny of humanity itself. Each side acts with near impunity, and their activities are covered up by the powers that be and dismissed with plausible excuses. After all, no one really wants to believe in ESP.

These facets may be difficult enough, but there are other points wherein the average *Necroscope* gamemaster could use some advice.

Tone

"The moon was up and full, and all the stars were bright; high in the mountains wolves prowled and howled even now, as they had five hundred years ago; all the auspices were right."

First and foremost, *Necroscope* is a game of horror. Twisted psychic psychopaths stalk the land, evil *ESPionage* agents work for the overthrow of your mother country, stomach-churning psionic sensations are your bread and butter, and worst of all, the blood-lusty Wamphyri lie carefully hidden in the populace at large, building their empires and feeding on the lifeblood of innocents. *Necroscope* is horror, impure and simple. As a gamemaster, it is your responsibility to ensure that you describe it in such a manner that the horror oozes through your words to chill your players' spines.

Take, for example, this description of action:

"Okay, you walk through the room and search for things. You don't see anything important in the room. Then a vampire steps in behind you and attacks. What do you do?"



Thomas O'Neill

Bleah. Not a thrill-a-minute campaign, right? The description is terse and dry, and the gamemaster uses vague words like "room" and "things." The description of the environment and action pertains only to game functions; the players were told there wasn't "anything important" in the room, but they weren't told what was in there. They were told they were being attacked in a completely calm and serene manner.

Compare that to this description:

"Your footsteps are deadened by the plush red-and-black carpet as you step into what appears to be a den. Two large leather easy chairs flank the cold fireplace, and a huge wicker basket sits in the corner, covered with a ratty blanket. A chewed bone lies beside the basket; it looks almost like a human femur. There are large black candles on the mantelpiece of the fireplace, framing a large portrait of a severe-looking man in Renaissance garb. Various knickknacks fill the room: a suit of armor stands beside the fireplace with a globe set opposite, an antique desk sits across from you, and bookshelves fill the empty wall space. You quickly scan the room to see if anything catches your eye, but as you do so you hear the latch of the door behind you open. As quiet as the room is, the noise sounds like a gunshot. The door swings open on well-oiled hinges, and a glutinous laugh freezes the air with its incarnate evil as the vampire Lord flows blackly into the room, sealing your escape."

This is a much more colorful description. The room has an identity, and small clues to the Wamphyri can be found in the portrait and the fact that he has a large bed for a dog. Clues of extreme importance could easily be buried in the prose, since items of relative inconsequence are already being described — for example, perhaps the globe has markings on it cataloguing the vampire's holdings around the world, or perhaps important documents are in the desk. Concealing clues in this manner forces the players to use their own insight instead of relying on that of their characters.

One problem that gamemasters might encounter in these situations are over-eager players who react immediately for fear of losing their initiative. This can completely trample your brilliant horrific prose:

"You hear the door open behind you, and a glutinous laugh —"

"I turn and open fire with my flame-thrower!"-

"... fills the room with its —"

"Fill the room with fire! Full throttle! Hose it down! Kill it kill it kill it!"

This is a common problem, since some gamemasters continue to describe the action until their players react, and if the players wait through the entire narrative, they might find they have already lost the battle. "The door swings open, and a glutinous laugh freezes the air with its incarnate evil as the vampire flows blackly into the room. The vampire

laughs and laughs, and razor-sharp talons grab your throat from behind and squeeze all your blood out. You're dead. You should have done something."

How to balance these two styles of gamemastering? One insists that the players wait passively until the description is complete so that they experience the full shock and horror, but with the other the characters die if the players wait passively for the entire description because the action continues inexorably.

Our solution is to incorporate the characters' reactions into the narrative itself. This tells the players that you as gamemaster have noted that their characters are taking action, but that you want to finish describing the situation for the benefit of the players. Here's an example of how this works:

"You hear the door open behind you, and a glutinous laugh —"

"I turn and open fire with my flame-thrower!"

"... fills the room with its calm and assured malice. You turn about with blinding speed, bringing the nozzle of your flame-thrower to bear. Even as you do so, you see the once-familiar face of your commanding officer, his eyes burning as fiercely as pools of molten steel. His wide grin turns wider, then impossibly longer as the skin on his face splits and thick bone and musculature extend into a ferocious muzzle. A sudden gush of blood bursts from his slathering mouth as long razor teeth erupt from his gums, sending human teeth and gobbets of flesh to the floor. He lunges for you even as you pull the trigger on your weapon ..."

This allows your players to react reflexively without sacrificing the picturesque descriptions. Another advantage of this approach is that the more colorful and terrifying your prose is, the slower the players will react. If you can wrap them up in your story, the characters will likewise be stalled in their own horror. It happens all the time in horror stories; the characters encounter something truly terrible, and they pause in shock as their brains slowly absorb the unspeakable scene in front of them. This effect lingers until it finally impacts their conscious that their lives are in immediate danger. If you can so enthrall your players, so much the better.

Nevertheless, most experienced players will continue to react instantly. If this becomes a problem, a good way to curtail reflex reaction is to have normal things happen in a horrifying setting. This will incite a reaction which is not necessarily appropriate to the situation. This is more easily done if the players' characters aren't the only protagonists present. Imagine:

"The door opens slowly behind you, and —"

"I turn and shoot my flame-thrower! Burn it!"

"A chill runs up your spine and you turn with murderous horror in your eyes, a gout of flame already spewing forth from the hot steel muzzle of your weapon. With unerring accuracy you plaster the humanoid form with burning napalm... only to hear the all-too-human shrieks of fear and pain from your Romanian guide! He turns and lurches away from you, flames consuming his clothes and igniting his hair! He screams something in Romanian as he desperately tries to extinguish the drooling napalm which roasts the skin off his flesh. Caught up in the terror, your ESPionage trainee leaps past you with a silver-loaded shotgun and empties both barrels into the flailing flaming form, which spasms once, then lies still as thick oily smoke billows up."

An incident like that will certainly put the damper on those who shoot before they look. And right then, when they're in shock and their weapons are unloaded, why, that's the perfect time to have the real vampire show up. Furthermore, after all is said and done, the characters are left stranded in Romania without someone who can speak the language, let alone run interference when they get questioned about the disappearance of their guide or the fire at the Old Mircea

Estate. Gee, I wonder why?

Adventuring in Modern History

"Time is relative. What will be, has been!"

— Igor Vlady

The above quote has never been more true than with this game. The *Necroscope* novels are set in the 70s and 80s. We recommend that you set your *Necroscope* game in the same time period, although there's nothing preventing you from setting it in modern times, World War II, or even the Middle Ages or the Twenty-first Century. The Wamphyri have always been here, after all.

One advantage of setting the game in a time in the past is that you can tie ESPionage to real-world history. In the Soviet Union, ADPE's head Gregor Borowitz plotted the death of Andropov with undetectable Bulgarian poison. In your game, Wamphyri could be behind the overthrow of Ceausescu (or trying to bolster his regime), or a strange psychic phenomenon could be the cause of the mysterious Siberian explosion of 1904. Perhaps Wamphyri are ensconced in the Bermuda Triangle, and are the reason for the continued mysterious disappearances. Jimmy Hoffa could have been killed by (or even have been) a vampire. Likewise Jack the Ripper is a prime Wamphyri candidate.

The advantage of tying your game to history in this manner is that it makes the game seem more real, and it gives your players a better sense that their characters are playing a shadowy game behind the scenes, that even though they are deniable and would be an embarrassment if discovered, they can control the future. It's a thankless job, and one which they cannot afford to have revealed. It also makes the stakes seem much higher when they know that the person they're battling is responsible for the assassination of a U.S. President every twenty years, and he's still trying to bring down Reagan to keep his record unbroken.

Another advantage to putting the game a few years in the past is that your characters can use state-of-the-art technology, yet you won't have to make up any hokey-sounding devices. Since you know what was released when, you can give the characters the best stuff, and still it will be behind what we have today.

Of course, one consequence of this approach is that you have to be willing to change history. If the characters fail on a mission against the USSR's ADPE base, then the Soviet Union might not fall. If the characters fail in their efforts, Ronald Reagan might be killed by the assassin's bullets. Go ahead and change history, but it's best if the threads are recoverable (Reagan was not killed, but slipped into a coma — eventually he comes out of it).



Using the Special Cards

There are two unspecified picture cards included with the *MasterBook* deck; a sphere and a cube. In *Necroscope*, these have different uses.

The cube, well, it's a box, right? Like, say a coffin? I know, the similarity is a stretch, but any simile is better than none. So, when you turn up a coffin, start working the Dead into the plot line somehow. It doesn't need to be as blunt as having zombies rise from the grave — although there's nothing wrong with that — it could be as simple as troubling dreams, or even a letter from a dead person which arrives in the mail, having been temporarily lost by the postal service. Remember, the Dead are basically good and compassionate; death mellows the soul, so they'll almost certainly be helpful to the characters.

Likewise, the sphere looks much like a Wamphyri egg. Of course, if that's a little too severe for your characters at this point, you could have the sphere be instead a globe, meaning that ESPers from an agency across the globe begin to intertwine with the story line. Whatever they are, undead, communists, or both,

they are working against the characters.

What the Gamemaster Has to Know About ESP

The study of extrasensory perception is a new science, and most of what the power is and how it works remains unknown to even the best scientists working with the various ESPionage agencies around the globe. There is nothing for which it has been proven that ESP definitively can't do, but this is hardly surprising since it's far easier to prove something can be done than that something can't — especially with such an esoteric and inexplicable ability as ESP. About the only thing which it appears cannot be done is that changes cannot be effected without someone's active intelligence being involved. A psychokinetic can cause objects to float in the air, but he can't just leave them there without continuing to expend effort. Similarly, the dead won't continue to feel physical pain when a necromancer stops his torture.

How, then, does a vampire cause someone to forget about him, or to continue to believe an illusion after the vampire has left that person's presence? Simple. The vampire fooled the person, and the person's memory, though false, continues to remain in the person's brain. It will eventually fade, but only because the intensity with which the victim believes the illusion will also fade over time.

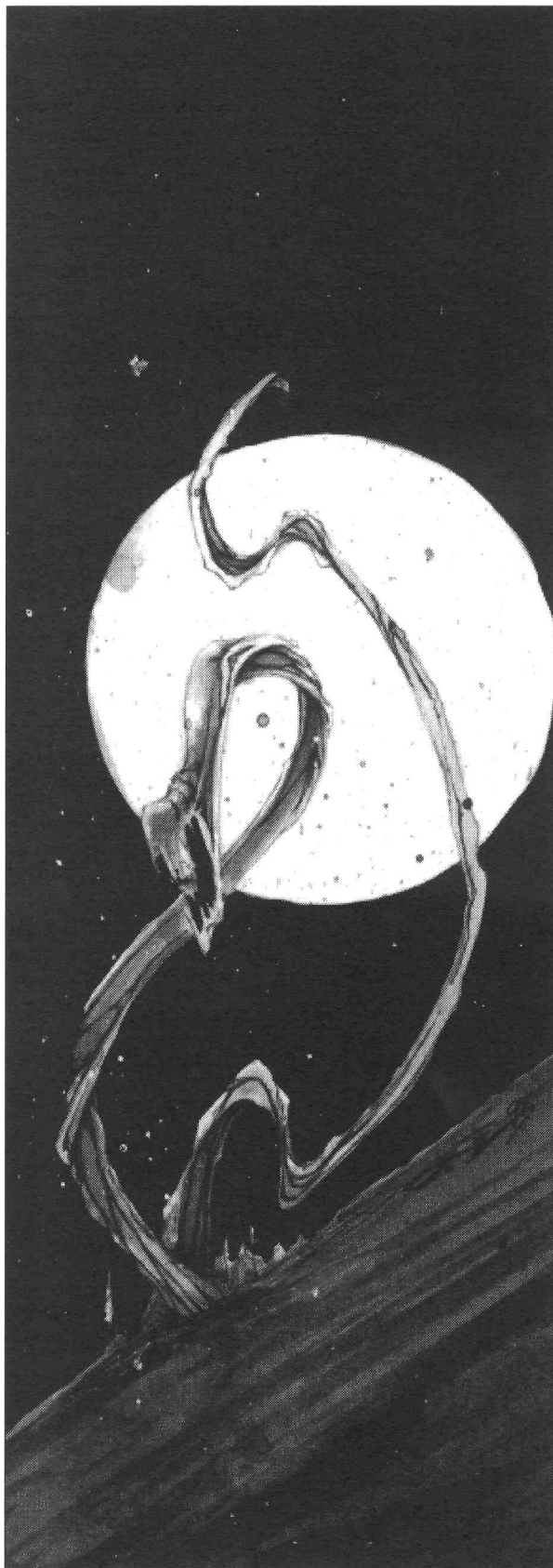
This is not to say that ESP cannot have permanent effects. If a pyrokinetic burns a piece of wood, it stays burnt for all time, and if a shaman kills someone, he won't get up and walk around again when the duration of the shaman's ESP talent is surpassed — at least not without the intervention of a vampire. ESPers can have permanent effects, they just can't have permanent unnatural effects like leaving a brick suspended in midair.

When running ESP in a game, there are many specialized situations which can cause confusion or difficulties. In the sections below, we give you some advice on how to handle them.

Dodgies

Among the crowd of Britain's INTESP, a dodgy is someone with a power they haven't identified or don't yet understand. In the U.S., they're called ringers, and other nicknames are found elsewhere. At one time, every ESPer was a dodgy, and experts believe that they have classified less than one third of the gifts which are out there somewhere.

Although we have included all the gifts used in the first book of the *Necroscope* series, many more were mentioned. Players can choose to have any of these talents, or even make up one unique to them; there is no gift that a player can't have. But remember that the more powerful the gift is, the harder it will be for the player to design an SFX for it without running into an impossible difficulty number. If the players want to teleport, levitate, burn objects with the mind or speak with computers, let them do it. Have them design the SFX using the published gifts as guidelines, and get your approval when



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they're finished. And if they design something that's really off the wall, by all means send it in. West End Games plans on publishing descriptions and examples of additional gifts in the future (we have about twenty more already planned).

Multiple Skills

In humans, ESP is a genetically-linked trait. Psychically powerful people will likely have psionically-gifted children. Furthermore, the exact nature of their psychic gift will probably follow the pattern of the gift of their parents. For example, Mary Keogh was a psychically-aware medium, a sort of a low-grade necroscope (although she didn't really understand it at the time); and her son Harry was a powerful necroscope. Harry's son was an even more powerful necroscope, although his was due as much to his unconventional training as to his latent ability.

The exact nature of extrasensory ability, genetic linkage, and other such details have not yet been worked out, although with the rarity of psychic people in the modern world it does appear that ESP ability is recessive — or that perhaps there is a gene which blocks psionic powers which is dominant. No one is sure.

There is one fact about ESP which has definitively been established. No human known has more than one paranormal gift. This has caused some difficulties in classifying certain persons, however. ESP gifts are many and varied, and although there are clear groupings — a telepath is very different from a shaman — the lines of division between gifts are not always clear. For example, what of an ESPer who can speak telepathically to his friends, but also sees them when he does so? Is he a scryer or a telepath? Or what of a person who has an automatic ability with which he reflexively attempts to rend the soul of anyone psychically-endowed? He has aspects of a shaman and a spotter, which is he? The answer to both questions is the same: he's both, he's neither, he's somewhere in between. Among the agencies, such intermediate talents are described as a compound form (telepath-scryer, shaman-spotter), this being the quickest and easiest way to describe the unique talent to those who already understand the major classifications of ESP gifts. The compound name does not imply that they have more than one gift, just that their gift is difficult to pigeon-hole into an already-established grouping.

You can allow these compound forms in your game. There are too many possibilities for us to define rules to cover all situations; we're afraid you're on your own here. In large part, the extra difficulty for using the skill (if any) depends on how imaginative the player is in describing the new talent. Advantages or Compensations could also be used to expand or refine an ESP talent, thereby obviating the need to make additional rules or alter the SFX's difficulty number.

The above discussion notwithstanding, there are those who do have more than one skill: the Wamphyri. These horrid fiends can have multiple ESP skills, and in fact almost all of them do. The most powerful Wamphyri are masters of a half dozen or more skills, and are in the process of mastering a dozen more. But even the Wamphyri have their limitations.

Remember, the Wamphyri are human-vampire symbiotic creatures. They have the vampire's powerful strengths, including awesome psychic strength and the ability to learn and master more than one ESP gift, but they must also deal with the limitations of their human form. Specifically, while humans are genetically biased towards having certain ESP gifts, they can also be genetically biased against having others. If a vampire's host human is one who is not genetically capable of being a spotter, then the creature created by their union can never become a spotter.

Judging by the powers most Wamphyri have, any given human has not more than a handful of prohibited gifts. Every Wamphyri eggson gets telepathy from

its vampire parasite. Bloodsons and lower Wamphyri get telepathy if the parent vampire gives it to them. Also, every vampire on record has had the abilities of smog and beguilement; these are perhaps the first gifts a vampire pursues. Even founding Wamphyri develop these gifts early, indicating that they are tied somehow to vampire instincts or the vampire brain, as opposed to the human brain.



Handling ESP in Necroscope

Extrasensory Perception is a fuzzy concept, and its effects are many and varied. Normally, the effects of using ESP are clearly delineated in the construction of the SFX governing the skill, but there are a few more complicated possibilities for which you might find the following advice helpful.

Psychic Stains

"The nightmare receded, its rush and gurgle diminishing in his mind, leaving him gasping for air where he clawed at the grassy bank. This was it; it was here. This was where she had died. Where she had been murdered. Right here!"

Intense psychological trauma — both during life and immediately after death, or more properly, during that fateful transition phase — can stain an area with a psychic reverberation. This is not a common event. It only occurs when the shock or horror or anguish is much higher than normal. Someone suffering from a heart attack would never leave such a psychic stain, unless the heart attack barely prevented her from accomplishing some task that was of critical importance to her, like saving her child from a fire. Generally, incidents which create psychic stains are those which involve betrayal or treachery, excessive horror, or the anguish of leaving a deed undone. Death appears to be the only event strong enough to engender such staining; there are no known psychic stains left by any lesser event.

Consider, for example, a person who gets pushed off the balcony of his seaside house by his twin brother, falls down the cliff and dies in the thrashing surf below. Fratricide is definitely a treacherous crime and a betrayal of the most heinous sort, and the situation would be even more emotionally powerful if there were an inheritance involved, if a love triangle were the cause, or if the murder was done to cover up some other crime which the deceased had just discovered.

So one twin brother falls over the edge of his balcony, down the cliff, and gets shattered on the barnacle-covered rocks below. The shock, outrage, and horror of the event permanently embed themselves in the area, lending the balcony a melancholy aura that even those who have no psionic talents would pick up on in some unconscious fashion. "I love standing on this balcony and staring out to sea. It just seems so sad, somehow ..." And if the average person picks up a little on the feeling, what about those with a gift?

They detect it as well, but much stronger, much fiercer, and without any euphemistic interpretation. They relive some part of the event, in a fashion in accordance with their particular talent. Take the above fratricide as an example. A shaman, whose psychic ability invokes assault, would either pick up on the murderous urge of the killer, or else he would see the twisted visage the victim saw just before he was hurled off the balcony. A psychokinetic, whose skill involves moving objects with the power of the mind, would get a strong sense of vertigo; he would feel he were falling, lose his balance, and perhaps need someone to grab his collar before he, too, fell over the balcony. A necroscope, who speaks with the dead, would probably hear the scream of the victim echoing again and again, never fading.

Other talents get more difficult. What would a seer, who views the lifelines of the future, feel in such a place? The seer's talent lies on following lifelines, and one ended on that balcony, so a seer might just get this feeling of termination, of

being in some sort of psychological dead end. Her heart might miss a beat, and her breath come short, and she would feel she had to back up inside the house again. Nothing definitive, but still tangible. Even more difficult is a spotter. What sort of lingering revenant would someone feel when their skill lies in detecting other psychic people? Beats us. Neither party here was an ESPer, so there's nothing for a spotter to detect. When in doubt, just have the ESPer experience a vague feeling of unease.

What does this mean for you, as a *Necroscope* gamemaster? It gives you an opportunity to darken the ambiance of the game, and it gives you a plot device to advance the players if they get stuck during the course of an investigation.

The ambiance angle is obvious. Imagine the dread the players will experience when their seer stumbles back into the seaside house, trying desperately to catch her breath, and then when the psychokinetic and necroscope investigate, the necroscope hears a scream just in time to turn and see the psychokinetic about to topple over the railing. The players will be very hesitant about walking back out onto that balcony, and they will definitely know that something terrible happened at that place. Such experiences add to the moody darkness of the *Necroscope* milieu and add gravity to any situation.

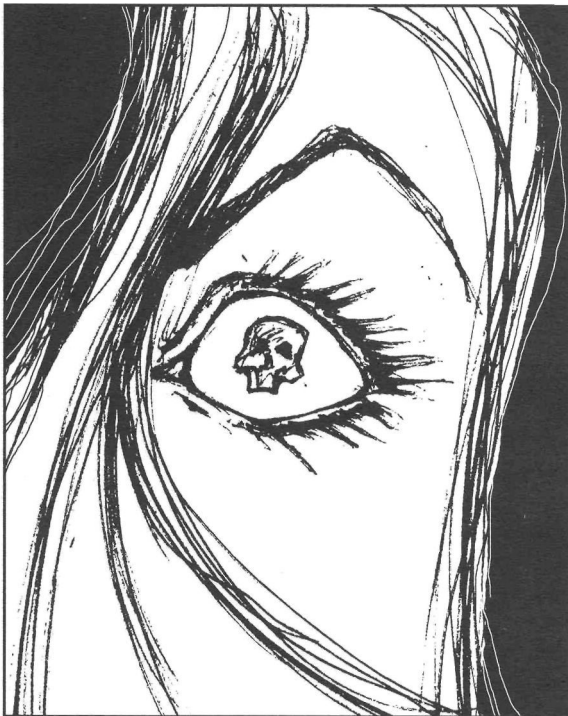
These nudges can also provide clues which the characters might otherwise have missed. If you get them acquainted with the phenomenon, using it once every couple weeks, then when it occurs again it will not be unexpected, and therefore will not seem contrived. This means that you can slip in important clues which they missed earlier, and they'll never know that this was more than just random stain they encountered (it's never good to let the players feel that you're spoon-feeding them clues). By providing these clues amongst a soul-rending spine-chilling otherworldly experience, they'll never know you're handing them over on a silver platter.

In terms of game mechanics, each psychic stain, though indelible, cannot be detected unfailingly. Instead, each lingering tremor has a difficulty number associated with it. ESPers passing through the stained area make a roll on their ESP skill, and each one who beats the DN of the stain gets a sensation, the quality of which can be determined using the General Success Chart. For example, let's take the psychokinetic who experiences the sensation of falling when he passes through our fratricidal example stain. On a Minimal success, he experiences the same brief sensation that we sometimes feel just as we're falling asleep; it seems for a fraction of a second that he's being dropped. On a superior success, he would get the feeling of falling over the railing, feeling the water rush impossibly closer to engulf him and waiting to invade his lungs with its chill embrace.

Giving clues in this manner, or even just having such psychic phenomena around for the fun of it, adds to the queasy horror of the ESPer paradigm. The stronger an ESPer's gift, the more likely he is to be psychologically attacked by these horrid visions, or perhaps even injured mentally or even physically as a consequence of experiencing such a trauma. Events like this, especially among good roleplayers, reinforce the idea that having a psionic talent is very much a mixed blessing.

ESP Force

How exactly does ESP work? No one knows, and Brian Lumley, perhaps using the Roddenberry maxim (since people never stand around in real life explaining how internal combustion engines work, there's no reason to explain how warp drives work), never attempts to elaborate on the subject.



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Generally, it seems that ESP does not interact with the physical realm unless the ESPer wants it to. People can read thoughts through walls, locate people across town, even transmit thoughts around the world. However, in *Necroscope III: The Source*, Lumley discusses the Perchorsk Project, and how it is shielded from the prying eyes — or more correctly, scrying minds — of the British INTESP agents.

There are two problems which prevent the British agents from being able to scry out the goings-on in Perchorsk. The first is that the project is situated in a deep ravine, and the surrounding mountainsides provide the emplacement with a measure of isolation. The second is that the entire project is housed beneath an impenetrable lead shield. These imply that ESP can indeed be hindered by material shields, but they have different ramifications. We'll deal with the lead shielding first.

Every type of energy is impeded in transmission by some material or other, and is aided by others. The same can be true of ESP. Lead is a very dense material, and could perhaps shield against ESP energy. The surrounding mountains are also dense and very very thick (especially as compared to the lead shield), so if lead can act as a barrier, megatons of rock could as well. Thus the safest places for Secret Projects For World Domination would be in inaccessible ravines, giant underground caves, and other such claustrophobic locations. Of course, it's your universe, so anything could be a shield. Perhaps metals are conductive, but wood and water act as shields. This concept helps explain why ESP can work in a modern city (there's lots of barriers, yes, but most have a conductive metal infrastructure), but it would mean that submarines and cetaceans would be undetectable. The Soviet ADPE agents might then undertake a secret project in an underwater laboratory, a very interesting adventure environment indeed, and quite a challenge for even the best ESPionage agents. This also makes deep gloomy woods more of a terrifying place.

The fact that Perchorsk was shielded by a ravine also brings up another complication: that ESP force is not projected in a linear fashion. Given that Perchorsk was shielded by a ravine, the British INTESP agents could not have been projecting their powers in a direct line. Were they to do so, the ESP forces would pass through the upper crust of the Earth, which would be a lot thicker than the shielding provided by any petty ravine. This means that ESP is projected in a curvilinear fashion, arcing from source to target like magnetic force lines. Since these lines are smoothly curved, a high ravine could prevent someone far away from scrying the location.

The problem with curvilinear force projection in game terms is that it makes range a lot more complicated to calculate. An ESPer waiting for his luggage at Heathrow could project his telepathic mind across the channel to a friend in France. Since both parties are standing above the surface of the Earth, the telepathy force path would run parallel to the Earth, and the range would be almost



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exactly as long as the statute distance from one to the other. However, if the French friend were standing in a ravine, the telepathy force path would have to assume a more ballistic path, arcing up from the guy at Heathrow and back down to the French friend. The deeper and steeper the ravine, the more the telepath will have to arc his force projection to avoid running it through too much dense soil. This arcing is instinctive, it takes place with as much ease as electricity finding the path of least resistance, but it occurs nonetheless. The problem is that if the French friend is standing in a ravine of any size, the telepath's path can easily double in length. When you start projecting force lines from INTESP to Perchorsk and trying to angle them in from a high altitude, you can imagine that the force lines become very long indeed — even being able to range the circumference of the Earth is not necessarily enough, and if the ESPers don't have the range, they can't see the place.

If you want to mess around with these rules, go ahead. Decide what causes ESP to be shielded, be it metals, or mass, or lightning storms, or water, or even life energy itself. You can even make free will a major factor in ESP effects. Then decide whether ESP is linear or curvilinear in fashion. If it's linear, walls are generally shielding enough, but curvilinear lines require a dome for adequate ESP defense. Obviously, the disadvantage of delving into these effects is the complications you will inflict on yourself as gamemaster calculating range and the like. But one positive ramification is that it forces your players to study the fashion in which their own talents work, and this in turn increases the believability of the game.

Future Shock

"Reading the future's a dangerous game. So you're going to live, are you? Well, maybe. But what as? A man — or a vampire?"

— Harry Keogh, Book 5

Two types of ESPers which can give gamemasters conniptions are seers and prescients, because they both deal with the future, with events which have not yet occurred. This is not a problem for novelists, who have complete control over their characters, but it is problematic for gamemasters, because players tend to move in directions which are completely unexpected and because players (and dice) like to keep control of their fate to themselves.

Prescients are not as bad as seers, because prescients deal primarily with clues and foresight, and as long as the clues are positive, the players will continue to ensure that they come about. Positive clues for prescients then become a sort of self-fulfilling prophecy. However, with such clues, it is important to make sure the character goes through whatever motions he saw himself going through in the prescient vision. If he fails to do so, have the clue fail to come about, or else have the clue not be nearly as positive as normal. Or, if you're feeling particularly mischievous, have the character fall out of the universe to correct the paradox he caused by not fulfilling the vision he saw.

Negative visions are more problematic, because the prescient character will wish to avoid the future. This is not a problem as long as the visions he has are of potential futures, not what will actually come to be. If the visions must come to be, the prescient must go through the same motions he saw in the vision, although he or friends could take precautions that are not overly visible. If a prescient saw himself being mugged, he could pack a pistol but could not carry a rifle, because he would have seen the rifle in his vision.

Seers are much more difficult, because they predict the future times of people by reading their lifelines. You can beg off on this with the 'fuzzy future' practice, where each person has multiple lifelines to account for the major possibilities each person faces, each possibility stemming from a different life decision. This way the players can see the possibilities of each person's future, but they never know which one is the right one until it occurs.

However, it is the opinion of this designer that ESP transcends time, and that the timeline a seer witnesses is the path the person will have already taken in the future. In other words, from the future, the events are in the past and are therefore unchangeable. This doesn't mean that it is perfectly easy to read the future. Harry Keogh once made a flat statement to the effect that "The future isn't like that. It isn't easily read, never safely, and there's no way to avoid it. And it must be remembered, *nothing* is certain until it has happened."

Use misinterpretation and vague definitions to your advantage. In one playtest session the seer read the lifeline of a gamemaster character right before a combat, to see if his lifeline terminated, or if instead it interacted with the lifeline of a player character further on in the week. The gamemaster decided that the gamemaster character would survive the combat in a coma. The player character in question was an anti-social person, and therefore unlikely to visit the comatose aide in the hospital. The vision was described so: His lifeline undergoes some turmoil in the hours ahead, but then it becomes very stable and proceeds without disturbance. However, for the next week, you do not see his line interacting with your teammate's line."

This middle-of-the-road approach is easy to fulfill. If the poor guy gets shot, he slips into a coma. If not, he takes a fall at the end of the combat and slips into a coma. If the player character tries to visit him in the hospital, bad luck prevents him; the taxi runs out of gas, he gets arrested for jaywalking, there's a terrible flood, or something of that order. The future is predicted, yet the seer gets no information which definitively tells what the result of the upcoming combat will be.

Obviously, it's easiest if a seer uses his talent to read people other than his teammates, and especially other than himself. That way you don't have to worry about foretelling the future of characters which are directly important to the players themselves. If you want to discourage them in this sort of reading, have it be that whenever a seer reads their own lifeline, they see their own death. And follow through. It's best to introduce this with a gamemaster seer, of course.

Alternatively, you could prevent the players from being seers and prescients. It's the easiest solution to future paradoxes, but it's a bit of a cop-out.



The Möbius Continuum

"The German agent was ...no longer there! From nowhere, an awful, lingering, slowly fading scream came echoing back. It was the cry of the damned, of a soul lost forever in ultimate darkness."

The Möbius Continuum is an intermediate place which is nowhere and everywhen, a transcendental nothingness which connects all time and all places. It is supreme blackness, a lightless trackless ethereal waste, the very essence of void. Inside the Möbius continuum, thoughts have weight and real mass is a foreign object to be ejected as soon as possible. For a while Ferdinand Möbius thought that the Continuum itself was God, but he was wrong. In fact, the Möbius Continuum is the *mind* if God!

Harry was able to travel this Continuum at will, because he was an instinctive mathematician and he had been tutored personally by August Ferdinand Möbius himself. In this instance the Möbius doors are natural phenomena; they are always there, but only certain astute and well-trained people can see them. If you can see them, and you know how the math works, you can enter them and drop out of reality, to enter again elsewhere at your discretion. The only restrictions are that corporeal visitors to the Continuum can only translocate themselves from place to place; they cannot change their position in time without creating a paradox. Purely spiritual beings can shift themselves however they please by opening doors to the past or future.

Taken straight from the book, the ability to traverse the Möbius Continuum would classify as a Column IV Advantage. It's very powerful, supernatural, and

in game terms it unbalances play quite a bit, especially when only one player character can do it. We don't recommend that you allow your players to be able to travel in the Continuum. If they want to try, have them start by increasing their *science: mathematics* skill to about 15 adds or so for starters. Once they do that, they can worry about finding a tutor to show them that the Continuum exists.

This does not mean that no one can travel the Continuum. A certain class of ESPers could do it; their gift being an unconscious understanding of math. That is, instead of being instinctive mathematicians like Keogh, they are naturals, so strongly gifted that they do not even know exactly why it works. Teleportation can be created just like any other ESP gift (and will in fact be detailed in a future supplement).

Also, the players' opponents could use the Continuum. Imagine trying to fight an ADPE assassin who could vanish like that, or trying to trap a vampire who can disappear at will. The challenges are staggering, and can turn an ordinary adventure into an epic. Think about it.



Using INTESP in your Campaign

Unlike other government agencies, the agents of E-branch do not have certain supports. They do not have unlimited budgets or unlimited access to high-tech weaponry and gadgets. They do not have diplomatic immunity. They don't even have that great of a paycheck. Their country will not avow any knowledge of them, because they don't want to be perceived as having any knowledge of organized paranormal activity — either at home or abroad. In short, the agents give the government their obedience, but they do not in turn receive any protection.

Minister Responsible

An important part of any government organization is the head of the bureau. In INTESP, this is the Minister Responsible, a nameless faceless high-powered and very official person who controls the organization. In ADPE, this is Gregor Borowitz (and later, his successors), the very opposite of a nameless faceless persona, a hands-on dictator whom everyone must know on sight, but still a high-powered and very official person.

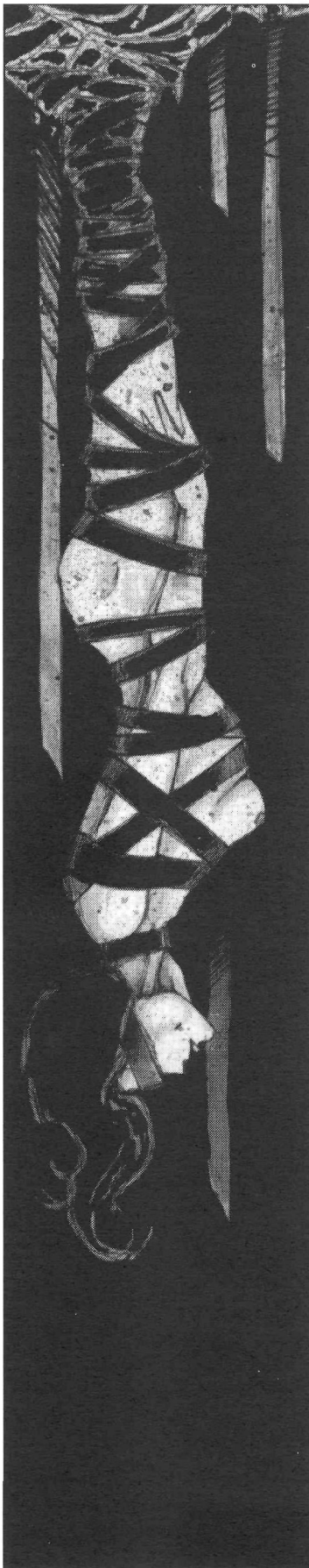
Whichever ESPionage force the players belong to, there should be a person in charge of their fate. Whichever approach you take, faceless or well-known, laissez-faire or hands-on, the person in charge should be carefully painted to be extremely powerful and a little unbalanced or unpredictable. The players should feel their characters have to tread lightly when the Minister Responsible is around, that if they screw up, they may permanently damage the future of their E-branch.

The Minister Responsible (or whoever he is) should be capricious, officious, bureaucratic, closed-minded, and not even necessarily believe that ESPionage is a worthwhile venture. He should have been appointed to the post in large part because he didn't want it. This puts the players in the position of having to keep their activities of low enough profile that they do not offend their boss by making him do too much to cover up their activities.

The Minister Responsible should not be so hostile that he doesn't help the bureau's ESPionage agents when they need it, but the players should feel they put him out whenever they need him. The only time he should give them their unflinching support is when they have to do something they don't want to or that they're unsure is the best idea. At these times the Minister Responsible can railroad the concept down their throat and force them into a position where they have to contravene his orders to bail themselves out. Mmm boy. Don't you love bureaucracies?



Ron Kulp



Running Interference

The first goal of those who fund the ESPionage activities of an E-branch is keeping the parapsychological activities a secret. In the 70's and 80's, voters (at least in the United States) lost their faith in their government when stories of government waste and arrogance became a major issue. The public at large began to focus its scrutinous eye on the activities of the government, and voicing stringent objections toward congressional junkets, expensive grants to study the mating behavior of an obscure species of insect found only on Bora Bora, and nepotistic promotions to useless but high-paying posts. It was in this hostile environment that the various governments began to explore the possibilities of ESPionage.

Most educated people do not believe that extrasensory perception is a real phenomenon, and were the public to discover that the government was funding an entire branch of psychics, the scandalous backlash would rock the administration. The stories would write themselves: "WASHINGTON D.C.: The U.S. government today admitted to funding an entire top-secret department of highly-paid personnel devoted to casting horoscopes and bending keys with the power of the mind. Speaking on the condition of anonymity, one congressional source admitted that the department had not actually produced any results, but that funding would continue. Noted psychic Jeanne Dixon denied membership in the organization, adding ..."

Such a revelation would certainly spell the end of the E-branch at the demands of millions of angry voters or a handful of clandestine foreign ESPionage operatives. The only way to avoid that fate is to make sure the public never finds out that the E-branch exists. "The public" in this case includes any government insiders who are set in their ways of denying the possibility of paranormal powers. Even the President or Prime Minister will be kept in the dark if it's deemed necessary. Generally, there are only a handful outside the organization who know about it; a few top-level executives in intelligence, and a bare handful in government itself.

With this hostile environment, it is imperative to cover up the activities of the ESPionage agents. Wherever they go and whatever they do, it must be cloaked in such a manner that their actions appear to have had normal or coincidental causes and consequences. Were a shaman to kill someone, an autopsy would flatly state that the victim died of a sudden coronary. Information gleaned by a necroscope is cited as having come from "confidential sources" or obtained through careful investigation and insight.

Witnesses are also taken care of by the government. Anyone who saw any psychic activity is debriefed by special psychologists. Many witnesses can be debriefed in such a manner that they disbelieve certain things they saw with their own eyes. When a witness cannot rationally explain how someone could just 'appear' out of thin air, they are inclined to accept the explanation that they just weren't being observant rather than teleportation as a real and viable means of transport. In a similar vein, those who encountered Wamphyri are usually terrified enough that they can be readily convinced never to tell anyone about it — often with the implied threat that the Wamphyri know when someone is talking about them. Finally, those persons who are superstitious and recalcitrant enough to pose problems are threatened with hostile tax audits for the rest of their lives. If that's not enough to dissuade them, well, there's always an unfortunate auto accident...

There is a limit to how much influence the government can exert to cover up a situation, because again, they cannot be detected as having covered it up, not even by those branches of their own intelligence service which are not aware of the E-branch. If an INTESP agent is seen shooting down a person in broad daylight, he'll have to go on trial for murder. The government dares not declare him a law enforcement officer or agent, but they can give him the use of one of their lawyers who has no apparent connection with the administration. What-

ever the result of the trial, though, the ESPer agent must still deal with the stigma he garnered for himself in that neighborhood.

Change the Plot

In the novels, Britain's INTESP and the USSR's Agency for the Development of Paranormal Espionage are the two most powerful organizations in the ESPionage business. Probably your players will want to be members of one of these two organizations, so that they can be a part of an effective team.

Don't let 'em. No, don't prevent them from being a part of INTESP, just make INTESP a shadow of what it could be. Remember, INTESP was struggling along until Harry Keogh spoke to those in power while in spiritual form. Not a ghost, but nonetheless a supernatural apparition which could not help but convince the bean-counters of the efficacy of ESPionage as a tool of the state.

But what of INTESP before Harry Keogh graced the scene? This would be the perfect environment for the characters to experience. In such a shoestring operation, they would be among the most powerful forces, perhaps the majority of the handful of psychics the government had thus far been able to locate. In this environment they cannot count on Harry Keogh as a sort of *deus ex machina*, they cannot count on lots of paramilitary weaponry to fight the Wamphyri, and they cannot count on unconditional governmental support. In many ways, they're on their own, relying on their own talents and creativity, and that is what roleplaying should be all about.

Similarly, if your players are members of the Soviet Union's ADPE, what if the KGB were successful in getting ADPE placed under their jurisdiction? ADPE would still be powerful, perhaps even more so with the backing of the KGB, but internal politics would be a very dangerous game indeed. The ESPionage agents might spend as much time fighting the KGB influence as fighting the Wamphyri (whom the KGB would not believe truly exist).

Extremist Third World countries could also have powerful E-branches, especially countries which lack a strong technological base or still hold to a strong spiritual base. India and Pakistan could be having a covert parapsychological war, or Moamar Khadafi could have stumbled on some strong psychic talent in his own country, either among his populace or else among the terrorists his people train in the deep desert.

And not all the ESPionage forces need to be nationally-aligned. Some might center around cults, ethnic groupings, or secret society goals. Aztec Indians might form an ESPionage group for the overthrow of the Mexican government. The Illuminati have been rumored to be around for scores of years; Tolstoy wrote of them in *War and Peace*, yet they have never really been uncovered. Could they be using extrasensory perception to keep their cover secure? Are they really a group of like-minded psychics, trying to shape the destiny of the planet in their own image? Any of these could be powerful organizations, with the player characters the "thin red line" opposing their plans for global domination.



Running The Wamphyri

The Wamphyri, those supernatural horrors from our darkest nightmares, are the most dangerous and sinister of opponents in the world of *Necroscope*. Gamemastering the Wamphyri is difficult, especially when your players have read all the books and know their strengths and weaknesses, possibly even better than you do. Perhaps these pointers will help:

The Rule: No Rules

The most important factor in accurately portraying the *Necroscope* ambiance is the feeling of horror. Part of that has already been stolen from you, since in all likelihood you can't surprise your players with the appearance of the Wamphyri.

However, the players may have read the books, but their characters have never met a vampire. The characters don't necessarily even believe they exist — why would they? Harry Keogh certainly never believed until it was forced on him, until he found himself face to face with one. So who's to say that the portrayal of the Wamphyri in the *Necroscope* novels is right? Choose your own path, and make the characters suffer through the exploration of the fortes and foibles of the most evil creatures in any universe.

In the *Necroscope* novels, the advantages and disadvantages of the Wamphyri are very well-defined. Strong light is a bother and will eventually kill them. Fire is very dangerous. The sure way to destroy them utterly is to impale them, decapitate them, burn them, and then scatter their ashes so they can never reform. That's pretty thorough, true, but certain of the classic vampire myths are never touched on. So, that being the case and this being your game, why not explore them?

The classic vampire can be killed by holding him under fresh running water; the water dissolves him away. Similarly, holy water is supposed to be a powerful deterrent, either injuring the vampire or destroying it outright.

Another legend holds that the vampire must rest in a coffin with the dirt of his burial place or his homeland, and that a way to weaken or kill that vampire is to put a stake in his coffin, or else to pour holy water on his dirt. Ripping the coffin apart and scattering the dirt is also supposed to work.

Other legends have vampires fearing the sign of the cross, or never actually being destroyed but only stopped. The most thorough death this designer has heard of involved staking the vampire with holly, decapitating him, filling his mouth with holy wafers, burning his head and then casting the ashes in a stream, and burying the body at the center of a crossroads — and that only stopped the vampire; if someone dug his body up and pulled the stake, he'd start to reassemble.

So what of your Wamphyri? Choose whatever you want, and explain away the other legends. Make your players learn the heard way, just like hapless Harry had to do. We used this in playtesting:

The Wamphyri fear fire, because it hurts a lot and because it burns away the outer shell of their host. They themselves are not flammable, and suffer only painful welts from even the most deliberate napalm hosing. They are also not affected by sunlight, although it does annoy them. They have weak eyes, but they have excellent sonar, better than dolphins', which allows them to 'see' under any conditions. Further, their sonar is omnidirectional; they have no blind spots. If they are staked through the heart (where their brain actually is), they are not slain, but they lose their psychic ability; the presence of the wood interferes somehow. Any wood has some effect, but only *lignum vitae*, holly, redwood, and mistletoe completely block a vampire's ESP. Decapitation does not kill them, but it amputates their sensory pseudopod rendering them blind and deaf. Thus, once they are speared and decapitated, they are much easier to handle. The way to kill them is to dissolve them with water. Yes, vampires hate water, and prefer to remain desiccated, which is why they drink only blood and alcohol, and also why they always look so sallow. A running stream dissolves them, quickly, a fresh water pond more slowly, but brackish or saline water has little effect. Holy water, its blessed nature being so counter to the evil incarnate in a vampire, acts as the strongest of acids ... but only if it was blessed by a priest who really believes in his faith and not just a guy who's going through the religious motions because it feels good.

The result? A vampire very much like the ones in the *Necroscope* novels, in fact identical in psychology and strategy, yet a very different customer than Lumley's and requiring all new methods to destroy. Oh, your players will love you for it, especially when the giant leechlike vampire cobra emerges from the fiery lake of napalm they dealt it, and it captures and enters into one of the characters.

Thinking Like a Vampire

"You could no more think like a vampire than you could think like a cockroach! That's what it boils down to: being as devious as they are. But don't think that's a bonus. Believe me, it isn't. You can make yourself sick, trying to think like they do."

— Harry Keogh, Book 4

Lie.

Lie - lie lie lie lie.

Do it all the time when you're playing Wamphyri. Vampires are evil critters, and truth goes against their nature. They are even known to deceive themselves when it suits their mood, and they believe it as well, because a lie is no fun if no one believes it.

The Wamphyri never release the whole unvarnished truth. Well, almost never. The only conceivable circumstance under which they might release the whole unvarnished truth is if they have nothing to lose and everything to gain, and even then they're more than likely going to try to release a true but incomplete version of the truth instead, keeping some part of it back for a bargaining chip later.

Everything a vampire says is a lie in some fashion or other; it's incomplete, it's embellished, it's deceptive, or it's patently untrue. A vampire will never admit to ignorance, far better to make up something on the spot and be caught lying than to admit a weakness, even in knowledge. To be caught lying is not a problem for a vampire, because they have no conscience to bother them. So, when playing the part of a vampire, you have the burden of trying to be as deceitful as possible, but at least that comes with the bonus that you don't have to worry about being true to your words later. Better still, you can tell the players the truth and they won't believe you.

In debate or discussion, don't let the players choose the course of the conversation. Pick small portions of their discourse and pursue them, thereby changing the subject of the conversation. Take their words and twist them back into a different meaning. Feign incomprehension. Spit out *non sequiturs*, or worse yet, start to say something and then stop. Question their motives for asking, but always with a paranoid and deceptive outlook. Never draw a conclusion for the players, but feed them the information to draw their own conclusion, and make-sure that the conclusion they draw is wrong. Worse yet, make unstated assumptions (like "there is no moral high ground" or "humans are happier as Wamphyri") and expand upon these assumptions, but never mention the assumptions themselves. All of these tactics will change the course of conversation away from what it was and steer it where the vampire wants it to go. This is especially nasty when the vampire can read the minds of the persons he's speaking to.

In short, as a gamemaster, you have to worry about consistency and reliability. This is your one opportunity to take that responsibility and chuck it happily out the window. Just do it.



Marshall Andrews III



The Psychological Hazards of ESPionage

Having dead, rotting corpses rise up from the ground to suck the eyeballs out of a screaming assassin segues very nicely into our next line of discussion: that of psychological stress overload, hysteria, temporary lapses of sanity, and the like.

Shock is the most prevalent psychological hazard the characters must face. In this easy-going modern jet-setting world with all the conveniences, watching our neighbor turn into a towering red-eyed slathering fanged monstrosity and biting our buddy's head off is almost exactly what we don't expect. For most people, even the shock of seeing a headless corpse is enough to stun them into disbelief.

As gamemaster, you might wish to give certain events a Shock Difficulty Number. This is the number which all witnesses to the event must beat on a willpower skill roll to avoid being startled into inactivity while their brain correlates the data. If a character makes the roll, they can act normally. If they miss, take the amount they missed the roll by and check that number on the General Push Chart to see how many rounds the afflicted person remains rooted to the floor in horrified dazzlement.

Ofcourse, there's more to it than just that. Certain people can become immune to shock effects once they're used to them. An ambulance paramedic would not be stunned by seeing a decapitated corpse. A soldier could be used to seeing friends and acquaintances blown apart — not that he'd ever enjoy it, but he'd seen enough of it to expect it. And experienced vampire hunters are no longer appalled and amazed when a normal-looking person erupts into the Wamphyri batform.

The easiest way to handle stress experience is to allow characters which have successfully resisted the shock of a certain event to become immune. This is a quick solution, it's easy, it requires less die-rolling, and it doesn't require any additional adds to anything. Characters who fail a shock roll must continue to roll for additional occurrences the same event until the time that they overcome their fright. For weak-willed characters, that could take quite a long time, and when you're tracking down a fugitive vampire, every second is precious.

Here are some sample Shock Difficulty Numbers:

SDN	Event
8	Seeing a corpse anywhere but in a funeral parlor
11	Encountering a particularly grisly murder scene
14	Seeing a friend shot to death
17	Seeing the walking dead rise from the grave
20	Watching a vampire transform into a fanged and taloned creature
23	Watching a vampire rip someone's head off and guzzle the blood from his neck

Therapy and Insanity

These are darker depths which perhaps are best left unplumbed as far as rules go; such horrors are much more easily (and much more believably) resolved using creative license and dramatic effect. In the novels there is actually very little of insanity; Harry Keogh's wife being the only major example. Nevertheless, gamemaster characters important to the players can go insane, dwelling in autism, denial, or vapid happiness in an attempt to avoid having to resolve their minds to the horrors they have witnessed. Use it if you want it, but spare your players' characters from such a fate.

Seven

Characters From the Novels

HARRY KEOGH

At the assassination of Viktor Shukshin, December 1976

"They were blue, those eyes — that startlingly colourless blue which always looks so unnatural, so that you think the owner must be wearing lenses. But more than that, there was that in those eyes which said they knew more than any twenty-five-year-old had any right knowing."

AGILITY 10

Acrobatics 11, acrobatics (figure skating) 15, dodge 13, maneuver 12, martial arts: judo 13, swimming 15

DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 11, vehicle piloting: wheeled 10

ENDURANCE 10

Resist shock 13

STRENGTH 7

INTELLECT 11

Deduction 13, demolitions 12, science: mathematics 30, navigation: orienteering 13, perception 14

MIND 8

CONFIDENCE 9

Psychology 11, willpower 14

CHARISMA 12

Charm 16, ESP: necroscope 30, persuasion 14

Derived Attributes

Toughness 10

Toughness w/ armor 10

MRG 7

MRS 4

MRC 2

MRJ 2

Life Points: 10

ESP SFX

Skill Used: *ESP: necroscope* (Charisma)

Difficulty Number: 30

Effect Value: 5

Duration: 18 (one hour)

Range: 30 (1,000 kilometers)

Cast Time: 3 (4 seconds)

Delay Time: 30 minutes

BORIS DRAGOSANI

At the time of his Wamphyric impregnation, July 1976

"Ilse looked at his naked chest. When he breathed in deeply like that, the muscles under his arms where they V-ed down into his back seemed to swell out like air sacs. He was deceptive, this one."

AGILITY 9

Acrobatics 10, climbing 10, dodge 11, long jumping 10, maneuver 11, melee combat 14, running 10, stealth 12

DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 10, vehicle piloting: wheeled 11

ENDURANCE 9

Resist shock 14

STRENGTH 11

ESP: necromancer 20, lethal strike: bare hands 15

INTELLECT 10

Deduction 12, espionage 14, perception 15, trick 13

MIND 11

Bureaucracy 13, research 13, scholar: Wamphyri 13

CONFIDENCE 12

Bribery 14, con 15, faith: Wallachia 15, interrogation 13, intimidation 17, psychology 13, willpower 20

CHARISMA 7

Derived Attributes

Toughness 11

Toughness w/ armor 11

MRG 7

MRS 5

MRC 3

MRJ 3

Life Points: 10

ESP SFX

Skill Used: *ESP: necromancer* (Strength)

Difficulty Number: 14

Effect Value: 35

Duration: 18 (one hour)

Range: 0 (touch)

Cast Time: 9 (one minute)

Delay Time: 30 minutes

STANDARD SIDEKICK AGENT

Can be made into an ADPE ESPer thug by adding an ESP skill

AGILITY 9

Dodge 10, maneuver 11, melee combat 10, melee parry 11, stealth 11, unarmed combat 10, unarmed parry 11

DEXTERITY 10

Fire combat 13, security 12, vehicle piloting: wheeled 12

ENDURANCE 8

Resist shock 10

STRENGTH 9

INTELLECT 7

Espionage 10, first aid 8, perception 9, trick 8

MIND 8

Bureaucracy 9

CONFIDENCE 10

Bribery 12, con 13, faith: the service 12, interrogation 13, intimidation 12, psychology 11, streetwise 11, willpower 11

CHARISMA 7

Disguise 9, persuasion 9, taunt 8

Derived Attributes

Toughness 9

Toughness- w/ armor 9

MRG7

MRS 4

MRC3

MRJ3

Life Points: 3-5

SZGANY

AGILITY 10

Acrobatics 12, beast riding: horse 13, climbing 12, melee combat 12, melee parry 11, running 12, stealth 13, swimming 11, unarmed combat 11

DEXTERITY 10

Prestidigitation 13, security 11, thrown weapons 12

ENDURANCE 8

STRENGTH 7

Lifting 9

INTELLECT 8

Camouflage 11, forgery 9, first aid 12, perception 12, tracking 10, trick 11

MIND 6

Hypnotism 8, medicine 8

CONFIDENCE 9

Bribery 11, con 12, faith: wamphyr lord 15, survival: homeland 12, willpower 10

CHARISMA 10

Disguise 11

Derived Attributes

Toughness 9

Toughness w/ armor 9

MRG 7

MRS 4

MRC 3

MRJ 3

Life Points: 1-4

Sample Lord of the Wamphyr

This is a generic Lord of the Wamphyr that could be found in the vampire world. Keep in mind that the older the vampire, the harder it should be to defeat or outsmart him. Also, if a vampire lord were to reach Earth, then he would undoubtedly pick up some more skills. As a final note, this particular vampire has all the inherent abilities of the Wamphyr: mind smog, shapeshifting, etc.

LORD OF THE WAMPHYRI

AGILITY 14

Beast riding: flyers 15, climbing 15, dodge 17, melee combat 16 (war-gauntlet 19), melee parry 16 (war-gauntlet 18), unarmed combat 17, unarmed parry 16

DEXTERITY 13

ENDURANCE 18

STRENGTH 15

ESP: necromancer 25

TOUGHNESS 19

INTELLECT 14

ESP: prescient 16, ESP: telepath 30, perception 18, tracking 16, trick 18

MIND 11

ESP: spotter 12, hypnotism 13

CONFIDENCE 20

Con 30, intimidation 23, survival: Starside, willpower 30

CHARISMA 14

Charm 17, persuasion 16

Life Points: 4-8

ESP SFX

Skill Used: *ESP: necroscope*

Difficulty Number: 13

Effect Value: 30

Duration: 20 (2.5 hours)

Range: 0 (touch)

Cast Time: 6 (15 seconds)

Delay Time: 30 minutes

Skill Used: *ESP: prescient*

Difficulty Number: 15

Effect Value: 25 (one day)

Duration: 5 (10 seconds)

Range: 0 (touch)
Cast Time: 0
Delay Time: 30 minutes
Skill Used: *ESP: telepath*
Difficulty Number: 13
Effect Value: 30
Duration: 16 (25 minutes)
Range: 15 (1 kilometer)
Cast Time: 15 (15 minutes)
Delay Time: 40 minutes

Skill Used: *ESP: spotter*
Difficulty Number: 15
Effect Value: 10
Duration: 6 (15 seconds)
Range: 8 (40 meters)
Cast Time: 0 (reflexive)
Delay Time: 20 minutes

Generic Bloodson

As with a Lord of the Wamphyri, bloodsons can gain better abilities and skills with time. This particular bloodson is a photographer based on Earth and is fairly new to his vampiric skills.

BLOODSON

AGILITY 9

Dodge 12, unarmed combat 11, unarmed parry 11

DEXTERITY 10

Fire combat 11

ENDURANCE 11

STRENGTH 12

ESP: necromancer 15

TOUGHNESS 11

INTELLECT 9

ESP: sensitive 10, ESP: telepath 15, perception 10, photography 13, trick 10

MIND 8

Artist: watercolors 9

CONFIDENCE 9

Con 11, intimidation 11, willpower 13

CHARISMA 8

Persuasion 10, taunt 10

Life Points: 3-6

ESP SFX

Skill Used: *ESP: necromancer*

Difficulty Number: 11

Effect Value: 16

Duration: 18

Range: 0 (touch)

Cast Time: 0 (reflexive)

Delay Time: 20 minutes

Skill Used: *ESP: sensitive*

Difficulty Number: 15

Effect Value: 25

Duration: 6 (15 seconds)

Range: (Not applicable)

Cast Time: 0 (instant)

Delay Time: 14 minutes

Skill Used: *ESP: telepath*

Difficulty Number: 15

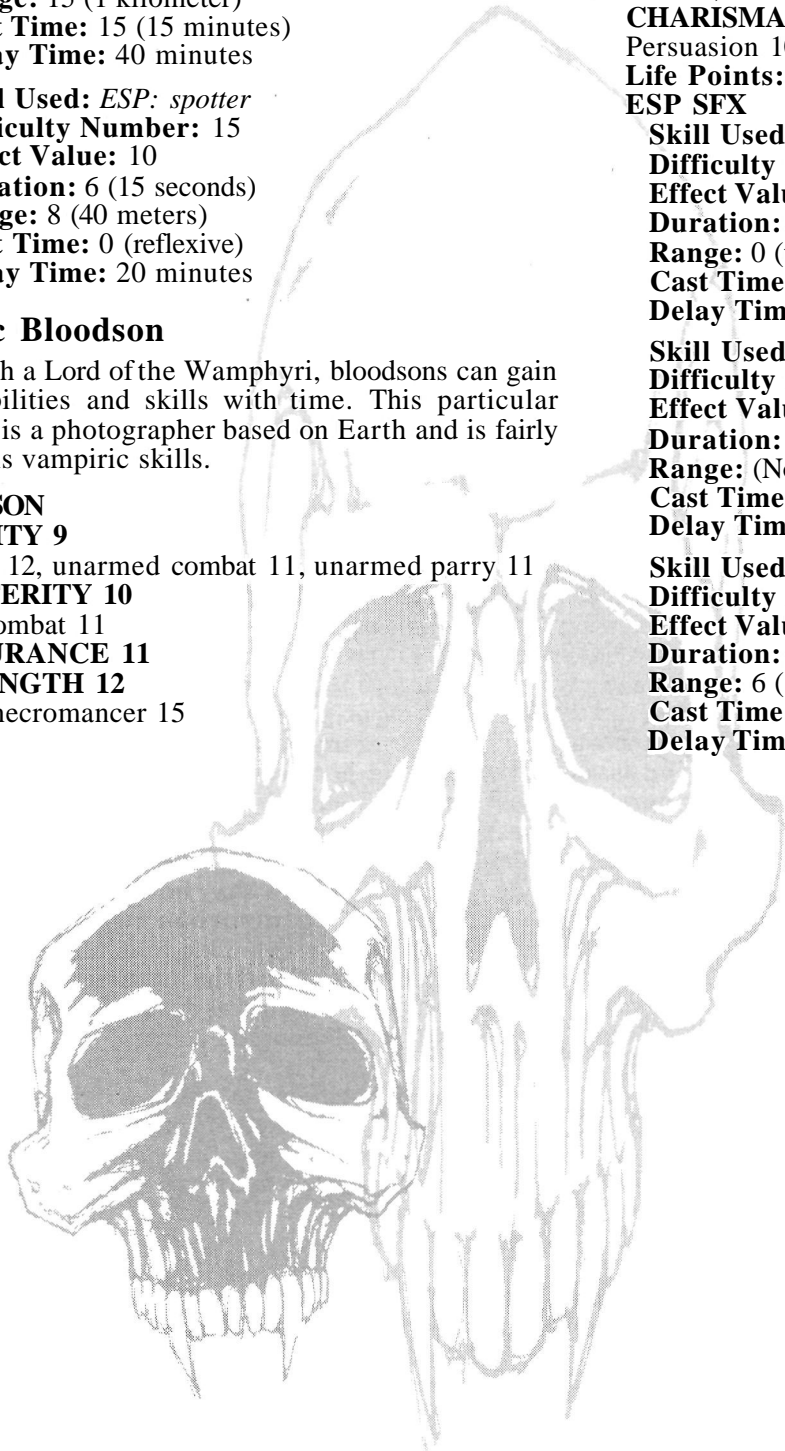
Effect Value: 15

Duration: 16 (25 minutes)

Range: 6 (15 meters)

Cast Time: 15 (15 minutes)

Delay Time: 18 minutes



Eight

Introductory Adventure

There are three basic classes of adventures which *Necroscope* characters will pursue: Wamphyri, ESPionage, and The Supernatural.

Wamphyri adventures are the most difficult, and the most deadly. The Wamphyri are very nasty creatures indeed; humans pursue the Wamphyri with much the same survival rate as sheep being led to the slaughter. Wamphyri adventures should be saved for experienced players and powerful characters, and even then the characters may require powerful allies. Remember, in the first *Necroscope* novel, the only real vampire was already dead. In *Necroscope II*, when the ESPers went after a young orphaned vampire and tried to prevent a Wamphyri return, they had the cooperation of the Russian ADPE. In short, Wamphyri are the Big Guns; give the characters a few howitzers of their own.

ESPionage is likely to be the most common adventure type. The primary purpose of any E-branch is to thwart the Opposition, and to safeguard their country. The antagonists they face might be foreign ESPionage agents, secret societies, freaks, or plain criminals. They might be in Greece chasing down drug smugglers, in the enemy homeland on an assassination attempt, or chasing serial killers. The enemy is human, even if powerful and psychic. The stakes are life and death, but not the immortal soul.

The main villain in this adventure is a translocator, which is a form of teleporter. We've tossed him in here to show you it's easy to make up your own SFXs. We'll detail other ESPionage powers extensively in the forthcoming *Parapsychology Handbook*. In the meantime, go ahead and use Gregg as an example to make your own.

The Supernatural is everything else; Stonehenge, crop circles, frogs falling from the sky, hauntings, spontaneous human combustion, carnivorous swamp creatures, who knows? Adventures can be pulled from all sorts of other games; during playtesting, we lifted the introductory adventure from *Indiana Jones*. These adventures deal more with problem-solving and less with opposition and combat, but they can be

equally as horrifying.

To start things off on an easy note (though by no means a light note), we've given you an ESPionage adventure. It can be set in any town you like; in whatever time period you play. We'll leave it to you to flesh it out fully; this gives you the opportunity to tailor it to your players' fears and to express your own deathless gothic narration. Bwah hah hah!

The Situation

Gregg Twyman is, shall we say, a bit of a problem. He wants to live forever. He never wants to grow up. The problem is, he has, and he doesn't like it. Responsibility. Accountability. Having to do his own laundry. No more free lunch. All these things he hates. So, of course, he's fighting it. Like all the rest of us, Gregg tries to keep himself young by playing games, staying fit, and eating



Marshall Andrews III



Ron Kulp

right, but unfortunately he goes about it in an entirely different manner. And he's an ESPer, which makes it very easy for him to do his heinous deeds without being caught.

Gregg Twyman was kicked out of his parents' house when he turned 18, and since then he has lived on welfare and whatever he could get through petty criminal activities. He has long studied black magic, picking up freakish books at a variety of off-the-wall bookstores (and when we say "picking up," we mean stealing). After studying these in his own inimitable fashion, he has convinced himself that he can stay young forever by ritually eating the hearts of children: in this way he gets their youthful energy, and he places on them the death that he would otherwise suffer himself. He attacks only boys who are red-haired, because he himself has red hair, though it is now browning with age.

Gregg's psychic gift is that of translocation; it's like teleportation, but he cannot teleport himself, only others. His method of operation is to lure a young boy into an area where the kid cannot be seen, and then translocate him via a Möbius gate back to a chest freezer which he keeps in his lair. Although the freezer doesn't work, it's plenty strong and Gregg keeps it locked, so his prey cannot escape and Gregg can sacrifice and eat him at his leisure. One might think that Gregg would be easy to catch, but his gift allows him to translocate other people at a reasonably long range. Since Gregg never physically touches or moves the victim, his abductions have baffled police.

Gregg's original method of operation was to place a football, a puppy, or a wallet in some brush or in a similar out-of-the-way location. The young boy would be lured by the item, and as soon as he stepped out of public view, zap! he was gone. Unfortunately, this method proved to be unpredictable, as sometimes girls would get the item, or boys without red hair. Further, this unpredictability meant that Gregg could not always feast on the day of the month of his birthday (Gregg's 18th birthday was October 17). Now he has started to take a more direct

approach; he hangs out at parks, playgrounds, and swimming areas and waits for a red-haired boy to head into the bathroom. If the kid is alone in the bathroom or if he heads for a stall, Gregg zaps him out. Of course, Gregg still carries a Frisbee and a bogus wallet around with him, just in case. Because of this improvement in hunting technique, he's able to take kids on his date of birth more often.

GREGG TWYMAN

AGILITY 9

Maneuver 10, martial arts: wrestling 12, running 11, stealth 11, melee weapons 11, unarmed parry 10

DEXTERITY 7

Security 9, thrown weapons (baseball) 10

ENDURANCE 7

STRENGTH 11

Lifting 12

INTELLECT 9

ESP: teleporter 14, mechanic: motorcycle 12, perception 12, trick 15

MIND 6

CONFIDENCE 7

Intimidation 9, psychology 10

CHARISMA 5

Derived Attributes

Toughness 10

Toughness w/ armor 10

MRG7

MRS 5

MRC3

MRJ3

Life Points: 7

Equipment: Motorcycle, ten-speed bike, large knife (STR+4/15), baseball (STR+2/13)

ESP SFX

Skill Used: ESP: translocation (Intellect)

Difficulty Number: 13

Effect Value: 7 (schoolboys)

Duration: 0 (instantaneous)

Range: 7 (twenty meters)

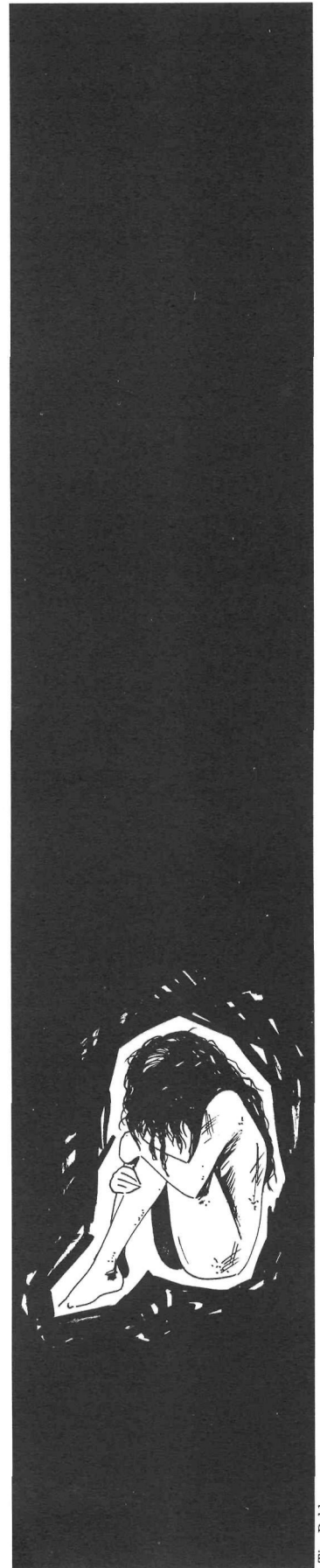
Cast Time: 5 (ten seconds)

Delay Time: 20 minutes

Gregg's talent is to locate a Möbius gate instinctively and move it to envelop his victim. His effect value is how large of an object he can teleport; for him, he can translocate up to 88-pound boys. Range is how far he can translocate someone, so area of effect is required for him to be able to affect a target at a distance (this is kind of a fudge, but the Area of Effect is basically how far away he can control the drifting motion of a Möbius gate). Speed is used to see how rapidly he can force the gate to his intended target; he can project the effect nearly instantaneously.

Totaling It Up

Step and Number	Cost	SFX	DT
1. Effect Value	7	7	
2. Range	16	23	
3. Speed	5	28	
5. Casting Time	-5	23	
6. Area of Effect	10	33	
16. Split into DN and DT		13	20
25. Totaling Up		13	20



Tim Bobko



Part 1: Assignment

This part assumes the characters are a part of an ESPionage organization. It's further assumed that the E-branch to which the characters belong has not yet truly proven itself in the eyes of the government. If this is not the case, alter the adventure as necessary to account for their background. Start things off by reading the following:

It's a muggy summer morning as you file into the office. On each of your chairs, you find a simple note initialed by your supervisor: "See me." You assemble in his office, drifting in by ones and twos, and take your seats. You sit quietly, watching him pore over various sheets, until everyone is present.

Your supervisor takes a long drag on a cigarette and holds it a minute before slowly letting out his breath. "We've got a weird one," he says. "Really weird. Probably falls right up our alley. We've had a series of disappearances in (whatever city). Children all, one a month like clockwork. None have ever been seen again. The police have no clues whatsoever.

"Each of the kids was seen shortly before they disappeared, but expert trackers and police dogs have found to trail, no footprints, no hair, no blood, no clues at all. Of course, in our business, a lack of clues is a clue. That's why I'm putting you folks on it. I want you to find out what's up, find the sicko who's snatching our kids, and pin the bastard to the wall."

He hands you a sheaf of documents and newspaper cuttings. "Here's everything I have on the case. We've got motel reservations for you, and bus tickets to get you there. We'll also spring for rental cars. You're on your own for food. Sorry I can't do any better than that, but we're strapped as it is. But keep track of your expenses, and for God's sake document everything you do in a fashion where we can prove our effectiveness. We need to show these bean-counters and pencil-pushers that we're for real. If there's anything else you need, you give me a call, and I'll see if I can't pull a string or two. Good luck."

When the characters go over the evidence from newspaper clippings and police reports, the following facts are readily available:

All the victims are red-haired boys between the ages of eight and thirteen.

All the boys were taken from parks, playgrounds, or other landscaped areas.

There is no sign of foul play whatsoever.

Police have tried to watch as many of the eligible kids as possible.

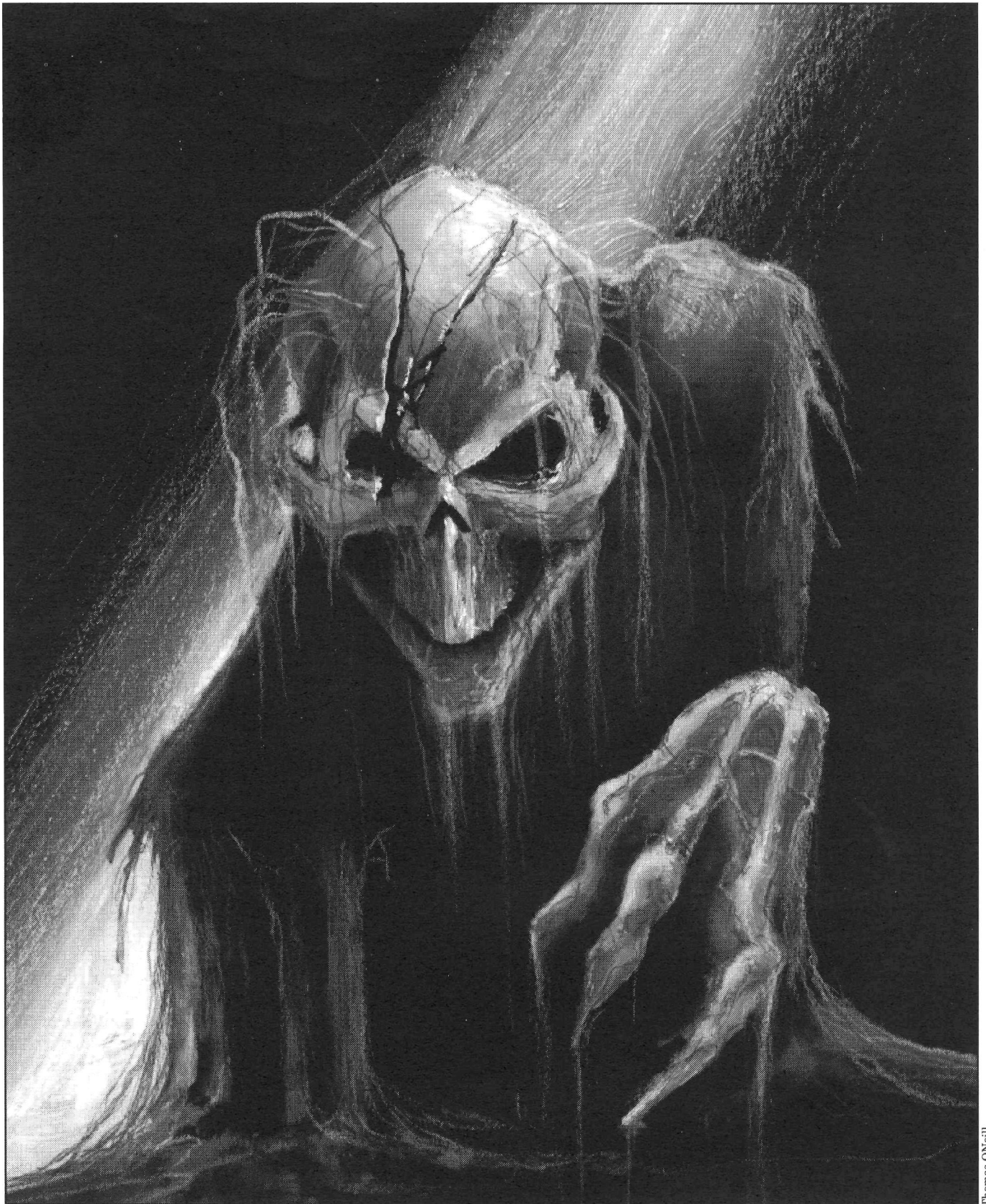
Even so, last month one kid disappeared while under police surveillance.

The police are not releasing most of these facts.

All the abductions are within about two miles of each other.

The abductions took place on:

January 18
February 17
March 23
April 17
May 17
June 18
July 17



Thomas O'Neill

Further research may reveal that there were two other abductions in another state on November 17 and December 19 of last year. These took place in a small town, and the uproar and limited targets caused Gregg to seek a larger town in which to stalk. There is also a list of people whom the police interrogated when the kid vanished on July 17 under their very noses. One of those people is Gregg Twyman, of course, but there are quite a few others, too. Throw in a few red herrings, like a cantankerous old janitor who was extremely uncooperative, a few kids caught with cigarettes, etc. The police report on the incident says simply:

"Four officers kept target under surveillance from long range with binoculars, spelling each other to increase concentration. One officer kept an eye on target at all times, often two officers watched target's movements. At 1432 hours, target entered public rest room with associate. At 1439, associate exited rest room, looked around, and waited. At 1451, officer entered rest room but could not find target. Upon questioning, citizens in the rest room noticed nothing unusual. The door to the stall the target apparently entered was locked from the inside."



Part 2: Surveillance

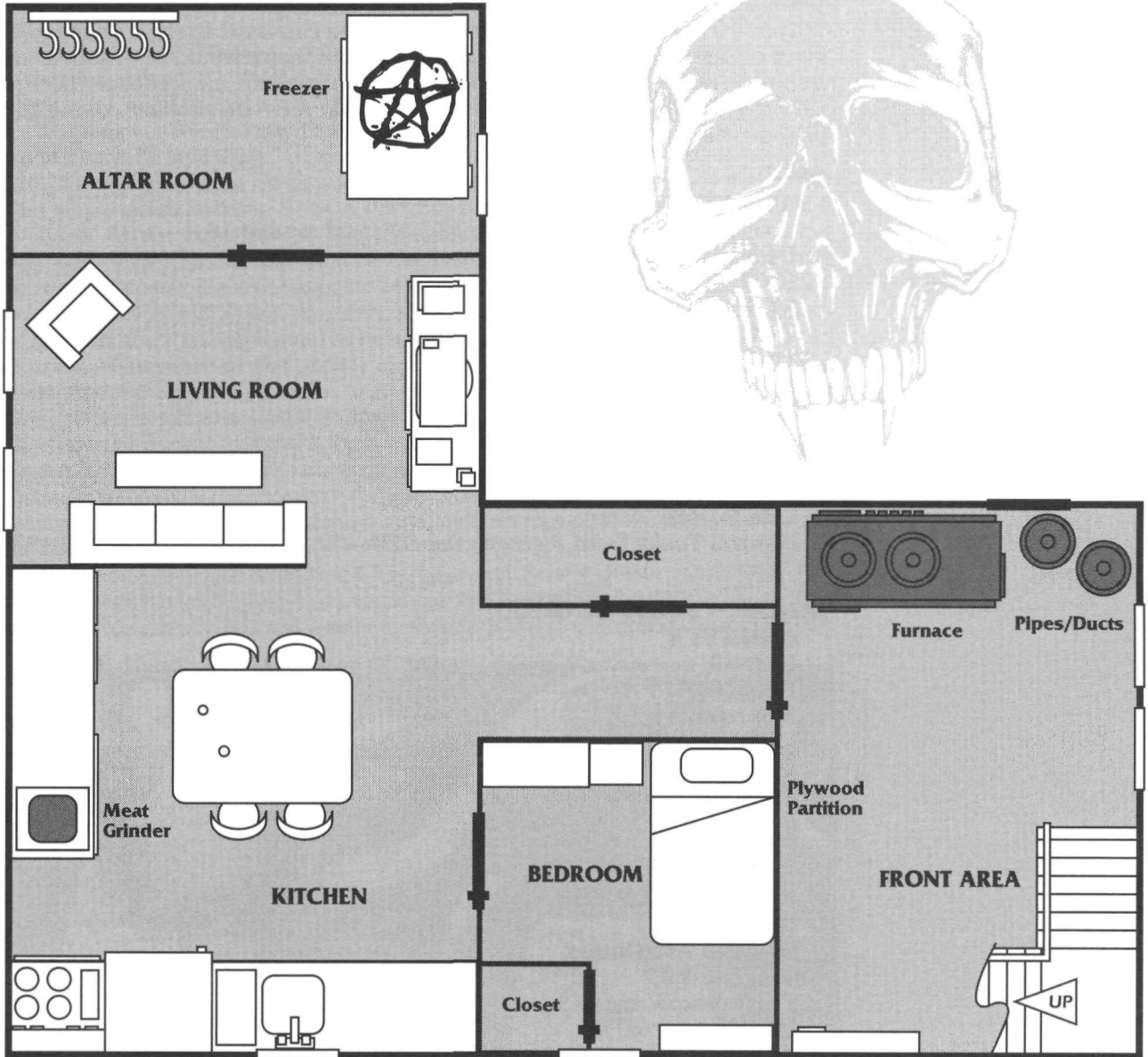
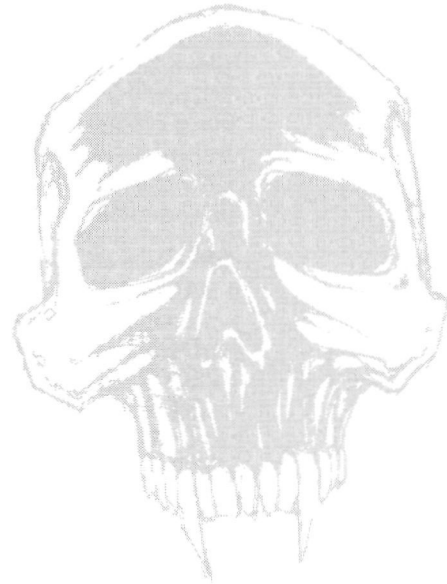
Heaven only knows how the players will pursue the investigation. They could attempt to follow as many of the kids as possible, possibly tuning in to the police radio band for extra information. They could tail all the people the police questioned about the July disappearance. They could use bomb scares or other tactics to get the police to close all the parks in the area of hunting but one, and stake that one out. They could put tracers on likely kids. If one of your characters is a necroscope, perhaps one of the abductions took place in a graveyard, and a dead psychic could provide some insight. This investigation isn't designed to be easy; police work never is. And it's made all the harder by the fact that the psycho is a psychic.

There are other problems which might arise, as well. You can be sure that foreign agents have started to hear about these abductions, and that they might send their own operatives in an attempt to find out what's going on. They might try to abduct or recruit Gregg Twyman for their own country. Copy-cat killers might make an appearance. And, of course, the police don't know about the characters, and cannot be expected to help them. They might even haul them in as suspects.

Eventually, the seventeenth will roll around, and Gregg will strike again. Perhaps the team's spotter notices him, or perhaps the team has discovered that he lived in the town where two other kids disappeared last year. His approach is the same as always; wait until a red-haired kid enters a bathroom, then zap him away. Of course, unless the characters have made arrangements, it's always possible that there won't be any red-haired kids at the park they're staking out, in which case Gregg leaves...

If Gregg is approached, he will evade in an effort to get away. He doesn't want to be questioned again, although he's savvy enough not to fight his way out of a situation if he suspects the police or the government is involved. Under questioning, he admits nothing, although telepathic questioning might reveal more. Remember, though, the characters don't have enough to arrest him, no matter

Gregg's Flat



how much they know. Even if they spotted him, scried out the actual tranlocative abduction, and telepathically read that he's the murderer, there's still no evidence that he's done anything wrong. They'll have to go to his house for that. And E-branch is very reluctant to let them do anything illegal without some sort of evidence to back them up.

The Confrontation

It's best if you can keep Gregg out of the characters' custody until he gets back to his house, or else have him escape their control when they arrive, perhaps as a side-effect of the sudden attack of his dog. There ought to be a fight in Gregg's place; it's just too gruesome to leave for a simple exploration. Furthermore, if the players have a strong team of characters, you can have Gregg be a member or even a leader of a satanist cult. Lots of unstable people would be willing to follow a childish bully who had the power to translocate young, innocent sacrifices right into their altar room, and such people would have no problem trying to kill anyone who tried to stop them.

GREGG'S DOG

AGILITY 9

Dodge 12, running 12, stealth 13, unarmed combat 12

DEXTERITY 6

ENDURANCE 9

STRENGTH 6

TOUGHNESS 9

INTELLECT 6

Perception 10, tracking 12

MIND 4

CONFIDENCE 6

Intimidation 10, willpower 12

CHARISMA 6

Life Points: None

Natural Tools: Teeth, damage value STR+3/12; claws, damage value STR+2/11

GENERIC CULTIST OF GREGG

AGILITY 8

Dodge 9, maneuver 9, melee combat 10, melee parry 9, stealth 9

DEXTERITY 8

Fire combat 9

ENDURANCE 6

STRENGTH 8

INTELLECT 6

Perception 9

MIND 6

CONFIDENCE 8

Faith: Gregg 10

CHARISMA 7

Derived Attributes

Toughness 9

Toughness w/ armor 9

MRG 6

MRS 4

MRC 2

MRJ 2

Life Points: 1

Equipment: Baseball bats, damage value STR+5/14, guns pulled from player characters

Gregg has a very creepy place; the cement basement of a tenement building. He rents it with his welfare money, and the crooked landlord by and large leaves him alone. If he only knew.

In the front area, the furnace and ventilation equipment squats like a giant steel octopus, thrumming and popping to itself and filling the area with waste heat. Pipes and ducts reach almost randomly for the various walls of the room. Electric lines and gauges line the walls, and the cement is pocked and raw. A new plywood partition separates one end of the room from the utilities; this is the entrance to Gregg's place. Where's the exit? Well, if you look in the furnace, there are some bone fragments and a few buttons to be found in there...

The interior of Gregg's place is an aberrant mix of childhood, occultism, and Americana, and this is where you, the gamemaster, can really pull out the stops in descriptive prose. Dallas Cowboys posters on the wall with a circle around the star turning it into a sort of pentagram. A health & diet poster advising the reader to eat good "heart food." Guttering candles and *Playboy* pinups. Dirty socks draped over televisions in every room. Empty pizza boxes with small body parts in them. "I love Gina" scratched on the wall next to a variety of wicked-looking knives. Books on black magic piled with comics.

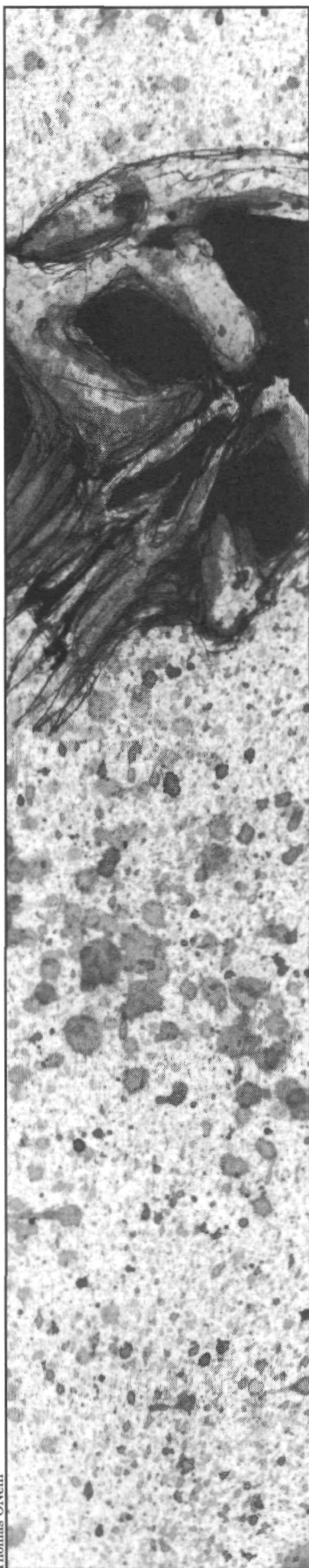
The whole place is dark, lit by a few dim bare bulbs, some candles, and the televisions. Music drowns out the video programming — either something moody and dark like Joy Division or the Doors; or else something bright and childlike, say pop or disco — imagine exploring this hideous place while the Bee Gees' *Saturday Night Fever* soundtrack played at a loud volume. Nothing has been cleaned since Gregg moved in here, and funky smells of all sorts assail the characters. The noise of the stereo and TV diminishes perception, as do the various posters, incense burners, and wires which hang from wall and ceiling.

Gregg's bed is a horror in itself. The headboard is just that... an array of small skulls staring lifelessly outward, each with the words "not me" scratched into the forehead. Some have cigarette butts clenched in their teeth, fake eyeballs in their sockets, or wear groucho glasses or a wig. The bed is adorned with femurs and other long bones crudely tied to the frame, and rib cages serve as shades for the lamps at either side of the bed.

The kitchen is a major mess, with a large crusty meat grinder dominating the counter. Gregg himself doesn't eat anything but the heart, but serves the rest to his dog and his guests. A large butcher's diagram of a cow is glued sloppily to one



Ron Kuyp



cupboard. The rest of the kitchen is ridden with cockroaches, stains best left to the imagination, and a whole lot of hamburger condiments.

Then there's the altar room. In the center of this room is a large, chest-type freezer with a lock. Inside there are scratch marks, urine stains, and other tokens left behind by scared young boys. On the top, Gregg has scrawled a pentagram on the peeling white paint. He has also engineered some restraints at the head and foot of the chest, to help hold the kid down while he cuts his way to the heart. Needless to say, there are blood stains all over the altar.

There are also two pair of handcuffs on the floor, and a variety of weird items pulled from kids' pockets like superballs, a rabbit's foot, and other such. Meat hooks juts from one wall, directly below which is a large aluminum basin with the name "Rex" written crudely on it in indelible ink. There are numerous hack marks on the wall below the hooks; evidently Gregg butchers his victims while they hang here. Against the opposite wall is the inscription:

MY
YOUTH
U E
REMAIN
VR
EAT
R

When the characters enter, Gregg and/or any cultists there try to bluff and deny their way out of trouble. When this doesn't work, they attack. As soon as any violence begins, Gregg's dog leaps into the fray with gusto — remember, that dog's been eating human flesh and blood for the better part of a year now. And, hey, who's to say that Gregg's psionic power isn't a little more powerful than we thought? Imagine a character suddenly disappearing in the midst of the combat, only to reappear a moment later inside the locked freezer?

Fortunately for the characters (or perhaps not), their below-ground location and the noise of the building facilities will prevent an alarm from being raised by the other tenants. Of course, interlopers might still appear. ADPE agents might try to rescue Gregg, or even tip off the police so that the cops bust the place right in the middle of the fracas, thereby putting the characters in the legal hot seat. Or some of the bones might start to move...

The End

Obviously, the characters have evidence now, and a lot of it. Forensics teams can find red hairs all over the place, which match those of the missing kids. Many of the small items scattered about can be identified as well, as can teeth and other fragments left in the furnace. Unfortunately, the characters cannot claim the credit. They can either tip off the police, or else they can just take care of Gregg and let that be that.

But what of the future of the E-branch? If the players were smart, they had their characters log their plans and actions, and then had them sent by certified mail to headquarters with instructions that they not be opened. Sealed predictions like these are how E-branch hopes to be able to prove its value, and it is difficult to bribe the postal service to give something a false postmark. But whether or not the E-branch is vindicated, at least the characters know the killings will stop.

So there it is. A short, relatively easy little adventure. There's only one ESPer enemy, only six square miles of one city to worry about, and less than a dozen innocents were brutally killed. Next time, turn up the heat.

NAME		HEIGHT	WEIGHT	AGE	SEX
ATTRIBUTES AGILITY 7 Beast riding: horse 8, maneuver 8 DEXTERITY 7 Vehicle piloting: motorcycle 10 ENDURANCE 7 STRENGTH 7 INTELLECT 8 Deduction 9, photography 9, trick 10 MIND 10 Artist: paintings 11, artist: paintings (pastels) 13 CONFIDENCE 9 Faith: Christianity 11, psychology 10 CHARISMA 13 Charm 15, ESP: necroscope 15, persuasion 16		DERIVED ATTRIBUTES 9 TOUGHNESS 9 TOUGHNESS (w/armor) 5 MRG (Movement Rate, Ground) 3 MRS (Movement Rate, Swimming) 2 MRC (Movement Rate, Climbing) 2 MRJ (Movement Rate, Jumping)		COMBAT BOX WOUND LEVEL <input type="radio"/> Light <input type="radio"/> Moderate <input type="radio"/> Heavy <input type="radio"/> Incapacitated <input type="radio"/> Mortal	K O MODIFIERS no modifier -2 to physical skills -4 physical & -2 all other skills -8 to all skills automatic KO; see text
		LIFE POINTS 5	SKILL POINTS	SHOCK CAPACITY SHOCK TAKEN	

BACKGROUND

Advantages: Additional Skill Adds (CI), +1 to *vehicle piloting: wheeled*, Equipment (CI), the character has a high-powered and responsive motorcycle; Luck (CII), the character seems to have a guardian angel; Trademark Specialization (CII), the character gets +3 to her bonus for pastel paintings, and is well known for her pastoral and uplifting graveyard landscapes; ESP (CIII), the character is a necroscope.

Compensations: Age (CI), the character is just below legal age; Handicap (CI), the character is so upbeat as to be gullible (+2 to DN when resisting *charm, con, persuasion, or trick*); Advantage Flaw (CII), her motorcycle has a lot of outstanding tickets and will be impounded by the police if they spot it; Quirk (CII), the character lacks a normal and healthy fear of death or dangerous situations; Achilles' Heel (CIII), the character is severely allergic to insect venom — if stung she must make an Endurance roll of 12 or higher every three rounds or take a wound until she receives an antidote.

DESCRIPTION

You were six before you realized that no one else believed you could talk to your dead grandparents, and nine before you realized no one else could do it. Gradually you became aware that you were apparently the only one who knew what lay beyond the grave, and you began to conceal your knowledge. Nonetheless, without a fear of death, you have begun to live life to the fullest; while most teenagers have an illusion of immortality, you know it's the truth. You are wild and woolly and free-wheeling and spontaneous, but many discount your effervescence as the hormones of youth. Yeah, let them be limp noodles and deadbeats, you've got fun to have, people to talk to, experiences to know.

EQUIPMENT

Customized high-performance motorcycle, artist's paraphernalia, pet monkey, nice camera with 70/210 macro zoom lens



"Nah. Life's no big deal. You should just enjoy it while you can. I know these things."

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	11	10	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	26	31	36	41
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14	+5

NAME	HEIGHT	WEIGHT	AGE	SEX
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ATTRIBUTES	DERIVED ATTRIBUTES		COMBAT BOX	K	O
	AGILITY 8 DEXTERITY 8 Vehicle piloting: wheeled 11 ENDURANCE 7 STRENGTH 7 INTELLECT 12 Computer ops 16, ESP: sensitive 15 MIND 11 Bureaucracy 13, business 14, business (accounting) 16, language: shorthand 14, research 13, scholar: nuclear science 12, scholar: nuclear science (toxic waste) 14 CONFIDENCE 6 CHARISMA 9 Taunt 11	9 TOUGHNESS 9 TOUGHNESS (w/armor) 6 MRG (Movement Rate, Ground) 4 MRS (Movement Rate, Swimming) 2 MRC (Movement Rate, Climbing) 2 MRJ (Movement Rate, Jumping)	WOUND LEVEL <input type="radio"/> Light <input type="radio"/> Moderate <input type="radio"/> Heavy <input type="radio"/> Incapacitated <input type="radio"/> Mortal	MODIFIERS no modifier -2 to physical skills -4 physical & -2 all other skills -8 to all skills automatic KO; see text	
	LIFE POINTS 5	SKILL POINTS	SHOCK CAPACITY		
			SHOCK TAKEN		

BACKGROUND

Advantages: Additional Skill Adds (CI), the character gets +1 to her *ESP: sensitive* skill; Wealth (CI), the character has saved up a large sum of money for lack of spending it on anything recreational; Contacts (CII), the character knows some environmental activists who tend to follow up on her observations with protests and the like; Skill Bonus (CII), the character has good business sense, and gets +1 to the bonus number of her **listed Mind** skills; ESP (CIII), the character is a sensitive.

Compensations: **Advantage Flaw (CI)**, when she uses her ESP, she suffers a -2 to all bonus rolls for the next hour as she gets depressed; Bad Luck (CI), the character is somewhat unlucky, perhaps aggravating or perhaps in fact due to her morbid disposition; Bigotry (CII), the character loathes scientists and military personnel, whom she blames for the proliferation of nuclear plants and weapons; Price (CII), if the character fails a *resist shock* roll of DN 12 when she uses her ESP, she loses a Life Point; Quirk (CIII), the character is extremely morbid, and when faced with certain death will "give up" unless she beats a DN of 15.

DESCRIPTION

The sickly green glows of nuclear piles have grown and grown over the years until your nighttime vision is no longer pure serene black, but poisoned and greenish. It's only a matter of time before they destroy the world, because they're spreading like a cancer. So who cares? We're all going to die. You've tried to do something to stop it, but no one notices the nuclear piles spreading like gangrene. Some are even working for it, like their lives depend on it, when you believe the reverse is true. So you quit caring. You could have gone somewhere in the world, but instead you just took a secretarial job, something to keep you in food and Wagnerian depression until the end comes.

EQUIPMENT

Five-year-old four-door sedan, peppermace keychain, extensive classical music library, electric typewriter, tape recorder (for dictation).



"Why bother? We're all just going to fry anyway."

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	26	31	36	41
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14	+1

NAME		HEIGHT	WEIGHT	AGE	SEX
ATTRIBUTES AGILITY 7 Dodge 8, martial arts: karate 8 DEXTERITY 8 Fire combat 9, security 10 ENDURANCE 7 STRENGTH 7 INTELLECT 11 Computer ops (mainframe) 12, deduction 13, demolitions 12, ESP: telepath 14, espionage 14, perception 13 MIND 11 Bureaucracy 12 CONFIDENCE 10 Faith: E-branch 12, interrogation 11, psychology (KGB) 11 CHARISMA 7 Charm 9, disguise 8		DERIVED ATTRIBUTES 9 TOUGHNESS 15 TOUGHNESS (w/armor) 5 MRG (Movement Rate, Ground) 4 MRS (Movement Rate, Swimming) 2 MRC (Movement Rate, Climbing) 2 MRJ (Movement Rate, Jumping)		COMBAT BOX WOUND LEVEL <input type="radio"/> Light <input type="radio"/> Moderate <input type="radio"/> Heavy <input type="radio"/> Incapacitated <input type="radio"/> Mortal	K O MODIFIERS no modifier -2 to physical skills -4 physical & -2 all other skills -8 to all skills automatic KO; see text
		LIFE POINTS 5	SKILL POINTS	SHOCK CAPACITY SHOCK TAKEN	

BACKGROUND

Advantages: Additional Skill Adds (CD, +1 to *deduction*; Skill Bonus (CD, the character knows KGB doctrine very well, and gets a +1 to the bonus number of any non-combat non-athletic skill used directly against a KGB agent; Contacts (CID, the character is a senior ESPionage agent, and has friends in the regular intelligence service; ESP (CUD, the character is a telepath.

Compensations: Bigotry (CD, the character hates foreigners and immigrants; Handicap (CD, the character has a bad knee which impairs *climbing*, *longjumping*, *running*, and *swimming* skill checks; Quirk (CID, the character tends to treat any perceived enemy as a non-entity deserving of nothing but death; Enemy (CUD, the KGB and ADPE both know this character well and seek his demise.

DESCRIPTION

Ever since you discovered your telepathic ability, you knew they had to be out there: the E-branch. You dedicated your life to one goal: find them, join them, and help them defend your country. Years of careful study, gaining notoriety among the local police by sussing their undercover cops (with your talent), and clawing your way up the intelligence agency ladder eventually paid off. You discovered an E-branch operative and read his mind. You used your intelligence and surveillance skills to trace their headquarters, and you walked in and announced that they were hiring you. Given that you'd found them, that sounded like a pretty good idea to the supervisor. Since then, you've been happy defending your fellow citizens against the invisible threat of foreign ESPionage.

EQUIPMENT

Bulletproof vest, .45 auto pistol (damage value 19, ammo 6), mirrorshades, tailored suit.



"You watch what you're thinking. We're in charge here, and you are mouse nuggets, got it?"

BONUS CHART

DIE ROLL	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	26	31	36	41
BONUS #	-10	-8	-7	-6	-5	-3	-1	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	14	+1

• The *MasterBook* System •

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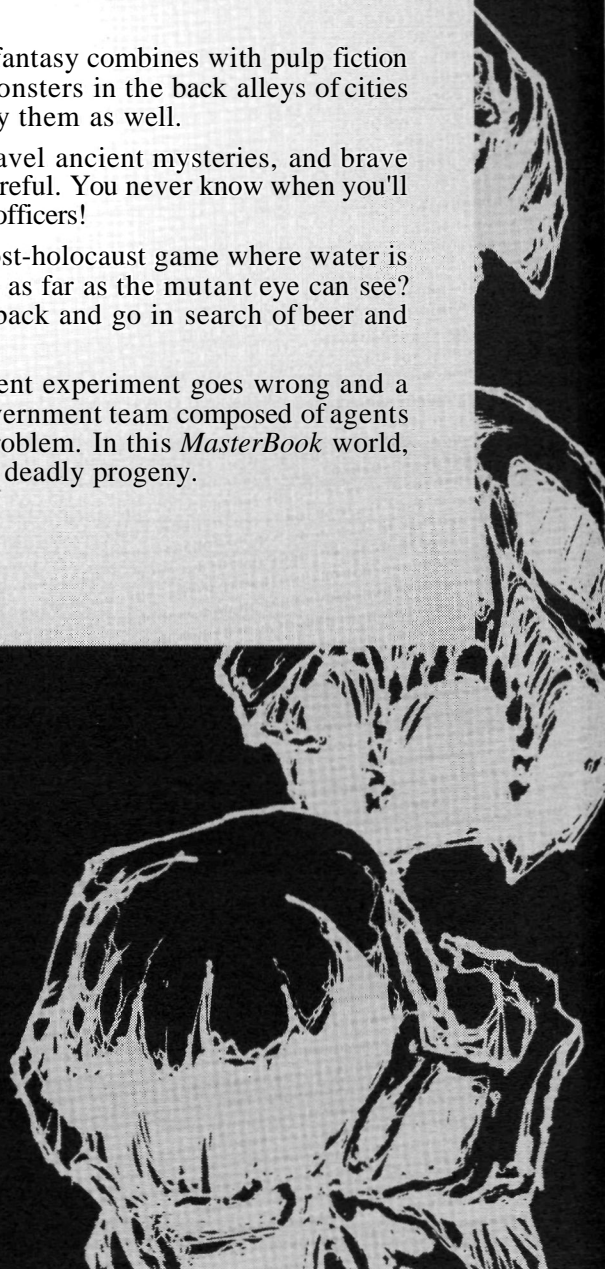
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and many more to come!



The World of
NECROSCOPETM

By Ed Bolme

Introduction by Brian Lumley

Coming from behind the shielding door, Harry saw the necromancer sitting there and gasped. It was as if Dragosani's eyes had exploded from within. Their centers were craters in his face, with threads of crimson gristle hanging down onto his hollow cheeks. Harry knew it was over then and the shock of it all caught up with him. Sickened, he turned away from Dragosani, saw his henchmen waiting.

"Finish it," he told them. And they slowly advanced on the stricken monster.

Boris Dragosani was quite blind now, and so too the vampire within him, which had seen with his eyes. But immature though the creature was, still its alien senses were sufficiently developed to recognize the inexorable approach of black, permanent oblivion. It sensed the stake held in the resolute fist, knew that an ancient sword was even now raised high. Ruined shell that he was, Dragosani was no use to the vampire now. And evil spirit that it was, it came out of him as if exorcised!

Dragosani stopped screaming, choked, clawed at his throat. Froth and blood flew as his jaws opened impossibly wide and he began to shake his monstrous head frantically to and fro. His entire body was going into convulsions, beginning to vibrate as the pain within grew greater than that of ruptured eyes and broken bones. Any other must surely have died there and then, but Boris Dragosani was no other.

His neck grew fat and his face turned crimson, then blue. The vampire withdrew itself from his brain, uncoiled from his inner organs, tore itself loose from nerves and spinal cord. It formed barbs, used them to drag itself head-first up the column of his throat and out of him. Stopping blood and mucus, Dragosani coughed the thing endlessly onto his chest. And there it coiled, a great leech, its flat head swaying like that of a cobra, scarlet with the blood of its host ...

—Necroscope

The World of Necroscope is a roleplaying game set in the dark world of Brian Lumley's imagination. A world where paranormal spies, ESPionage agents, and Mind Spies fight a secret war against darker things and one another. The Wamphyri, or vampires, exist, and their age-old evil stretches from the beginning of time to threaten the Earth.

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Parental Advisory:

This product is not suitable for children.

A
MASTERBOOKTM
Game



25001

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