

BEAST[®]

THE PRIMORDIAL



BUILDING A LEGEND

BEAST

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BUILDING A LEGEND

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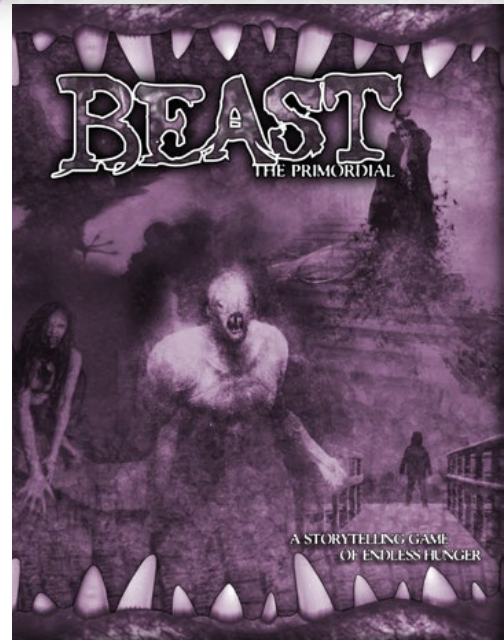
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BEAST

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BUILDING A LEGEND

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INTRODUCTION

A monster reflects the fears of the people who invented it. Its appearance, its behavior, its whole *legend* is a product of the culture and history that gave birth to it. In the same way, Beasts reflect the circumstances of their Devouring. And as their legends grow, their hunting grounds become more like the monsters that hunt there.

Building a Legend was originally a stretch goal of the **Beast: The Primordial** Kickstarter campaign, pitched as a guide to building a **Beast** chronicle. This book describes a cooperative process by which the Storyteller and players build the setting in which the shared story takes place – all before the first curtain rises on the game’s first chapter.


This approach has broader application but makes particular sense for Beasts. First, the Children need to know the lay of the land in order to feed, and so they typically know their territory intimately. Second, their Kinship bonds make them more likely to share information. After all, while they might be predators, they do not all feed in the same way and largely do not view each other as competition the way two vampires, two mages, or even two werewolf packs often do. Furthermore, the Children acknowledge other supernatural creatures, whom they frequently befriend, giving them even more access to details about the region. Finally, Beasts walk the Primordial Dream. They see the patterns in the nightmares of the region’s inhabitants, and many learn to extrapolate information about the physical world from those dreams, in nearly the same way a spider knows when it is about to feed from the vibrations in its web. The players’ characters probably have at least heard rumors about everything the troupe creates during this process.

Chapter One: Region provides guidance for creating the physical region in which the chronicle takes place – from brainstorming and researching a likely location to working together to describe the noteworthy people and landmarks within it.

Chapter Two: Primordial Dream adds another dimension to the region’s landscape. It includes advice for describing a local dreamscape and Hive, designing the brood’s Lair and its Chambers, and developing new, unclaimed Chambers for the Children to investigate, explore, and conquer.

Chapter Three: Chronicle is aimed at Storytellers. It provides advice on taking all the ideas the players came up with to weave together a chronicle that hangs together as a coherent story. It addresses some of the questions of crossover chronicles and includes some broader considerations and Storyteller tricks to make running a chronicle a little bit easier.

Throughout the book we’ve also included an example to show how this process works in practice. While designed with **Beast** in mind, this book features a process and provides advice that could be useful in any **Chronicles of Darkness** game.



“...Then listen close to me.
ANYTHING can happen, child.
Anything can be.”

— Shel Silverstein,
“Listen to the Mustn’ts”



PART ONE REGION

Whether they hate it or love it, everyone has a community they call home. Every town, every block, every neighborhood and street is unique, because they are evolving, breathing communities, with families and businesses and crime and history and secrets. Everyone lives somewhere, and that somewhere is filled with ghosts and regrets, sorrows and joys, the demons that drag us down and the angels of our better natures.

Communities are made up of the best and the worst of those that dwell within them, spawning legendary figures and urban folktales that haunt or titillate generations of residents. Take a walk through your own community. Drive. Bicycle. Ride the bus. Look out the window. Linger at an outdoor table at the coffee shop. Travel the virtual streets on Google Earth. Read a book, a blog; talk to a lifelong resident.

Take note of the houses that look run down and mysterious – or terrifying. Listen to the neighborhood gossip, which is often filled with sordid, hushed-voice tidbits that reveal and illustrate the true nature of the citizens that live there. Which streets do the kids avoid? What crimes do the townies remember? What bizarre, strange, surreal things do the people talk about?

Everyone lives somewhere. And that somewhere is filled with seeds that, properly tended, grow wild and strange into brand new territory.

A FEW PRELIMINARIES

Building A Legend is not meant solely for the Storyteller. While the Storyteller can certainly use this book by herself to develop the area where she's setting her games, the book was written with the assumption that building the setting is the joint effort of all members of the troupe.

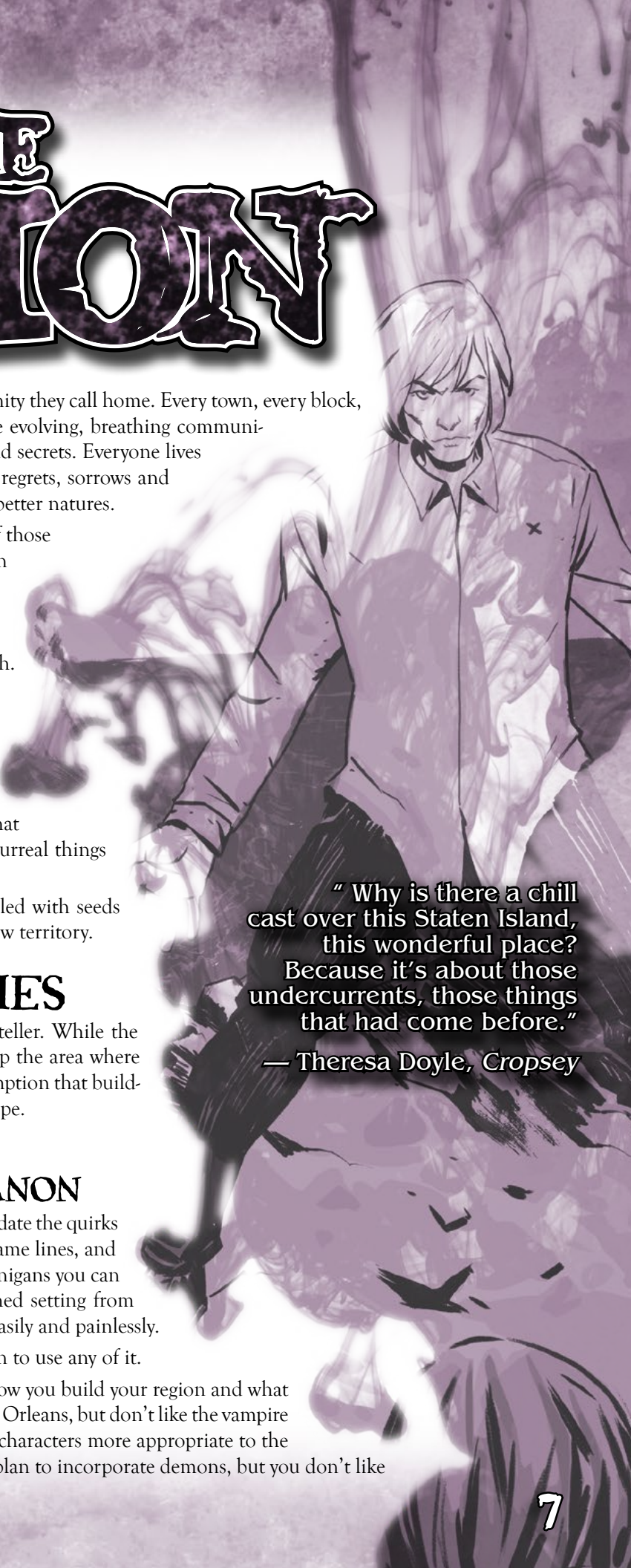
With that in mind, a few caveats apply:

AIN'T NO SUCH THING AS CANON

Beast is a crossover-friendly game. It's built to accommodate the quirks and unique themes of the other *Chronicles of Darkness* game lines, and can incorporate just about any kind of preternatural shenanigans you can dream. It's constructed with the notion that any established setting from the other game lines can be tweaked with *Beast* elements easily and painlessly.

That being said, you are under absolutely no obligation to use any of it.

Your table is the final and most important arbiter of how you build your region and what happens in your chronicle. If you want to run a game in New Orleans, but don't like the vampire elements, take them out and fill any gaps with supporting characters more appropriate to the game you want to run. If you set your game in Seattle and plan to incorporate demons, but you don't like



" Why is there a chill cast over this Staten Island, this wonderful place? Because it's about those undercurrents, those things that had come before."

— Theresa Doyle, *Cropsey*

the established history, replace it with other events. You are free to use or ignore any of the tools at your disposal.

EVERYWHERE IS SCARY

A vital distinction to make early on is the difference between “region” and “city.” A city encompasses the political boundaries of a human settlement. A region is composed of the area in which the chronicle takes place, and its boundaries might follow mundane political borders, but do not have to obey arbitrary lines on a map unless the troupe wishes it to.

While that might seem like a fine hair to split, it’s important to remember that horror happens everywhere, from corporate high rises to run-down slums, from apple-pie suburbia to lonely strands of mist-shrouded woods.

ALL PLAYERS MUST BE PRESENT

Creating the chronicle’s region is a group endeavor and should be considered part of character creation. To that end, all players should be present and able to contribute to the development of the region. Sometimes, that might not be possible. If one player can’t make it to that session (and is fine with the game going ahead without them), allow them at the start of the next session to add their input to the region.

LEAVE A PAPER TRAIL

World-building on the level necessary to maintain continuity and consistency can be overwhelming, and it’s hard to know where to begin, especially if a troupe decides to build their region from scratch. Keeping track of all the details is a daunting task, but a little preparation and organization goes a long way toward simplifying it.

One of the easier ways to accomplish this is to begin a *chronicle bible*, where information on important events, characters, locations, and organizations, amongst other things, are kept in a communally-accessible place, such as a digital document, a three-ring binder, or a notebook. It’s a standard technique used widely across all forms of entertainment, such as in the comic book, television, and writing industries, and provides writers, actors, artists, and other creative types with a master document they can reference during the course of their work.

A quick Google search will bring up dozens of web-published fiction series and official TV show bibles groups may draw inspiration from, as well as advisory videos from popular fiction authors on their preferred methods of bible organization, and websites chock-full of downloadable templates interested groups can use for keeping accurate records.

BRAINSTORMING & RESEARCH

The hardest part of any storytelling endeavor is figuring out the details of the environment, how much of it to include as passive backdrop, and how much of it to actively engage as the plot develops and side plots spring into being.

So how do you choose? You could pick one of the settings provided in various game lines, such as Seattle in **Demon: The Descent** or the Bristol from **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. You can let chance decide, by throwing a dart at a map or flipping an atlas open to a random page, or making a list of places that members of the group find inspirational, then pulling them out of a hat or a dice bag. You could do it democratically and take a vote. You could even crazy-quilt a brand-new location together, pulling disparate bits and pieces and sewing them into a city that pulls from all players’ suggestions.

Each method has benefits and drawbacks, ranging from the level of control to the ease of development, but every player should be on board with the method, as well as the location.

TRAVEL PACKAGE: THE PLACES PROVIDED

Chronicles of Darkness is replete with numerous ready-for-use settings for Storytellers and players, and **Beast** is completely compatible with each of them. The benefit of using prepackaged settings lies in their plug-and-play nature – most require only minimal basic tweaking (or none at all!) for insertion into a **Beast** game. The drawback of using “official” settings is the rigid appearance of the setting: some troupes may find that packaged settings need extensive tweaking and adjustments before they’re suitable for their game.

WELL-TROD PATHS: THE PLACES YOU KNOW

Selecting an area the group knows well is the easiest route to travel. Personal familiarity with a chronicle’s region allows a group to skip much of the creation process and get right to the meat of supernatural happenings. While choosing a place you know requires a little more work than an out-of-the-box setting, it also comes with the inbuilt benefit of familiarity, which can smooth the path for the group to feel more comfortable, especially if they’re new to the game or to roleplaying in general. Familiarity can breed contempt, however; some players might find themselves unable to pretend Beasts and other creatures dwell just down the block from their own homes and favorite haunts, which makes immersion into the chronicle more difficult to achieve.

ROADS LESS TRAVELED: THE PLACES YOU DON'T KNOW

Many, many games are played in locations no one in the group has visited. New places spark the imagination, because they're different and exotic, and their unknown qualities easily translate into fertile ground ripe for stories of wonder, mystery, and horror. But adapting a place none of the group knows means a heavier commitment of time. It's fine to watch a movie set in a remote part of Africa or Europe and think, *that'd be a great place to set our chronicle*, but please bear in mind that Hollywood gets many things wrong. Take some time to dig into the history, culture, and customs of faraway locations; learn about the people who live there. It's a great disservice to your group, your game, and the real-world residents to rely only on the narrow views offered by the entertainment industry.

Reality is often far stranger and more interesting than fiction anyway.

BRAND NEW TRAILS: THE PLACES YOU CREATE

Creating a brand-new setting from scratch is arguably the most rewarding tier of region-developing, but it's also the most involved and complex, and likely requires several sessions to complete.

Building a world from the ground up is a formidable, daunting goal, but offers a wealth of control from the very first step of construction, as the Storyteller and players collaborate to create a setting that is 100 percent tailored to their needs and goals. While it can seem terribly overwhelming, multitudes of examples can be found in every form of entertainment media for a stymied group to examine for guidance.

INSPIRATION & RESOURCES

An exhaustive list of sources from which you can draw inspiration for your chronicle's region would be impossible to fit into a single book. The following suggestions list is by no means all-inclusive, and should be considered a series of jumping-off points for further research and inspiration.

LITERATURE

Damnation City might have been developed with an eye to **Vampire: The Requiem**, but it remains an excellent source for any Storyteller looking to develop her own area for any of the **Chronicles of Darkness** games. As an addendum, the setting material found in the Appendices of various game lines can be used out of the box, or used as a foundation to tear down and rebuild to suit individual chronicles.

National Geographic Traveler, *Lonely Planet Traveler*, *Frommel* travel guides and hundreds of other travel-oriented publications are filled with photos, maps, historical tidbits, cultural events, and lists of businesses. Keep in mind, however, that these are geared towards attracting tourists, and tend to paint one-sided pictures of the areas they describe.

Jared Diamond's *Collapse*, and *Guns, Germs & Steel* are excellent non-fictional looks at the history of human civilizations, how they interact, how they rise, and how they fall. In a similar vein, Alan Weisman's *The World Without Us* delves into the fate of natural and artificial environments should the human race up and vanish. While it's only tangentially related, it's a fascinating look at how interconnected people truly are to their environments, and how even tiny disruptions can have grave consequences.

VISUAL MEDIA

Inspired by Weisman's book, the documentary serial *Life After People* (History Channel, 2008-2010) examines in episodic format different facets of society, nature, and human construction to theorize about their fates in a post-human world. A close cousin, *Aftermath* (National Geographic Channel, 2008-2010) presents scenarios to theoretically explore how culture, society, and the planet change in the wake of events like oil supplies running out, or the global population becoming unsupportable.

A pair of very short documentaries titled "How Wolves Change Rivers" and "How Whales Change Climate" present an abbreviated overview of the widespread impacts a single predatory species can have on the environment. This is prime inspirational material for a group of Begotten moving into an area that has been free of their influence for long periods of time.

Cropsey, (2009, dir. Joshua Zeman and Barbara Brancaccio). This documentary begins with the filmmakers examining the urban legends of Cropsey, a boogeyman from their youth, and segues it into the story of Andre Rand, convicted for the abduction and murder of at least two children from Staten Island in the 1980s. While deeply disturbing in its subject material, the documentary is a piercing and critical look at how a region may be layered, with a normal façade on the surface, but with undercurrents that can spark violence, solidarity, and fear in its residents.

Batman (1989, dir. Tim Burton). This is the source for the Gotham we have come to love and fear in DC stories. The cinematography paints the city as bleak, corrupt, and without hope, setting the tone and atmosphere before we even see young Bruce Wayne exit the theater with his parents. Even the Nolan trilogy drew inspiration from Burton's flick, though it leaned more towards apathy than hopelessness.

A SELECTION OF FICTIONAL SETTINGS

- **Gotham City.** Originally inspired by the history and architecture of Trenton, Ontario, DC Comics' Gotham City has evolved over the decades to incorporate thematic elements of Detroit, Chicago, New York City, and other major North American cities. It's also an incredibly complex example of building a region to fit a theme; Anton Furst's goal as production designer for 1989's *Batman* (dir. Tim Burton) was to make it the "ugliest and bleakest metropolis imaginable," and his vision of Gotham significantly influenced almost all subsequent depictions.
- **Genosha.** When introduced into the Marvel universe, Genosha was an idyllic land of high technology, low crime, and exotic locales, but this seemingly-utopian society had a dirty, horrible secret. Beneath the luxuries and the lavish lifestyles labored a slave population of mutants. Magneto eventually conquered the island and freed the mutant slaves, Genosha rather went to shit as its infrastructure fell apart, services became disrupted, and an influx of mutants coupled with an egress of non-mutants shifted the demographics significantly. Genosha stands as a poignant example of what may occur during a change of Apex in a region.
- **Lovecraft County.** This fictional area comprises all the locations of H.P. Lovecraft's works, which incorporate real and fictional places spread across a generous portion of New England. It is one of several terms used by fans of the Cthulhu mythos; others are Miskatonic County and the Miskatonic region. It includes the fictional cities of Arkham, Innsmouth, and Dunwich, as well as versions of the real-world Providence, RI, Danvers, MA, and Albany, NY, amongst others.
- **Stephen King's Maine.** Stephen King's prolific career gave the world an alternate topography of Maine, where the fictional trinity of Castle Rock, Jerusalem's Lot, and Derry coexist with Bangor, Ludlow, and other real-world New England areas. Castle Rock in particular features in a number of novels, and is shown to grow, change, and suffer greatly as the books progress and terrible things keep happening to its inhabitants.
- **Gravity Falls.** The setting for the Disney Channel cartoon of the same name, Gravity Falls is a small town in Oregon where weird things happen on a regular basis. Gravity Falls features an extensive list of supporting characters, strange happenings and an increasingly-complex mythology, which provides multiple launching points for the main characters to explore and investigate their neighbors and their environment.
- **The Island.** Somewhere in the South Pacific Ocean, the unidentified tropical island where the survivors of Oceanic Flight 815 were stranded on ABC's *Lost* (2004-2010) was a central point for strange, frightening, and unexplainable events, including powerful inhuman forces, mysterious energies, opportunistic factions, and hostile Others.
- **Night Vale.** The fictional setting for *Welcome to Night Vale*, Night Vale is a town somewhere in the American southwest where all conspiracy theories are assumed to be true, and the podcast serves as an in-character radio show, broadcasting news, announcements, weather reports, and advertisements for the residents of the town.

While the finer details of locations and communities might have been lost in the blockbuster films of the Marvel Cinematic Universe, the Netflix series adaptations of *Jessica Jones*, *Daredevil*, *Luke Cage*, and *Iron Fist* do a fantastic job of building the neighbourhoods of Hell's Kitchen and Harlem, complete with racial themes, secrets, corruption, mysteries, and deep-seated grudges between residents.

Shows and movies set in different time periods often rely on heavily detailed world design to enhance the storylines and sell the believability of their setting. Advice: pay more attention to the shows than the movies, as an episodic property must develop its settings and locations over longer periods of time. Some shows sell it better than others. Check out series like *Stranger Things*, *The Last Kingdom*, *Vikings*, *Spartacus: Blood and Sand*, *Rome*, *Hell on Wheels*, *Turn*, *Merlin*, *Sword of Destiny*, *Marco Polo*, *Rebellion* and many, many more.

Though they started as a small big top circus troupe in Quebec, Canada, Cirque du Soleil is now a worldwide phenomenon. Acts like *Varekai*, *Amaluna*, *KÀ*, *Toruk*, *Zumanity*, *Mystère*, *La Nouba*, *O*, *Ovo*, *Worlds Away*, *Totem* and dozens of others are able to sweep audiences into rich, developed, and believable settings and storylines with little more than often-minimal scenery, props, music, and the bodies of their incredibly flexible performers. The soundtracks are likewise phenomenal.

AUDIO

Bear McCreary is best known for his work as a series composer for *Battlestar Galactica* (2004), *The Walking Dead*, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, and *Outlander*, but his resume is much more extensive. Whether for evocative ambience, entire session soundtracks, or just music to help the troupe get into the appropriate mind space for developing the

region, McCreary's body of work is an excellent source. (The development of the setting and scenery of the shows he works on aren't bad sources either.)

Dream Theater's *Metropolis II: Scenes from A Memory* is a progressive album that tells a complete story from the first notes of the opening track to the last echoes of the final song, and the city emerges from the various songs as a character that grows, develops, and falls.

Finally, listen to the soundtracks of your favorite movies, TV shows, and video games. Not the official release that have all the licensed songs with lyrics; go to the *other* soundtrack, the one with the instrumental pieces that play in the background, underscoring dialogue, ratcheting audience tension, and changing tone and mood in the space of a couple of notes.

ELEMENTS OF REGIONS

Like any construction project, regions consist of core components that, once slotted together, build a setting complete with important and supporting characters, locations, events, and underlying politics and history. All of these components shift and mutate, evolving along lines guided by the Storyteller's plot arcs and the players' characters' actions. In no particular order and broadly categorized, the core components are: *scope and concept*, *theme and mood*, *geography and climate*, *demographics*, *history*, and *the supernatural*.

It's important to cover these aspects during the region design phase of character creation, but Storytellers and players should feel free to do so in any order that works best for their tables. You may find, once you've started, that the different elements of a region need adjustment as they attempt to fit together. A word of advice here: don't attempt to make everything neat and tidy. Let the region's elements be messy. Perfect areas are boring, because nothing happens there. Regions where the climate is at war with the citizens, or mortal politics historically stymie the development of the landscape, or taboos interfere with the local supernatural agendas become much more interesting places to play.

When detailing any setting for a chronicle, a group has a couple of choices in the methodology they use. They may choose to begin with a small section, a handful of focused details, and expand outward in broader and broader strokes until the whole picture is filled in. Conversely, a group may choose to begin with the broader, general details, gradually working their way into smaller and finer details. Either method, (or any other method the group decides to use) works equally well.

SCOPE & CONCEPT

Regions begin with an idea, a *concept* that becomes the seed from which the region grows. How individual groups decide their concept is completely up to them: pick and choose suggestions from a hat, discussion and debate, a democratic vote, the Storyteller's call.

Ask everyone at the table *what kind of game do you want to play?* Try to answer it as honestly and completely as you can, because the answer the players collectively give is a great starting point for figuring out the concept of the region. Is it a small hamlet with a missing child and strange lightning storms? Sounds perfect for an investigative story or delving into shadow wars with changelings or shapeshifters. Do you want to play something that's heavily political? Tension and hostility should underpin almost everything residents do to each other, with friends, family, and lifelong neighbors at each other's throats at the slightest provocation.


Close on the heels of *concept* for importance comes *scope*, in which the group decides how large they plan on their region being. As stated earlier, "region" is a loose term that means everything from "a couple of streets in Podunk, USA" right up on through "the entire western half of Louisiana." In the end, it's about what the characters can claim and protect from interlopers. While the region's scope isn't necessarily tied to the power levels of the Begotten who will be moving in or are already established, bear in mind that younger, newer Beasts face challenges in asserting their presence more powerful, well-known Beasts may not.

THEME & MOOD

Theme and mood are tricky concepts, but done properly, they are important, core elements that can evoke the feel of a location in a handful of words. There's a certain way the imagination sparks when you hear "City of Lights" or "City of Legends" or "The Big Apple." "Victorian London" brings pea-soup fog, Jack the Ripper, giant clocks, trains, and a host of other hallmarks of the time period to mind. "The Great Pyramids" evoke a sense of the weight of time and the grandeur of ancient Egyptian culture. "New England" conjures old money, historic buildings, forested lands, and folktales of headless riders.

As important as they are, however, it's just as important that the core feel and atmosphere do not turn into harmful stereotypes or caricatures. While this might be more acceptable in cases of fictional locations developed by the group, boiling down real-world locations to a bare handful of defining characteristics does a disservice to the people and culture of that place.

A good way to ensure that your region has a rich and nuanced theme is to incorporate one or more suggestions



from each person in the group, then find a way to tie them all together. Even the most ridiculous-sounding suggestions can turn into something great and unique. One might not think that “Rome’s lost Legion” and “Pokémon” as a paired prompt could turn into anything but farce or satire, but Jim Butcher used both these concepts as a starting point for his *Codex Alera* series.

GEOGRAPHY & CLIMATE

A beginner mistake to make is to assume that a setting has a single landscape, a single climate. Even in the smallest regions, the shape of the land and the area’s weather patterns can shift from street to street and block to block. While it might seem like a minor detail in the larger scheme of storytelling, appropriately-themed *geography* and *climate* breathe vital believability and life into a setting.

The physical composition of the land plays a large role in dictating the kinds of communities that grow out of that area. Ground that is too wet or too sandy does not have the stability or strength to support structures like skyscrapers and massive arenas. Islands, depending on their size and location, often suffer from issues with importing resources not otherwise available to their residents (and increased costs for shipping). Heavily forested areas can lend an isolated (or insulated) feeling to a region. Flat plains or deserts tend to remind people how *big* the world really is, how empty and immense it can seem. Rural areas often have accessibility issues, by travel and with technology. Food deserts are common in highly urbanized areas, with residents often located miles from the nearest full-service grocer, and diseases tear rampant through cities faster than they do farming towns.

The climate leaves its mark; it’s a well-established fact that weather patterns affect the disposition of entire communities, influencing residents’ moods and changing their behaviors with the shifting atmospheric conditions. Areas of high sunshine might see their populations with higher energy levels, more buoyancy in their steps. Perpetually foggy, damp areas, on the other hand, lend themselves easily to gloomy, closed-off residents suspicious of outsiders.

As well, more extreme weather, like tornados, earthquakes, floods, dust storms, or hurricanes, affect the region and its residents; communities in areas of frequent potential disasters are constructed with those disasters in mind. Buildings along fault lines have earthquake counterbalancing systems to prevent collapse. Houses in hurricane territory are built low and spread apart, with advanced warning systems well-established to alert those in harm’s way to get out of the danger zone.

BUILD-A-REGION

Choose a positive facet for your community, such as “vineyard” or “hospitable, friendly folk” or “high-tech

neighborhood” or even “lonely moor.” Then choose a negative facet for your region, such as “constantly foggy” or “cell reception sucks” or “roads are constantly being torn up” or “there’s a Hero on every corner.”

Repeat this process until you have at least two or three pros and cons your group can agree on, and then decide how *much* of a problem or benefit each one truly is to the individual player characters, as they will be experiencing this environment on a regular basis.

DEMOGRAPHICS

The *demographics* of a region is a broad category that encompasses the habits, behaviors, and resources of a mortal population, and is useful for dictating the resources available to Begotten and their Kin, and limiting the number supernatural entities in the area.

Some categories you might wish to consider in deciding the demographics of your region are as follows:

- **Population:** Approximately how many mortals live in the region.
- **Economic Status:** Further dividing the population according to their income levels. While it might seem like too focused a detail to include, bear in mind that the nightmares and vices of the wealthy are far different from those in lower socioeconomic statuses. In addition, high-wealth areas tend to look very different than low-income areas, with more expensive shopping and services. While real-world censuses typically categorize economic levels by median income, this is the **Chronicles of Darkness**, so rough percentage estimates broken down by dots in the Resources Background to reflect the average amount of disposable income should be sufficient for most groups’ needs.
- **Services.** The public services available to the region’s citizens: fire, rescue, law enforcement, hospitals, doctors, dentists, schools, daycare centers, and many, many other health and community safety providers. This category also includes conveniences and luxuries, such as tourist-attracting facilities like ski resorts and campgrounds.
- **Education.** Available schooling, including post-secondary education, and the general education level of the populace are all items to consider.
- **Transportation.** How people generally get around in this region: public bus services, a wealth of Uber drivers, on foot, by subway, taxis, shuttle bus, horseback, etc.
- **Industry.** The main source or sources of income for the region’s population. This also includes the

tourism industry, which, if it is healthy and stable, can provide a steady influx of resources, including money and jobs, for the area.

- **Technology.** We like to assume, in the 21st century, that everywhere is Wi-Fi enabled and there's a cell tower on every corner. But many rural areas are still on the fringes of the technological world, with cell phone reception spotty at best and nonexistent at worst.

BUILD-A-REGION

Sketch in a few details for each category, and consider positive and negative facets for each. A high population means a steady supply of victims to sate Hungers, but it also means more competition for resources and increased risk of discovery by hunters or Heroes. A low-technology area might be isolated enough to allow a group of Begotten and Kin to relax their vigilance a little, but it also has the drawback of being cut off from long-distance resources and restricting the ability to call for help.

REGIONAL HISTORY

Just as events and experiences shape people, they shape regions. If the physical elements are a canvas, historical events are the paint that adds color, fills in areas of light and shadow, and fine-tunes the smaller details in order to present a nuanced picture of the region.

If your region corresponds to a real-world location, look into its history. Even smaller communities now tend to have webpages and Wikipedia articles dedicated to them, complete with tidbits of local history to pull apart and stuff into the region to pad it out.

LIMIT THE JUNK

Not all of it is going to be necessary or even useful information. It's a neat bit of trivia to know that, in 1895, there were only two cars in the entire state of Ohio, and they still managed to run into each other, bringing the number of vehicles to zero. But if a group can't find a way to draw a plot point or story seed from it, it's probably best to let it go. It's interesting, and amusing, but ultimately useless.

(Of course, if that collision laid the groundwork for a rivalry between the families who owned the cars, and that rivalry cuts a bloody swath through the history of your region, by all means, keep it. You've found a use for it.)

KEEP IT SUPERNATURAL

Remember that real-world history is only useful insofar as it inspires events and characters in the chronicle. Pick

a few human events your group really likes, things that resonate throughout the ages, and then set them aside for the moment.

The bulk of your focus during region creation should be on the supernatural history, the stuff that goes on under and around the notice of mundane people. Mortals might think they're the crown jewel of worldly history, but they're not. Supernatural creatures, by dint of their natures, leave indelible marks in the areas they occupy and influence, though their machinations may take decades or centuries to be fully realized.

Supernatural beings keep themselves hidden from the mundane world, and for good reasons. No matter what particular brand of bizarre a Kin may claim, each and every single one has enemies both alike and unlike. The **Beast** book covers the Begotten take on each of their strange cousins in a concise manner, beginning on p. 224, and further on in this chapter, we'll go into more detail.

BEGIN AT YOUR BEGINNING

A region without a developed past is flat and disorganized, so breathe as much life into it as possible. Layering the history of the region is much like crafting the physical aspects and populating the landscape with allies, innocents, and enemies, fitting disparate pieces together until you have a more complete picture. Just as with crafting the physical areas and the social networks, the first thing a group should do is choose a *boundary* for your history.

Pick a starting point. It doesn't have to be the founding date of the settlements in your region. It can be as early as the Primordial Dream itself, or as recent as a handful of decades ago. You can go much closer to the in-game start of your chronicle, but you should give yourselves some breathing room to add details and events as they are decided by the group.

Once you've determined where your chronicle's regional history begins, ask yourselves *why* it starts there. What makes this point of history so special? Was there an abrupt shift of Apex? Was there a mass exodus away from the settlements? Did a natural disaster take place at this point in time, forcing the city to evacuate for months until they could return home? Did the Fae come through the Hedge and sweep up the region's mortal population?

Move forward and back along the timeline, filling in root causes and subsequent consequences of the event. When you've run out of ripples for one event, pick another, and do the same. Once you get going, the history practically writes itself, especially if you're not sticking to just the factual history.



CHOOSE YOUR OWN HISTORY

For our purposes here, look at history as the events with the biggest impact on the region. Don't let the word "big" limit your imagination, though. "Big" can be measured in social and personal impact, not just in physical size or monetary damage. Its impact is in casualties and fallout reports, in windfall income or the sudden ruination of an influential individual.

Unless the characters are moving into the region at the start of the game, the players should take some time to develop each of the characters' backstories in conjunction with the broader history. While the number of historical events a character might generate is likely based on how long they've been active in the region (and left to Storyteller and group discretion), every player should have the opportunity to develop at minimum one personal, unique event and influence the direction of Storyteller characters and plot threads in the region.

Unlike general historical events, player-generated events don't have to be big, earthshaking, region-wide things. Player history can and should be personally significant to their character, and by association to their brood and Kinship bonds.

HISTORICAL EVENTS

This is not a definitive list of all the events that might occur in a region's history, and is meant only to serve as a set of examples individual groups can use as a guideline for their own region. Feel free to create your own categories as inspiration strikes, and don't hesitate to mix and match. Historical events are rarely as cut and dried to fit neatly in one category and no other, but delving into all the weird and wonderful ways history unfolds would be a book all on its own.

ALLIANCES

Alliances occur when two or more groups, previously hostile or neutral with each other, make the decision to pool some or all of their resources and work together for the common good or against a common foe. Most of the time, alliances break apart as quickly as they form, but some alliances stand the test of time and remain strong for years.

Factual: "You wanna know how the local leeches and our brood got so close? We had a common enemy a few years back, some asshat Hero with a stake who fancied himself Van Helsing. By the time he was dealt with, we'd found a few more common goals with the leeches. It's been that way since."

Legendary: "I'm telling you, it wasn't less than 18, and

FACT VS LEGEND VS MYTH

It's hard to tell sometimes what might be factual history versus what's legendary history or mythical history, so here's a quick rule of thumb:

- If it's mostly true, and can be proved fairly well with the application of a bit of time and effort at the library or on a laptop, it's *factual*, even if it's biased in its presentation.
- If it's only a bit true, and you can find something to back it up, but it's filled with exaggeration, gossip, invention, hyperbole or speculation, it falls under *legendary history*.
- If there isn't a chance in hell that it's true, but it's what some of the locals believe to be true, and it's just cool and interesting to the group, file it under *mythic history*.

word at the time said there was more on the way. I dunno what crawled up their collective asshole, but with *alla* that, plus a coupla Heroes sniffing around, the fuck else were we supposed to do? Whine about how the mages fucked us over for Lairs and the fairies opened gates in our houses and the vampires sucked our favorite dinners dry? Then the hunters pick us off one by one while we're holding grudges. So fuck that. We went back to hating each other afterwards, but while the hunters were here, we had each other's backs."

Mythic. "Once upon a time, there was a sea serpent and a water dancer who fell in love. The sea serpent sheltered the water dancer in her coils, and the water dancer spun for her dreams and nightmares. Eventually the water dancer's cruel master came looking for her, but none are so fierce as a dragon protecting a treasure. The cruel master fled back into the thorns, and the sea serpent and the water dancer lived ever after in a cave below the sea."

BETRAYAL

As fast as groups can find common ground, one or more individuals within that alliance find ways to break it apart. Betrayals happen for any number of reasons, including benign and altruistic ones, but most tend towards reasons of greed, vengeance, anger, grief, opportunism, or just plain old pedestrian malice. Betrayals might be of an individual nature, such as a business partner selling half the business out from under the other, or it might be on a larger scale, such as a spy in the community informing hunter cells on where the monsters make their homes.

Factual: "It took a bit of digging, but you know that ghost that haunts Ben's bookstore? She came first, set everything up, got the bookstore in order. He got here six months later, showing up when the business started turning a profit, and then undermined her decisions, alienated her customers, and reneged on his half of the debts. He filed for bankruptcy, stole the rarest books in the place, and left her on the hook for everything else. You know what came next."

Legendary: "Well, of course someone had to let the angels in. My money's on that chick that always brought sandwiches to

the alliance meetings, the one who looked like a tiger with blue fur. Whackjob, that one. But she knew everyone's orders, knew when to put them in, knew who would be there and who stayed home before anyone even showed up. Everyone trusted her, right? Who else could it be?"

Mythic: "Did I ever tell you about the Empress of Pearls? She was before your time. Before my time, too. But the story's still around, and I'm going to tell it to you like it was told to me. When the Empress was young, she was cautious, respectful to others, and polite even when she had no reason to be. When she became the Apex years later, she became a despot. Her own broodmates rose against her when even they lost their tolerance for her excesses, and now her bones decorate the Lair of the current Apex."

DISASTER

There's nothing like an avalanche, tornado, superstorm, hurricane, blizzard or series of wildfires to leave scars across a region. Sometimes, the disasters are manmade, whether through industrial accident, neglect and inattention, or actual malice. Even though they tend to be functions of climate, weather, or human doing, large-scale disasters are often beyond the predictions of the most adept oracles. As a result, even non-human people (who really should know better) still have the tendency to attribute every uncommon event, like sudden strikes of lightning, spontaneous forest fires, or the rumbles of a massive earthquake, to supernatural powers.

Factual: "I heard from a sister in California. The wildfires this summer have driven a lot of the werewolves out of the country and in towards the cities. It's already bad there with the drought. No one's looking forward to another burden on the area. We should be careful here, too, or we could face the same problem. We're not that far from drought ourselves."

Legendary: "Of course, the water table was poisoned on purpose. You think that kinda stuff happens by accident? Ten chances to one, it was that Hero who keeps trying to poison Saneya's Lair. Shit only seemed to start going wrong when Hoyden caught him down by the river that one time."

Mythic: “You think Sandy, Katrina, Igor, and Charlie were just nature, or El Niño, or climate change? I’m telling you, there’s some sort of weird shit going on down around the equator, man. There ain’t no wrath like a weather spirit scorned.”

DISEASE & SICKNESS

Whenever people gather together, disease and sickness breed. Though most epidemics are relatively minor, like chicken pox or the common cold, an outbreak of a new pathogen or within a compromised, at-risk population can have serious repercussions on the region for years to come. Occasionally, the diseases are deliberate attacks on a region, originating with an enemy of the powerful and influential, who seeks to weaken the power structures and alliances within before attempting to take it for herself.

Factual: “You remember the mass animal deaths back in early ’11? Tons of fish washing up on shores, birds falling out of the sky, cattle dropping in their tracks? It happened here too. We had the CDC and Fish & Game crawling all over the place, trying to figure out what happened. It sounds like one of those urban legends, I know, but it happened, and no one’s ever been able to satisfactorily explain it.”

Legendary: “Get a flu shot. You don’t think it’s necessary? Honey... If you talk to any vampire, talk to Maria. She’ll tell you. She was just turned during the Spanish flu pandemic. Her home city was almost wiped out. Mortals were dying in the streets, vampires spread it to the uninfected, and ghosts popped up everywhere. I’m sure Begotten who dream of ruins and wreckage would be fat and gluttoned, but they’re not my Hungers. I’m not interested in starving.”

Mythic: “Met a mummy once. She traded a dream of death and destruction for a couple of nights’ shelter while she was in the area. I was curious, so I agreed. And... I’ll never shake this thing, okay? Skies blackened by millions of corpse-flies, bodies piled in the sand until they were as big as the pyramids, and a river running red with blood and bloated corpses. So vivid I could smell the baking rot. I have no idea if it actually happened, but goddamn... I still think about it. I keep hoping she’ll come back some day. I have a guest room already waiting for her.”

INVASION

It’s an ingrained trait of humanity to look at their neighbor’s lands with covetous eyes, plotting and planning to encroach and claim that which is not theirs. The monsters are no different. Resources are limited, competition can be fierce, and the grass is always greener on the other side of the fence. Sometimes, though, invasions aren’t malicious, deliberate things. Groups end up migrating through regions for one reason or another, and occasionally settle without warning or permission, carving out niches for themselves and bringing their myriad problems with them.

Factual: “Six or seven years back, eight, nine changelings showed up all at once. They were in bad shape, torn to shreds, looked like they’d fought through thorns or something. And they were scared shitless. Running from something big and bad, from the gist of it. They didn’t exactly ask to stay, and we didn’t exactly tell them they could, but if you ask one of them from that, what do they call it, freehold? Yeah. Ask one of them why they stayed, and they’ll tell you they had nowhere else to go.”

Legendary: “The demons like to claim that they were the first to come into Seattle, and that the rest of us are just here to cause problems for them. From our perspective, they’re the invaders. Just because they didn’t know we were here first doesn’t mean we weren’t. Now we’re tripping over angels every time we step out of our goddamn Lairs, and that’s a problem we didn’t have to deal with before now.”

Mythic: “Happy hour at the pub. Sanjay’s doing his storytelling thing again. Man, can that fucker entrance you. Last time, he told the story about the walls of Tell es-Sultan, how Jacob and his people marched around and around for a week without stopping, and how angels of all goddamn things came to smash those walls into dust after the trumpets blew. Yeah, I think the Bible’s full of shit too, mate, but Sanjay used to be an actual goddamn angel. Maybe he knows what he’s talking about.”

POWER SHIFT

Power is rarely a static thing. Though it might reside in one pair of hands (or with a group) for a length of time, sooner or later another individual or group will claim it naturally, or by force. These shifts in the balance of authority and influence might happen on a regular basis within and between the various groups that inhabit a given region, or they might be rare, remarkable events. When power shifts balance, the ambitious and opportunistic in the region move swiftly to take as much advantage as they can before their chance is gone.

Factual: “Yes, I care about this year’s election, and this is why you should, too: The mayor and the sheriff usually run unopposed, and they’re Grigor’s men, bought and paid for. But Grigor’s stranglehold is slipping. This is a chance we should capitalize on. If we move quick enough, we can knock some of Grigor’s power base down around him.”

Legendary: “Been researching Roanoke for close to 10 years now with everyone who’ll give me five minutes of their time, and the most intriguing bits come from the changelings. They say there were faeries out there at some point, with a queen invested in the land. That much is true. They showed me the records. Here’s where it gets fuzzy: Something happened, maybe some of these Keepers they keep looking over their shoulders for, and the queen was killed. When she died, the land opened up and swallowed all its residents whole. I get chills every time I go out to that island. There’s something in the ground... It calls to me.”

Mythic: “There used to be this Apex a long time ago. I don’t know how to describe him. It. I don’t know. Most terrifying

thing I've ever heard. Stories got passed around, you know? How this... fire would rage around him sometimes, how nothing would be the same when the flames went away. I don't know if I more than half believe he was real. Anyway. One day, he just up and disappeared. Gone without a trace. Took all the Chambers with him when he went, they say, so that's why there's no evidence of him anymore."

RIVALRY

Pompey and Caesar, Montague and Capulet, Edison and Tesla, Hatfield and McCoy — literature and history are both full of famous enmities. Rivalries can be friendly, only sparking between two or more strong-willed individuals with their eyes set on the same prize. They can also be brutal, bloodthirsty, and cutthroat, full of smear campaigns and backstabbing business deals, each rival actively seeking ways to undercut and undermine the successes of the other.

Factual: "Back in 1895, Leo Fitzwallace bought a car because Anton von Holtz had one, and whether by accident or design, crashed into von Holtz's car. Von Holtz swore blood feud on the Fitzwallaces right then. Ever since, the families have been sniping at and looking for ways to interfere with each other. It flares up every couple of years and it used to be something we could more or less ignore, but lately it's getting nasty enough that it's drawing all kinds of attention none of us want or need in our neighborhoods."

Legendary: "Kamali and Juarez might seem like they're the best of friends, but you haven't seen them go at each other like there's a gold medal for petty bullshit on the line. Ever hear the term 'frenemies'? Well, that's what they are. And they don't bother trying to keep it to themselves either. Last time they butted heads, we ended up with three new grudges from the local wolf packs, two blood feuds by the leeches, and I swear to fucking Christ a fairy curse hurled by a supremely pissed-off ogre. Best thing to do when they start squabbling is to just keep your head down and pray they don't notice you."

Mythic: "Be careful around Heidi for the next couple of days, Jules. Whatever you did last week pissed her right off, and you'll be lucky if she restrains herself to killing the shit out of you in sacrifice to whatever blood god she's worshipping this week. You're Mother's favorite, and she's always been jealous of that. Watch yourself before you end up strapped to an altar and slashed open. I swear, you two should have been named Cain and Abel with all the drama you've put us through over the last few years. I'm just not sure if she's Cain, or if you are."

WAR

When all else fails, when peace breaks down, when negotiations are done, when every other recourse has been exhausted, sometimes war breaks out. Whether the war is a shadow war, fought in isolated bouts and skirmishes away from the eyes of unsuspecting mortals, or it is a mortal war

broad enough in scope to sweep along the region's non-humans (along with everyone else), it has left its wounds on the landscape and on the people.

Factual: "We almost didn't have a home to come back to, after the Great War. Of all the boys this place sent to France, more than 90 percent of them fell, dead or injured, on the first day. Beaumont Hamel. Look it up. Took decades to recover from the losses. Hundred years later, it's still woven into the Dream."

Legendary: "Speaking of the walls of Jericho, pull up a chair. I'll tell you why we can't just walk into the vampire's business and tell him to fuck off. Twenty years ago, we had two different groups of mages who had beef with each other. We're talking real salt-the-earth-into-the-seventh-generation mojo here. And when the dust settled, not fucking one of them was left standing. What's this got to do with the leech? Said leech has built his business right over the ground where the mages went to war, and it's saturated in all that nasty shit they did, and it's not sleeping quietly. Since then, no one can be aggressive or hostile around there without paying a hefty fuckin' price."

Mythic: "He stood on the edge of the cliff, the ocean behind him, the remains of his army in front of him, as we advanced. He stared us down with the fury that comes from a Legend thwarted, and as we showed fang and claw and magic and fire, he did the only thing he had left to do. He jumped. If he died on the battlefield, his story would end, but if that story's conclusion was 'and his body was never found,' then he had a way back."

THE EVOLUTION OF A REGION

The region in which your group plays should be considered as vital a character as any Ally, Contact, neighbor, or player's character in the chronicle, and should have as much potential for growth, decline, evolution, and decay as any living, breathing creature in the chronicle.

ALLOW THE REGION TO CHANGE

No place on Earth is eternal and unchanging. Terrain changes as natural forces, like weather, and unnatural forces, like human exploration and expansion, wear away at it. Societies change as time marches on, bringing them into contact with other societies in the larger, global theater. People change as new experiences bring them new perspectives.

So too should the chronicle's region be allowed to shift and change, in response to the events, people, and supernatural occurrences happening within its borders. "The land time forgot" is a popular, descriptive trope of an area that is frozen and undeveloped, but outside of magic

and fairy tales, these places simply don't exist. (Then again, this is *Chronicles of Darkness*, so such a place just might be an entire story in itself.)

Example Scenario: Rafael has been running his **Beast** chronicle for nearly a year, and his players have made their characters into their region's prime movers and shakers. The downside is, their success has left them with few challenges. At the next session, Rafael tells his players he's been having trouble coming up with new antagonists and storylines. After some debate, the troupe decides they aren't ready to mothball the chronicle, and tells Rafael they're fine with major changes to the setting, even if it negatively impacts the things they've worked hard over the last year to achieve. At the next session, Rafael begins a new storyline that starts with half the town burning flat, displacing hundreds of citizens and all but guaranteeing the local economy will hit rock bottom soon. Even though their characters have now lost allies, resources, and influence, the players are intrigued and tell Rafael they look forward to the way this new chapter of their chronicle will develop.

ALLOW THE STORY TO SHAPE THE ENVIRONMENT

A good general rule of thumb is to let the chronicle's setting evolve along the lines and trenches dug out by the story and the players' characters' actions. The inverse is also true: allow the environment to shape the story. Savvy Storytellers work with their groups (even if the groups are unaware of it) to change the storylines to suit the group. The *Chronicles of Darkness* are collaborative games, after all, and one of the most rewarding aspects of the world for a player is seeing their actions and their decisions having real, tangible impacts on their character's surroundings.

Example Scenario: Shonda plays in a **Beast** chronicle that encourages mixed character types, and her mage Rae, an impulsive and inquisitive Free Council Acanthus, has been researching information about a valley with a bad reputation that lies just outside the troupe's region. After several sessions of getting nowhere with libraries and other supernatural types in the area, Shonda decides her mage is going to go to the valley and scry it magically to see if she can conjure visions of its past, an action she has been warned against taking by older mages and Beasts she's talked to. Juliet, the Storyteller, has been planning that phase of the chronicle for a while, but hadn't expected it to come up in game quite so soon. She cautions Shonda that what she's attempting will be nearly impossible to achieve and even nothing-happens failure carries risk, just like the Storyteller characters have told Rae. Shonda is determined to try, and the other players encourage her to go for it. After her spells fail, Rae returns home disappointed, not realizing her spells have awoken a dangerous, predatory

entity trapped in the valley long ago, and it is now eyeing the region for its first meal in centuries.

ALLOW THE WORLD TO AFFECT THE REGION

Even though the chronicle might be largely taking place in one small area of the globe, a wider world is still out there, filled with just as many bizarre and dangerous creatures as the region is. Allow the region's inhabitants to interact with the outside world, even as background material. Keep an eye to who this region's trade partners are, if any of the prominent citizens (or Beasts in the troupe, for that matter) have allies or enemies beyond the borders. Keep notes on if the region has valuable resources or features outsiders might hungrily watch, biding their time for an opportunity to attack.

Example Scenario: After a short introductory storyline and a more in-depth plot allowing the troupe to seize control of their region and establish themselves as major players in the social landscape, Tia decides it's time to expand the scope of her storylines. Before she begins the next story in the chronicle, Tia spends some time developing a nearby region. She looks over the notes her players have kept in the community bible, and pulls inspiration from the points detailing the brood's rather firm ousting of all other supernatural creatures from the region. She decides that a mage of middling-but-growing power has taken refuge with a friendly Begotten in the neighboring region, resents her expulsion from her home and sanctum, and has quietly been building an alliance of other displaced former residents to take back their home. Tia begins the new story at the next session, introducing the new region, the disaffected mage, and her small army of pissed-off ex-locals who will drive the plot forward for several chapters to come.

ALLOW THE REGION TO STYMIE THE STORY

Sometimes, players don't get what they want. Games can stop being fun if they become too easy. Storytellers (and even players) shouldn't be afraid to allow the region's history, physical features, or cultural makeup to simply block, negate, or implode an aspect of the plot. Just like any other aspect of the Storyteller's toolbox, the region should act as a foil or roadblock when it's dramatically appropriate. A word of caution when using the region in this fashion: Try not to overuse it, because players can and will become quickly frustrated with having their efforts constantly fail.

Example Scenario: The troupe in Jordan's game has claimed an urban region, with a well-established civic government. One of their players, Jonas, plays Denny, a

loudmouth Anakim with a talent for pissing off exactly the wrong person. A few sessions ago, Denny made a few wisecracks about the mayor to a camera crew before his broodmates could haul him out of the spotlight, and the mayor took it rather personally. The brood has just purchased a large warehouse down on the docks, and are beginning phase two of their import business project, but find red tape suddenly choking their every step. Their days are now filled with officials, fire marshals, and health inspectors, who show up uninvited and unannounced to inquire why their paperwork isn't in order, or why their building doesn't adhere to fire codes.

ALLOW THE STORY TO RETCON THE TIMELINE

Your region's history, its timeline, should be as well established as it needs to be for the demands of the table and the chronicle, but don't feel obligated to adhere to it as though it was carved in stone. Sometimes, hours or days or even weeks later, someone will have a eureka moment about the foundational history of a series of events in the present day; only problem is, it didn't come up in the region development phase. Don't be afraid to revisit the decisions made at region creation later in the story, if someone has a better idea than one presented at that session. Much like the previous section, use this one as sparingly as possible, because it has unlimited potential to completely change storylines, impacting both character development and out-of-character record keeping.

Example Scenario: In the region-creation session, Mattea, Patty, Thomas, Lawrence, and Kalina decided that their region suffered sporadic and mysterious mass disappearances, like the Bermuda Triangle, but intended it to be an ancient vampire who woke periodically, fed, and then went back to sleep. They even included a note that, at a future time, the mass grave with all the bodies should be discovered, which will allow the brood to hunt down the vampire that killed them. As the date approaches in-game for the mysterious disappearances to happen again, Lawrence comes to Mattea, the Storyteller, with what he thinks is a better idea. The mass disappearances aren't the result of a vampire, but of an otherworldly portal that opens in the region in a rough cycle. He even presents a believable way the brood might find out: A local historian lost someone in the last cycle, and has been obsessed with finding them. Mattea likes the idea, even though it means scrapping a storyline in planning, and brings the suggestion to the rest of the troupe. Once they sign off on it, she can incorporate Lawrence's ideas into her planning for future sessions.

THE SUPERNATURAL

Beasts are not the only supernatural creatures lurking in the world. The troupe should spend some time fleshing out the other monsters who inhabit or are passing through the region. Some of this will fall to the Storyteller. The players' characters don't know everything, after all, but the Children are aware that other kin are out there, and they often set out to befriend these cousins.

TROUPE LIBRARY

Start with what your group has. Some troupes might only have the **Beast** core book, and that's fine. Many will have other Chronicles of Darkness games available. A handful of completists will have most or even all the games' core rules, plus supplements for several of them. This is far from necessary, however.

If the group doesn't have a large library at its disposal but would like some guidance creating new occult beings, the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook** includes a system for designing new supernatural creatures — whether it's the monster of the week or an important occult faction that operates in the region. **Hunter: The Vigil** has a similar system for building monsters that the group.

OTHER MEDIA


A region's supernatural denizens need not be limited to those in a published Chronicles of Darkness game. One of the oldest tricks of Storytellers everywhere is to borrow ideas from media her players haven't yet encountered. This can be anything from horror novels and atmospheric TV series to collections of creepypasta stories online. Nor should players hesitate to introduce borrowed ideas. Everything is fair game if it inspires your troupe and makes the region and the chronicle more interesting.

CREATIVE SUBTRACTION

On the other hand few regions (or the chronicles set in them) include every creature from every game in the Chronicles of Darkness line. It is therefore a good idea to narrow the range upfront. Sometimes this will be thematic. If your troupe feels that one of the Arisen would upstage the characters or that a society of local mages might pull focus away from the Beasts, feel free to exclude them.

Narrative considerations also factor in. One potential pitfall of introducing many different kinds of supernatural creature is that the players spend so much time learning the capabilities of potential allies and enemies that they lose sight of them as characters with interesting personalities and motivations. If the cast of Storyteller characters gets too large, it can be difficult for the story to develop them outside of their role as "the werewolf" or "the vampire with the shadow powers."





How many supernatural creatures and how many types of supernatural creature inhabit your region? As many as your troupe needs to tell an interesting story. Some regions invite a wide variety of such beings – whether because of the presence of an occult force that draws them there or because it sits at the crossroads of several different spheres of influence among the kin. Other regions benefit from a focus on only one or two other kinds of supernatural beings. The area might be remote, or one creature type or occult faction might maintain a strong foothold over it.

PLAYER CONSIDERATIONS

Finally, each player should have veto power over which creatures appear in the chronicle. Some players feel uncomfortable with the soul-stealing powers of demons. Others can't help but think of popular media franchises whenever vampires come into a game, and so the undead throw them out of the story. Whether it is a strong dislike for stories about some kinds of supernatural creature ("I'm so over werewolves.") or a discomfort rooted in personal experience ("**Changeling** hits a little too close to home for me."), the troupe should respect these boundaries without objection and without expecting an explanation for them.

The collection of supernatural creatures that remain after this process of addition and subtraction is the palette the troupe has at its disposal. Not all of them will come into play, but it serves as a starting point.

KEY PLAYERS

The players' characters and any characters that play an important role in their backstories form the initial basis for the region's supernatural population.

BROODMATES

Peopling a region with supernatural creatures starts with the Children played by members of the troupe. How do they know each other and why do they work together well enough to consider themselves a part of the same Brood? It's perfectly fine if the characters aren't a Brood yet – or even if they haven't met – but the players still need to answer some fundamental questions about what will bring them together, and think about why they will stay together. This should be done before play begins.

The answer will not necessarily be the same for every character. One broodmate might be bound to another by a debt of gratitude, for example, while that Beast is committed to another of the Children because they met shortly after their Devourings and bonded over that shared experience. Each player should choose at least two other characters to whom her Beast has a connection – whether it's one that exists at the beginning of the chronicle (assuming they already know each other) or one she and the other player agree will

emerge soon after the characters meet. Further, these connections should form a knot. That is, if the broodmates are dots on a page with lines showing their connections to each other, it should be possible to touch every member of the brood by tracing a finger along those lines.

It's okay if one of the Beasts has connections to three or more characters (especially in a large troupe). Likewise, sometimes three or more characters will have a shared connection. Depending on the starting point of the chronicle, the entire Brood might have a single, shared bond – such as a common enemy or membership in the same organization.

Here are some starting points for inventing connections:

Common Enemy: The characters share a foe whom they wish to elude, defeat, or destroy. This could be an opponent who is actively pursuing them or one who isn't yet aware of the depth of their antipathy for him. Either way, neither Beast can defeat him on her own. It might be possible to defeat this enemy during the first story, or he might remain beyond their power for much of the chronicle. A short-term foe is not an ideal choice for the sole connection between broodmates unless the Children have other reasons to continue associating with one another after they overcome this opponent. A long-term, common enemy can drive a chronicle, but it tends to be a shaky foundation as personality conflicts and arguments over strategy undermine the characters' efforts. In the right troupe, this tension can heighten drama and make the story more interesting, but not all players are interested in a chronicle that features a lot of infighting.

Common Threat: The characters face a moral hazard or existential threat together. Whereas an enemy can be fought and even defeated, threats are generally a force of Nature that must be endured. A handful of monster hunters is a potential enemy; a world-spanning organization of monster hunters who imprison supernatural creatures for study and have the characters' scents is a threat. Defeat one group of monster hunters, and another takes its place. Threats can also include societies of the Children or other supernatural creatures operating in the region – as long as they bear the characters a grudge or regularly work against the Beasts' interests. Some threats are more atmospheric in nature – a natural or supernatural phenomenon that plagues the characters. Perhaps the region's dreamscape suffers frequent invasions by roving Horrors that invade Lairs and attack the Horrors of local Children, or maybe an arcane portal in the area occasionally looses monsters whose predations will attract Heroes if the Brood doesn't eliminate the creatures quickly and quietly. A threat need not have an occult origin. Both characters might know that their faces are on "Wanted" posters at the local police station, for example, which has the potential to complicate any encounters with law enforcement. A common threat

can easily apply to all the characters, but be careful that it isn't so insurmountable that the most rational response would be to leave the region permanently. Static atmospheric threats can be used to justify "monster of the week" plots, while a threat that grows over the course of a story or chronicle can offer a clear plot arc as the tear in space-time grows or the FBI sends a team of supernaturally-enhanced agents to investigate the fugitives who have eluded the regional police for so long.


Common Goal: Not all objectives are adversarial. The characters work together to achieve a shared goal. It might be helping an ally become the region's Apex, seizing control of a local crime syndicate, sharing their lessons with as many people as possible, or some other goal that unites them. As with enemies and threats, a common goal and a willingness to cooperate in pursuit of it doesn't mean the Beasts like each other or agree on anything else. Disagreements on strategy and seemingly-common goals that turn out to be mutually exclusive (such as if both characters want to be the Apex) can wear away at such a bond or dissolve it entirely. That said, a common goal can drive a chronicle — or at least explain why the characters consider themselves a Brood even if they have disagreements with one another.

Pooled Resources: The characters have abilities or resources that complement each other in some way. One

provides muscle, while the other brings a host of social connections to the table, for example. This can be a fairly equal relationship where each leans on the other and respects his capabilities, but it can also be codependent or even one-sided. Applied to an entire Brood, the characters are a team of specialists, and in this case "niche protection" (an upfront agreement by the players about what advantages each character brings and an understanding that no one should become better at that character's job than she is) is important.

Debts: One character feels obligated to another. Unlike pooled resources, a debt that defines a connection is almost always unequal, although how the one owed the debt feels about the indebted character is just as important as its opposite. Debts can be objective or subjective, voluntarily or inescapable. A character who feels obliged to save the life of the character who once rescued him creates a different dynamic than one who promised his services in exchange for a desperately-needed favor, for example, and a character who feels honor bound to keep up her side of the bargain will likely view her debt differently than one shackled to the agreement by a supernaturally-enforced contract. It is highly unusual for an entire Brood to be united by debts to each other. The most likely scenario is for all the other characters to owe a debt to one member, but that can be





fraught unless all the players of indebted characters are comfortable letting that character boss them around.

Shared Loyalty: The characters belong to the same organization or owe loyalty to the same person. This could mean a shared mentor or a mutual friend, a place of employment or an occult conspiracy. Applied to the entire Brood, shared membership in a group or service to a common boss can make it easy for the Storyteller to introduce new plot hooks. This is especially useful in an episodic chronicle, but it can also drive a story arc focused on a quest to rescue or redeem a friend or a campaign to consolidate the power of an organization in the region.

Shared History: The characters have been through a lot together, and those experiences have forged a bond that persists even if their interests have since diverged. The players should invent some stories about their adventures prior to the start of the chronicle. This could be a single, formative incident or an entire series of war stories stretching back for years and revealed ad hoc over the course of the entire chronicle. This connection can resemble any of the others, with the key difference that it is something that occurred in the past rather than something that lingers in the present. All the members of a Brood can have a shared history, as well — possibly one that begins with a couple of introductions and gradually becomes a common narrative as their lives became intertwined. This is especially reasonable if the characters begin the chronicle as more experienced Children instead of as starting characters.

Family Ties: Beasts are not common, and so the characters were pleasantly surprised to discover they were not alone in possessing a Horror. In a way, they “grew up together” after their Devourings. Or perhaps one was a little older and wiser and took the new Beast under her wing. Even though the apprentice is no longer a newly-hatched monster, he still finds comfort in the familiarity of the Beast who first introduced him to his extended family. Possibly, the family bond is more literal — two cousins who were always outcasts at family reunions but who discovered they both dreamed deep. And now they are inseparable, effortlessly dancing between gossiping about relatives and debating the best role for the Children to play in the world. To some extent, all Beasts share a connection as scions of the Dark Mother. In regions where Children are rare or hunted, this familial connection might be attractive enough in itself to convince the characters to overlook any personality clashes, divergence of interests, or petty crimes committed by their kin — not unlike the clannishness of large families in small towns or rural areas. In regions where Children have more options when it comes to their occult associations, the bond might not be as strong, but it isn’t necessarily absent, either. It might simply take the form of chipping in a few bucks to help settle a fellow Beast’s debts, rather than brutally murdering

the one blackmailing him in order to send a clear message that no one fucks with the Family!

Emotional Ties: The characters satisfy some emotional need for each other. This can overlap with shared resources. One might enjoy creating a strategy and handling logistical details but freezes up when forced to improvise, while the other finds such preparations boring but really shines when in the moment, for example. However, this can also manifest in less pragmatic ways — whether as a romantic or a platonic relationship, a healthy interdependence or a deeply dysfunctional codependence. A character who enjoys playing the role of champion and protector can get along quite well with one who likes to feel safe and cared for. On the other hand, a take-charge narcissist and a passive-aggressive character with a martyr complex can have a long, deeply unhealthy and unfulfilling relationship. Chapter Three provides several examples of emotional needs that could draw characters together. It is uncommon for all characters to share emotional ties, but it is more common for a character to fulfill their needs through the Brood as a collective. A Beast who yearns for the approval of others can draw on all her broodmates in hopes of satisfying that need, for example.

Mundane Ties: The characters share a hobby, vocational background, or academic interest, or maybe they plain enjoy each other’s company and would probably have become fast friends even if neither of them had been Devoured. While this sort of connection is rarely enough in itself to justify helping a colleague bury a body, shared interests can round out a relationship between characters and give them something to bond over besides the current crisis and their insatiable Hungers. They often lighten the mood at the table or give players something to roleplay quietly together when their characters would otherwise be off-screen. It’s quite common for these connections to emerge during play as players settle into the personalities of their characters, but there’s no reason not to decide on a couple of shared quirks or interests before the chronicle starts.

KISSING COUSINS

Most players in a **Beast** chronicle will create and play one of the Children, but the game doesn’t assume that all the players will do so. If someone wants to play a mage or a Promethean or a changeling, nothing about the game or the general attitude of Beasts toward other scions of the Dark Mother prevents him from doing so. The choice to play a non-Beast can have an impact on the themes of the chronicle, but more immediately, it implies the importance of a particular kind of supernatural creature in the region.

For example, while it is possible that the sorcerer who hangs out with the Brood is the only one in town and that she has no meaningful contact with other wizards, it is

more likely that her presence hints at the existence of other mages in the area. If so, what kind of relationship does she have with others of her kind, and why has she chosen to associate with the Children? Is she an emissary for a society that hopes to forge an alliance with the Beasts? A spy or scholar seeking to understand them? An outcast or exile from her own kind forced to seek succor elsewhere? Do the Beasts have some resource that she needs or wants to further her goals? Did the relationship emerge from some formative moment such as defeating a common enemy or working toward a shared goal? These commonalities might not even be rooted in their connection to the occult. They might move in the same mundane political circles or share membership in or employment by the same organization – such as professors at a local university.

Generally speaking, a player's character who is not one of the Children will be equipped to serve as the brood's resident expert on matters related to his supernatural type. A changeling will have a working understanding of the local Courts, for example, and a sin-eater will know more about local hauntings than the average Beast. As such, encourage the *player* to take a leading role in fleshing out these in the region – both during the pre-chronicle discussion of the region and during play. This isn't to say that he knows everything or that any fact the player introduces during play isn't subject to Storyteller approval, but one of the benefits the Children derive from including such a distant cousin in their daily routine is that he has a baseline understanding of topics that it would take them years to achieve on their own. Moreover, he knows others like him who have access to resources that none of them can match.

MERITS

Merits like Ally, Contacts, Mentor, and Retainer describe important connections the character has. A character with Status (Police) doesn't just get a mechanical benefit in certain situations. The Merit implies a potentially-complex

involvement with local law enforcement, which includes relationships with colleagues, superiors, and a whole system of standard procedures and obligations.

Most players who choose Merits like Ally or Mentor have a pretty good idea about who these people are, but it can get a bit fuzzier with Merits like Contacts and Staff that represent an assortment of less distinct connections instead of an individual. In these cases, players should feel free to invent a few examples of characters implied by these Merits.

For example, Contacts (Antiquities) could include a mage who knows a lot about occult relics, an antique dealer who specializes in firearms, and a collector of truly alien relics that do not appear to adhere to any known natural or occult laws. That doesn't mean these are the only three people the character knows, but fleshing them out in advance puts some names and faces to a Merit dot – as well as offering easy plot hooks the Storyteller can use later.

In cases where a character's backstory doesn't make the source of these Merit dots clear, consider explaining the source of each connection using the examples provided for broodmates earlier in this chapter.

BEYOND THE DOTS

Not every teacher is willing to take risks for a Beast – not even in exchange for a significant favor. And not every perfectly respectable colleague has time to answer obscure questions about Babylonian lore – much less at three in the morning. This step is optional – ideal for sandbox chronicles (see Chapter Three) with a large cast of Storyteller characters or for socially well-connected characters whose players like to have a nice list of people they know. It can also help round out a character's backstory if a player has a good idea of who her character is and what he's doing now, but is having a hard time coming up with anything about how he got to be that way.


Family: Think about the character's blood relations. Does he have any siblings? Do his parents live nearby? Are

CONFLICTS AND COMPETITION

As important as it is to come up with reasons for the characters to form a brood and work together during the chronicle, not everything between the Children need be so rosy. Players should feel welcome to invent sources of conflict between their characters. These might be clashes of personality, stark philosophical differences, or bad habits that occasionally put the character at odds with all her broodmates. Such conflicts create drama, and drama can drive character development and the narrative as a whole.

Be wary of going too far, however. No matter how grating or unreliable a character might be, the benefits he brings the brood must greatly exceed his abrasive quirks. In the same vein, no character should be so incompatible with her broodmates that it doesn't make sense that he would associate with them. Ask yourself why this character has chosen to be one of the brood (and why the brood would let him hang around with them). If the only honest answer is, "Because he's a player character, and so are they," you need to tone down the sources of conflict or pick some meaningfully balancing good qualities.





his grandparents alive? What about extended family — aunts, uncles, and cousins. Who are these people, and does the character still have regular contact with any of them? If so, what are these relationships like? Because of the nature of their Horrors, many Children find themselves isolated from their human kin and unwelcome at family gatherings, but some stay in touch with a few relatives after their Devouring. Quite often these are fellow outcasts and black sheep — the majority of them perfectly ordinary, but one or two might have occult connections of one kind or another.

School Days: Think about the character's education. Don't concentrate too much on what she studied — not yet, at least. Instead, focus on the kids she knew in elementary school. Many Beasts before their Devouring either attract bullies or find themselves becoming bullies themselves, but some nevertheless make friends with other children. What about junior high? High school? Did she go to college? Graduate school? Think of the people she went to school with. Does she maintain any friendships with her peers? Who are they now? Are any of them aware of the supernatural world?

Teachers: Think about the character's educators. Did he have any favorite teachers? Teachers or vice principals who made his childhood a living hell? Many Children were troubled kids or, at the very least, frequently misunderstood by those responsible for their intellectual development. While some who dreamed deeply as kids accepted this as their lot in life or found these experiences watering early cynicism, others deeply cherished any open hand offered to them — whether it was the 5th-grade P.E. teacher who taught him self-defense to help him keep the bullies at bay or the college philosophy professor whose ideas somehow slipped past his defenses to leave a lasting impact on his worldview, in spite of his contact with the Primordial Dream. Does he maintain contact with any of these teachers? Do any of them have a connection to the occult world in which the Beast now finds himself?

Vocation/Career: Does the character have a job currently? If so, what does she do to make ends meet so that she has the physical strength to feed? If not, did she have a career before her Devouring or in the days immediately following it? Was it something she found intellectually stimulating or spiritually satisfying, or did she suffer the same isolation at her place of work that many Children do in all aspects of their lives? Does she have any coworkers she considers friends, and do any of them have contact with other supernatural creatures?

Hobbies: How does the character spend his free time? Does he dabble in special effects make-up? Is he an avid deer hunter? Is he never seen without a book or a sketch pad tucked under one arm? Does he try to balance out the acts

he commits in the service of his Hunger by involving himself in charity work? Does he regularly associate with others who share his hobby? If so, who are those people, and are any of them in the know when it comes to the occult?

Obligations: Does the character have any obligations beyond her Hunger and other necessities required to keep her alive? Is she married? Does she have children, and are they young or grown? Ailing parents or grandparents whose care falls to her? Disabled relatives or comatose friends she needs to look in on from time to time? Does she feel compelled to visit the grave of a friend for whose death she feels responsible (or has vowed to avenge)?

Neighborhood: Where does the character live? Does he own a house? Own or rent a condo or apartment? Squat in an abandoned warehouse at the edge of town? What is the neighborhood like? Does it have a vibrant night life, or is anyone walking down the sidewalk after dark viewed with suspicion? Is it popular among college students, a quiet community of mostly retirees, or a housing development at least 10 minutes' drive from the nearest strip mall or gas station? Is it safe and relatively low in crime, do residents play half-serious games of "gunshots or fireworks," or is it somewhere in between? Who are the characters' neighbors and how much does he interact with them? Is it nary a nod or wave as everyone's garage door opens promptly at 7:30am and they all go to work, do neighbors engage in elaborate exchanges of vegetables from community gardens, or do residents regularly trade profanity and punches in the street? Do any of the neighbors suspect the character's nature (or at least regard him as very odd)? Which of his neighbors does he think have arcane secrets of their own?

Role Models: Does the character admire someone with whom she currently (or previously) associates — perhaps a spiritual leader, a political dynamo, or a fellow Beast who really seems to have his shit together? Does she have a deep respect for a celebrity or icon she has never met? Who are these people? What does she admire about them? Does she actively attempt to emulate them in some way, or is her fascination purely academic?

Secrets: What secrets does the character keep from her broodmates? Are they largely harmless revelations that simply haven't come up in conversation, or are they likely to deeply damage her relationship with the Children closest to her? Are they relatively straightforward causes of shame, or do they require a convoluted tangle of background information to adequately explain? Who else knows her secret, and what are they doing with the information? What would the character do to keep the secret hidden, and what would be the consequences of its coming to light?

Skills: Look at the character's Skills and consider how he acquired them — especially those that have especially

high ratings or those Skills that have a single dot and don't quite match most of his other abilities. How did he learn those skills? Is he an autodidact who largely taught himself by means of extensive study and practice, or did someone show him the ropes and help him hone his skills? Was that single dot in Larceny the result of learning to pick locks over the course of an especially boring summer vacation, or was it a key survival skill among his poor and occasionally criminal circle of friends as a teenager? Did he win an award for his singing as a young man, or has he never really had an audience to speak of? If he had a teacher or fellow students, who were they and what was his relationship with them? Are they all ordinary people, or did some of them have occult connections that the character didn't discover until later?

UNKNOWN QUANTITIES

The players' characters don't know everything about the region or everyone in it. They probably have a broad understanding of the shape of any society other Children may be a part of. They're likely aware of the presence of other kinds of supernatural creatures — particularly ones with a lot of pull in the region. They no doubt keep their ears open for hints that a Hero or an especially well-organized group of monster hunters has begun to operate in the area. And they've certainly heard their fair share of ghost stories, urban legends, and other rumors of occult phenomena that impact the region.

LOCAL CHILDREN

The troupe should consider whether other Beasts live in the region. If the players' characters are the only ones, you can skip this step. If not, how many other Children regularly feed in the area? If it is only a handful, there might not be a local society of Beasts — or else they might each maintain an alliance with other, more numerous supernatural creatures. If the region is large enough or populous enough to support a higher population, the Children might maintain their own society in the region.

Think about the shape that society takes and the purpose it serves. Is it primarily social in nature, or does it function as a kind of governing body? What behaviors does it demand of local Children, which does it frown upon, and which does it forbid? How does it enforce its precepts? Does it reward loyalty (by offering protection from outside threats, for example, or by appointing good citizens to positions of authority), does it encourage compliance primarily by means of social pressure (loss of access to the resources of other Beasts, for example, or official but basically toothless censure), or does it vigorously punish violations of regional laws with banishment, imprisonment, or death?

How involved are the characters in the society of the region's Beasts? Are they partisans or renegades? Do they offer mere lip service, or are they activists among the region's Children?

KIN, MONSTER HUNTERS, AND HEROES

The troupe should discuss what other kinds of supernatural creatures are active in the region. Do they have any allies or enemies among these cousins, or are the ways of other occult societies largely impenetrable to the brood? This can be case by case, as well. The characters might have an understanding with the region's vampires, for example, but have only suspicions about the activities of mages in the area.

For the most part, the specifics of the societies of other supernatural creatures should remain beyond the knowledge of the brood (unless one of the players' characters is one of these kin). Those characters whose Merits reflect a connection to another occult society might have access to a bit more information than her broodmates do, but supernatural creatures rarely share a lot about themselves with outsiders.

Do the players' characters know of Heroes or anyone else currently hunting Beasts or other supernatural creatures in the area? Have any familiar faces in the region suddenly vanished, their disappearances rumored to be the work of monster hunters? Are the Children (or the brood specifically) their main target, or are they mostly interested in some other kind of supernatural creature? What is their M.O. — targeted violence, elaborate cat-and-mouse games, or capture for study?

GHOST STORIES, RUMORS, AND URBAN LEGENDS

The troupe should consider creating local legends and rumors about supernatural phenomena in the region. Take turns telling these like short ghost stories or have players write some likely rumors independently before the chronicle begins. Members of the troupe and the Storyteller can eliminate those that are too far out there even as rumors go to arrive at a page or two of local stories particular to the region. The Storyteller should share the fruits of this bit of brainstorming.

The advantage of these kinds of stories and tidbits is that they don't have to have any bearing on reality. Troupes who find that they enjoy this exercise might even invent more tales as the chronicle progresses — possibly even taking these ghost stories in-character as the Children share their tales with the rest of the brood. The Storyteller should feel free to use the legends she finds inspiring and ignore those she can't fit into the chronicle.





SUPERNATURAL CREATURES AND HUMAN SOCIETY

After deciding which, if any, supernatural creatures you intend to include in your chronicle, it's time to figure out where they'll hold territory and where they are most likely to set their seats of power. No real fast-and-hard restrictions on who may set up shop where exist, but the natures of these creatures tend to influence where they'll live, work, and gather.

Consider also that a region's population isn't going to be composed solely of creatures that are friendly to Beasts. Everyone has their enemies, and those enemies are just as likely to inhabit a region as they are.

HOME GROUND

Most non-human residents of a region are social and political creatures who congregate around resources of interest and areas of shared influence. Some, like mummies and the Created, tend to be solitary or rare, but Beast broods, demonic rings, mage cabals, werewolf packs, vampire coteries, hunter cells, and changeling motleys form naturally for social and defensive purposes. In addition,

each kind of creature in the area should have one or more places they call home ground, a place where they are safe, secure, and in as much control of their environment as they can be.

GOVERNMENT

Unless the region is sparsely populated, mortals in positions of civic responsibility might be influenced in some manner by local supernatural creatures who are willing to devote the time, effort, and resources to do so. Vampires, being meddlesome, political creatures by nature, are the most likely candidates to compromise a local official, but mages, demons, werewolves, and Heroes can also find reasons to co-opt powerful mortals.

UNDERWORLD

In contrast to the government, supernatural creatures tend to be more directly involved with the criminal underworld, as its clandestine nature lends itself to a climate more welcoming to beings whose survival depends on secrecy and privacy.

The underworld is not a single, codified entity; rather, it is a loose grouping of social and business interests that intersect or ignore each other on different levels. Mortal

WORKING BACKWARD

This section on the supernatural assumes the troupe is starting with the players' characters and extrapolating the region's occult influences from their backstories. That's certainly a reasonable approach if the dots are already on the character sheets. Just as common, however, is for the troupe (or Storyteller) to decide on details such as the Apex and which supernatural creatures are present, after which the players develop character concepts in keeping with those parameters.

It can also develop as a sort of conversation: The Storyteller sketches out the region's supernatural inhabitants and mentions a couple of possible set pieces and factions she thinks she might use. The players build characters based on that but also invent factions and hooks of their own, which the Storyteller incorporates into her notes. Then the troupe gets together and weaves the threads into a detailed tapestry of the region.

In other words, don't get too hung up on the order in which collaborative region building proceeds and don't expect that you will include all the aspects we suggest you consider while designing your region. The purpose of this section — and of the supplement as a whole — is to help direct your troupe down creative paths you might not have considered. It is a box of crayons — hopefully one a little larger than the one you've been working with. Some of these colors are familiar to you, their points worn to stubs. Others rarely left your old box, and you don't expect to get a lot of mileage out of them here, either (and that's fine). Some of the new colors won't interest you, but hopefully some of them will turn out to be exactly what you need in sketching out your region.

crime syndicates and black markets, vampiric society and meetings, demon information and intelligence networks, hunter communications boards, the shadowy societies of mages, changelings without a freehold... all of these and more can be considered part of the local underworld.

When developing the seedier side of your region, take some time to consider the kinds of resources available to your non-Begotten denizens, how those resources might be organized, and how those organizations might affect your player characters during the course of the chronicle.

INDUSTRY

Everyone needs a source of income and, for those who can pass as humans, many supernatural creatures find that source of income in the dreaded nine-to-five grind. Mages, demons, changelings, psychics, and ghouls, in particular, might hold down a regular day (or night) job, but many more find gainful employment in the small businesses of their colleagues, or with self-employment through retail-based websites.

ACADEMIA

If your region boasts a college or a university, you might find supernatural creatures of every bent lurking around the campuses. In larger towns and cities, college students become a convenient source for predatory vampires, hungry Begotten, dream-starved Lost and humanity-seeking Created to sate their appetites. In addition, campuses large and small are rich, nurturing environments for certain kinds of mages, demons, and hunters to thrive as students or instructors.

TRANSIENTS

Regions with high traffic in travelers are more likely to see a diverse number of different creatures coming and going. Some are better suited to a solitary, itinerant lifestyle than others by the nature of their kind, like mummies and Created, but virtually every type of supernatural creature has individuals who choose a life of drifting from one place to another over a sedentary existence.


Travelers and drifters might pass through a region for many reasons. Some just like the lifestyle and enjoy seeing new places and meeting new people. Others are constantly on the run from their past, their enemies, or their justice. Some are malicious, sadistic beings who stay in one place just long enough to feed their urges and sate their hungers before moving on to avoid getting caught.

THE APEX

Finally, consider the region's Apex. The Apex is a supernatural creature whose presence shapes the Primordial Dream in the region. Oftentimes this being is among the most powerful occult entities in the region (if not the most powerful). That said, this is less a matter of dots on a character sheet or total Experiences spent than a measure of the creature's impact on the dreams of the region's residents.

The Apex must be something that has fairly regular contact with humans in the region. It must possess and occasionally employ occult powers that terrify people and so echo in the Primordial Dream. Not every Apex is hostile. A few are relatively benign or, at the very least, take reasonable precautions against injuring innocent bystanders. Even





these wield terrible power that is sufficiently supernatural in appearance to provoke breaking points in witnesses, however. Most Apexes have no compunctions about harming or killing humans who get in their way.

Bear in mind that while the players' characters will assuredly know the region's Apex Trait, the Children will not always know the nature or identity of the Apex itself. The troupe should decide on the Apex Trait (subject to Storyteller veto). In some regions, the Apex's influence extends beyond the Primordial Dream, producing regional atmospheric effects or fanning certain human emotions such that the region's populace is noticeably more paranoid or cruel or generous. The troupe should also determine whether the characters know enough about the Apex to sketch out any other details.

If the characters know the Apex's identity, the troupe should establish what they know, suspect, or have heard about it. What type of supernatural creature is the Apex? What is its M.O. or apparent motivation? How long has it held the role, and how did it rise to prominence in the first place? Did it defeat the former Apex, or did it supplant its predecessor by dint of wielding its power more frequently or more visibly where humans could see it?

EXAMPLE CHRONICLE: THE TWINS' CITIES

Aaron is running a **Beast** chronicle for Jenny, Noel, Marc, Rachel, and Jake. Aaron has decided to set the chronicle in the Twin Cities of Minneapolis and Saint Paul, which is where they live. As a high concept, he has determined the position of Apex is continually passing back and forth between two monsters (one in each city) of almost equal influence. This isn't something these supernatural creatures seem to realize is happening. Each seems perfectly content to confine its reign to just one of the two cities. However, every few months the region's Apex Trait abruptly changes, and that has tended to discourage Children from settling there. The players' characters have decided to move into the region. If they can find a way to stabilize the region's Apex Trait (whether by throwing their support behind one of the contenders or seeking an even more powerful monster to elevate), they have a real opportunity to become movers and shakers in the region. Aaron hasn't yet decided who the Apexes are or which other supernatural creatures operate in the region, but he likes running chronicles with lots of different factions for players to interact with, and so he expects to include a fairly large number of occult beings.

FROM HIGH CONCEPT TO REGION-BUILDING

Aaron tells his troupe about the high concept. The players pitch characters to Aaron and discuss their concepts with each other to ensure that everyone has a niche and no one has any quirks or habits that will make it impossible for them to get along with the rest of the brood. The players pick their characters' traits, and most of them write preliminary backstories. They bring all these materials to the region-creation session.

The troupe doesn't need to spend a lot of time discussing the mundane attributes of the region, because it's their home. They know the general character of the two cities and the reputations of its noteworthy neighborhoods, and whatever specifics they don't know they can pretty easily research online.

Normally, Aaron would have the troupe spend a lot more time thinking about who their characters know in the region, but because the high concept assumes they are all outsiders, he keeps this relatively short. Noel's character is as much of an outsider as anyone, but his backstory mentions that a Beast he knew went missing in Saint Paul about a month ago, and part of his motivation in the chronicle is to find out what happened to her.

Rachel's character grew up in the Twin Cities and still has a lot of connections there, but she and Aaron will flesh those out in a separate conversation before the chronicle begins. For the moment, Aaron is using some of the major figures in her backstory as a starting point for the troupe to flesh out local supernatural factions.

Jenny has been busy and didn't have a chance to write a full backstory. Aaron knows she will welcome the troupe's help in putting some flesh on the bones of her character's background.

REFERENCE MATERIALS AND OBJECTIONS

Aaron's troupe has been playing *Chronicles of Darkness* games for a long time. In addition to all the **Beast** books to-date, they have access to the core books for **Mummy**, **Vampire**, **Mage**, **Promethean**, and **Demon**, as well as the **Chronicles of Darkness Rulebook**. They also have a fairly exhaustive collection of **Mage** sourcebooks and all of the first-edition **Hunter** books.

Given the chronicle's focus on the delicate balance of power between the two Apexes, Aaron thinks including the **Arisen** would tip the scales too far. Marc asks that there be less focus on the God-Machine in this chronicle than in the last one, where it was a focal point. Jake knows Aaron has been eyeing the new edition of **Changeling**, but he's

been feeling kind of burnt out on media about the Fae and asks that the troupe not include them in this chronicle.

Rachel's character's backstory specifically calls out a mage as an old college friend and implies that the wizard belongs to the Seers of the Throne (one of the major antagonist factions of that game). She suggests that the Seers dominate in one city, while the Pentacle (the game's protagonist faction) has a strong presence in the other — in keeping with the high concept of a cold war between the two cities. Noel objects that he feels that the Seers are too black hat and suggests that the conflict is instead between the two sub-factions within the Pentacle (the Free Council versus the Diamond Orders).

In addition to these mages, the troupe ultimately settles on a faction of vampires in each city, a small throng of Created (Promethean protagonists) in the suburbs of Saint Paul, some nebulous war between Heaven and Hell taking place in Northeast Minneapolis, and a corporation or government agency that has been harvesting organs from monsters in both cities.

CONNECTIONS

The troupe hashes out connections among the brood. Noel's character used to work with Rachel's, and when he found out she knows the Twin Cities well he asked her to help him find his missing friend. Rachel's character and Jake's character have been running together since soon after their Devourings, and they've been through a lot — including hiding the body of another Beast's victim from the monster hunters investigating the three of them. Marc announces that the third Beast was his character — recently Devoured, starving, and more careless than he should have been. Rachel and Jake took him under their wing. He screwed up again more recently, though, and he's on the run from the victim's husband, who can turn into a monstrous jaguar. Jenny's character has an academic background with several dots of Occult. She decides that her character wants to catch the jaguar monster, but it knows

Miami too well for her to have any chance of success. She hopes that her quarry will track Marc's character to the Twin Cities, where she thinks she will have a better chance of trapping it. Noel's missing friend was in academia, too, so the two agree that his friend was a colleague of Jenny's character.

Aaron teases out some more details about the other characters' connections — particularly anyone who might be in the Twin Cities. In the process, Jenny discovers that luring people into inescapable traps before releasing them unharmed a few days later is her character's preferred method of feeding (she's an Eshmaki with a Hunger for Prey, after all), and capturing supernatural prey is so much more satisfying than chloroforming joggers.

The troupe spends a fair amount of time describing supporting characters they know who might be in or around the Twin Cities and inventing legends for the region (when they're not stealing them from real-world legends) — particularly about creatures of the sort they agreed had a notable presence in the region.

THE APEX

The shifting Apex was a part of the chronicle's high concept, but the troupe hasn't decided on many of the details beyond that. After some discussion, they agree that it's more fun to keep these two supernatural creatures a mystery to be revealed later. It makes sense that they would know the relevant Apex Traits, so they ultimately settle on Extreme Cold and Maze while leaving open the question of which one comes from the creature in which city.

One of the players comes up with a rumor about whichever monster causes the Maze Apex Trait. Apparently this creature has built a sizeable underground labyrinth into which it sends anyone who displeases it. As the victim searches for an exit, water floods the labyrinth until, after about an hour, there is no air left to breathe. No one has ever escaped the labyrinth, and some speculate that it has no exit.





PART TWO PRIMORDIAL DREAM

The Primordial Dream provides an additional layer to the setting of a **Beast** chronicle – one part augmented reality, one part home turf, and one part alien landscape. A Storyteller can use it to create atmosphere, introduce plot hooks, and provide hints about events taking place elsewhere in the region. The three components of the Primordial Dream most likely to feature in a chronicle are the local dreamscape, the Lairs of the Children, and Chambers.

DREAMSCAPE

Waking experiences shape a person's dreams. When enough people watch the same TV show or participate in the same local event or otherwise share an experience that made enough of an impression to inspire dreams, those dreams create an echo in the collective unconscious. That symbol in the collective unconscious then creeps into the dreams of people who did not share the original experience. In this way, humanity is engaged in a constant conversation with its soul.

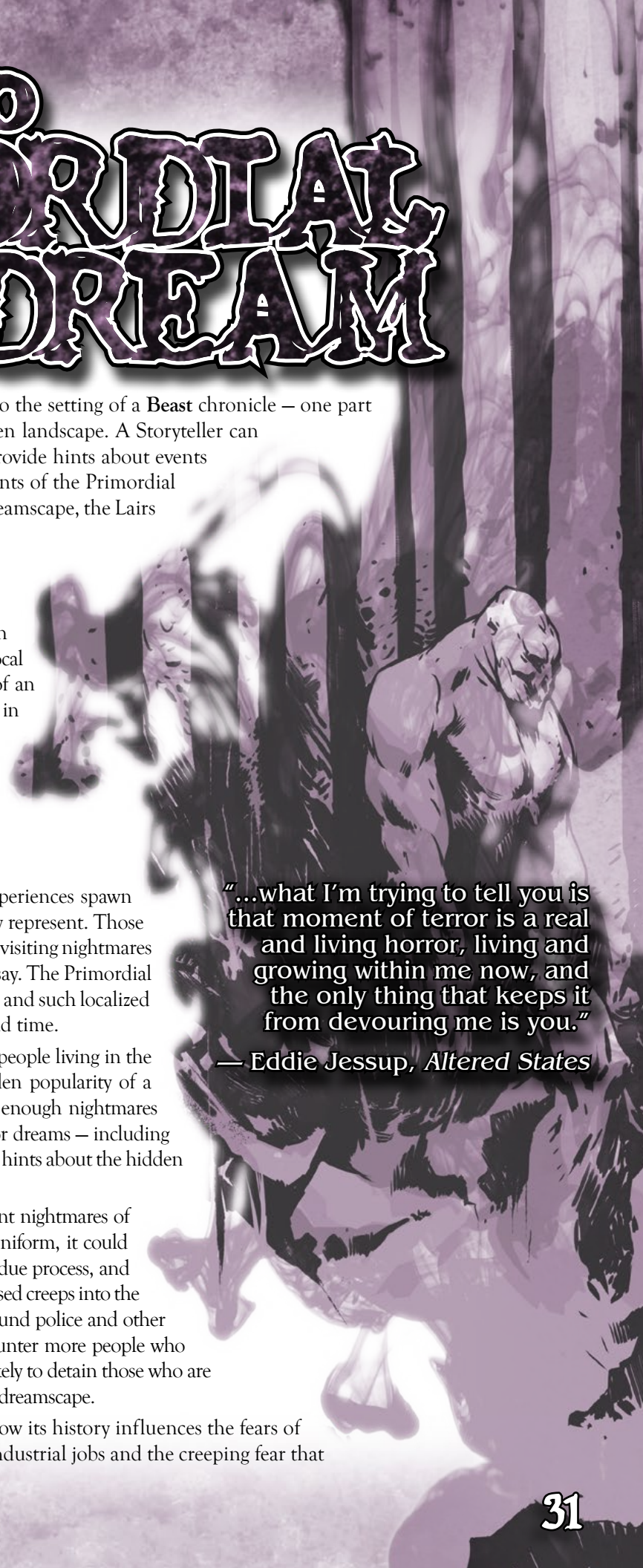
SHARED NIGHTMARES

The same is true of humanity's dreams. Terrifying experiences spawn nightmares, which attract the attention of the Horrors they represent. Those Horrors then feed on the dreams of other people in the area, visiting nightmares on those victims, as well. This is no accident, the Children say. The Primordial Dream helps humanity to survive by teaching people to fear, and such localized nightmares teach them what to fear in the current place and time.

The local dreamscape therefore reflects the fears of the people living in the region. Often this is not especially illuminating. The sudden popularity of a horror movie with especially visceral imagery might spawn enough nightmares to give rise to a Horror, but it doesn't tell those who monitor dreams – including Beasts – anything useful. Sometimes, however, it can provide hints about the hidden atrocities taking place in the region.

For example, if the prisoners in a local jail suffer frequent nightmares of being sentenced to death by a misshapen giant in a police uniform, it could mean that local police have become corrupt or sloppy about due process, and they are jailing innocent people. That fear of being falsely accused creeps into the dreamscapes of other people, and they get more nervous around police and other authority figures. This creates a vicious cycle, as police encounter more people who seem like they're hiding something and are therefore more likely to detain those who are guilty of nothing, further feeding the nightmares of the local dreamscape.

When designing the region's dreamscape, consider how its history influences the fears of its inhabitants. A Rust Belt city might reflect the loss of industrial jobs and the creeping fear that



"...what I'm trying to tell you is that moment of terror is a real and living horror, living and growing within me now, and the only thing that keeps it from devouring me is you."

— Eddie Jessup, *Altered States*

outsiders are taking what few jobs are left, for example. People in a rural area in Tornado Alley live beneath the specter of losing everyone and everything they love to a force of nature that strikes without warning.

MONSTERS AND MEMORIES

Humans learn from an early age not to look too closely when they witness the supernatural. They rationalize away or forget these encounters. Many monsters even possess qualities that prevent witnesses from remembering they saw anything unusual. Moreover, the societies of occult beings universally work to hide their presence, and even monsters with merely animal intelligence tend to avoid humans much of the time.

For example, the man who was in the gas station convenience store that day doesn't remember how the clerk shot lightning from her hands to electrocute the customer who tried to sneak into the employees-only area. Instead, he recalls an armed robbery, with the perpetrator fleeing in a vehicle he can't describe. That sorcerer might have had a friend nearby whose spell erased the victim's memory of the altercation, such that the man only remembers an uneventful trip to buy a gallon of milk and a box of waffles.

Although individual humans forget such unearthly events, their dreams do not. Their nightmares serve as a warning against the situation that inspired them, albeit one more symbolic than literal. The witness to the sorcerous altercation at the roadside gas station doesn't dream of the gas station or the clerk. Instead, he suffers nightmares about a dragon made of lightning that sets fire to the roof of his house or crushes his aging car or otherwise destroys something at home that he knows he should have repaired or replaced months ago. The witness' dragon nightmares encourage him to stay at home for the next couple weekends to work on some long-delayed home improvement projects, and so the Primordial Dream has served its role by using fear to protect the human from another encounter with the gas station wizard.

Such nightmares are not always so straightforward and do not necessarily feature literal monsters. Dreams are about metaphor and symbolism, and the lessons the Primordial Dream teaches can be mundane even if the nightmare it visits on the sleeper is not.

The Primordial Dream is an instinctive defense, not a rational one. Nerve endings cannot distinguish between a knife in the gut meant to kill and the life-saving scalpel cutting away diseased tissue. Both send shockwaves of agony into the brain of the victim, and even if she knows that the scalpel is not a threat she cannot turn off the pain. In the same way, the nightmares of the Primordial Dream offer warnings but no explanations.

As with mundane fears, the nightmares caused by an encounter with the supernatural don't just affect the original victim. They enter the Primordial Dream, as well, and through it infect the nightmares of others — slightly modified each time to evoke the same fear using the tools available in the secondary victim's subconscious.

Nightmares don't always provide as much protection as they once did in societies where people talked about their dreams more and clung to technological talismans less. The witness hires someone to fix his roof and then goes on another road trip. As a result, the fear shapes human behavior slightly but not for a reason that most people can discern. Why is the hardware store so busy? Why have boxes of shotgun ammunition been flying off the shelves? Why has everyone suddenly decided to call their mothers?

As creatures who are in tune with dreams, however, Beasts are better-equipped than most to make sense of these behaviors. Instead of scratching her head over random human responses to unspoken fears, she can peek into the nightmares that inspired them and look for underlying patterns. A sudden plague of nightmares about being chased by an unseen monster through a labyrinthine dream version of a school is perfectly normal in the weeks leading up to annual standardized tests, for example, but it is unusual in the middle of summer vacation.

When designing the region's dreamscape, consider how the activities of supernatural creatures are making an impact on the nightmares of its inhabitants. The Storyteller can start with the supernatural incident or behavior and extrapolate a suitable set of recurring nightmares from there, or he can start by inventing bizarre nightmares and figure out what they mean later. Consider also how people respond to these warnings from the Primordial Dream.

TRAGEDIES AND TRAUMA

Just as several individual incidents in the same region can compound into a measurable current in the Primordial Dream, a single terrifying event that affects a large number of people can also make an impression on the local dreamscape. If a spree shooter strikes a crowded pedestrian mall, for example, anyone who was there is likely to have nightmares. Those nightmares seep into the local dreamscape, and the fears that inspired them will plague the dreams of other people in the region — even those who remain unaware of the event itself.

The pervasiveness of news media can sometimes magnify the effects of such mass trauma even as it masks its effect on the dreamscape. In centuries past, a massacre could haunt the nightmares of its perpetrators or its survivors, but it wasn't thrust into the imaginations of millions of people over the



course of a week of news coverage. The slaughter of a village in the hills several miles away caused people in neighboring villages to dream about man-eating ogres who lived in the hills. They made up stories about the ogres and told them to their children. And they stayed far away from those hills. That particular fear was confined to a couple dozen square miles around the site of the slaughter, however. This was useful in that it meant that a nomadic tribe in modern day Uzbekistan wouldn't experience nightmares meant to keep people in Yucatan away from a cave where an owl monster made its lair.

Constant worldwide news coverage means that people experience nightmares meant for those in faraway places – an immune reaction to a danger that does not apply to them. In this way, freak accidents and small-scale events can lead to irrational terrors. Someone living in the Midwest develops an irrational fear of swimming in rivers and lakes after seeing a news story about a deadly shark attack off the coast of Florida. Even though he knows there are no sharks lurking in Lake Michigan, he simply can't shake the feeling that something lurks beneath the water's surface. Horror motifs in fiction and film have a similar effect – invoking imaginary sources of harm in ways that spawn nightmares that taint the local dreamscape. The constant noise of false fears drowns out the whispers of the Primordial Dream that would fan their fears of real threats that are close to home.

When creating the region's dreamscape, a troupe should discuss what local tragedies have captured the imagination

of its inhabitants with enough force to shape the Primordial Dream. Consider also which recurring nightmares reflect genuine threats and which take their inspiration from fears that belong to other people in a far-off place.

ROVING HORRORS

When an especially well-fed Beast dies, its Horror often lives on in the Primordial Dream as one of the Unfettered. Such entities linger in the region where the creature died, visiting themselves on the dreams of the people who live there. The Unfettered are driven by Hunger and are incapable of fear or discretion. As a result, their predations tend to attract the attention of Heroes, which is bad news for the Beasts who live in the region.

Not all regions have Unfettered in them. The circumstances that make a Beast's transformation into one of these disembodied Horrors possible are not as exacting as those of an Incarnate, but they are by no means common. Consider whether one or more Unfettered feed on the nightmares of the region's inhabitants.

LAIR

A Beast's Lair is both her home and her treasure vault. It is the place where she wields nearly absolute power but also the place where she is most vulnerable to attack.

THE MAP AND THE TERRITORY

Every Chamber in a Beast's Lair (other than her Heart) corresponds with a real-world location. Heroes and rival Children can use that location as a means of ingress to the Beast's Lair. These are also places where someone had a very bad day – bad enough that he either suffered a breaking point or was the victim of an especially effective Nightmare. The troupe should keep this in mind when designing a Beast's Lair.

Some Chambers form around places that see a lot of traffic during certain times of the day, week, or year – the overpass under which two wizards squared off without realizing someone was close enough to watch their magical duel, for example, or the spot in the public park where a new mother watched in horror as dog-faced monsters snatched her baby from his stroller and carried him off to serve the Fae. Such places are often convenient because they make hunting a little easier. During non-peak hours the Beast can easily pull a victim into his Lair to feed his Hunger without needing to lure her into a remote location. At busier times, he can blend in with passersby, briefly call upon his Lair, and then seemingly vanish into the crowd, leaving any pursuer behind. The disadvantage to such high-traffic locations is that it is usually impossible to prevent enemy Beasts from entering them, and using them as the external end of a Primordial Pathway during busy times can attract unwanted attention.

Other Chambers are in remote places where the Beast's victims' cries for help go unnoticed – the basement or attic of an abandoned building, a cave, a forest, or a sewer. These tend to be easy to defend and unlikely for anyone to stumble onto accidentally. They can mean a long hike back to a populous area when it comes time to hunt, however. Beasts can exit their Lairs into another place that has the appropriate resonance, and many of the Children do exactly that. This can become risky if a Hero comes calling, however, because it provides an enemy with another potential entrance to the Lair.

REMOTE CHAMBER

The Burrows that lead from one Chamber to another do not obey physical laws of distance. This makes it possible for a Beast to add a Chamber to her Lair that corresponds to a location hundreds or thousands of miles away from any others she has. A sufficiently clever, well-travelled, and lucky Beast can secure a Chamber that connects to a point in the Astral Realms, the Underworld, or even stranger places (see **Beast: The Primordial**, p. 96). Such far-flung Chambers can offer important advantages.

Local enemies are unlikely to know about a Beast's remote Chamber and would be hard-pressed to reach the physical location even if they had a good guess about where to

find it. For this reason alone they make excellent Chambers to use as inner wards (see below). Furthermore, they can serve as escape routes when the Beast needs to bug out from her current region. When a Hero has breached the Lair and is cutting his way closer to the Beast's Heart, she can retreat to her remote Chamber, sever any connections between it and her other Chambers, and suddenly she is headquartered in another country where the Hero is unlikely to have the resources to pursue her. Is it an extreme measure? Absolutely, but it's better than an Anathema dagger in the chest.

Most young Children can only dream of adding a remote Chamber to their Lairs, as it is no easy process. The Beast must first travel to a suitably far-off place. He must almost certainly do so in the flesh, since traveling to a distant and unknown part of the material world is exceptionally difficult. Once there, he must seek out a suitable Chamber – preferably one that has not yet been claimed by another one of the Children. Living in a foreign country for any length of time has enough challenges, but the Beast must often sink or swim in the local politics of the Children and other Kin. And while navigating language barriers, culture shock, and potentially-hostile residents with occult powers, he must locate and research (or create) a suitable Chamber – all without upsetting anyone enough that they might turn his extraordinarily secure, remote Chamber into an easy access point directly into the Heart of his Lair.

All these problems are even worse when it comes to establishing Chambers in other worlds. Just because Beasts can use any portal by means of Skeleton Key or open up Primordial Pathways that lead to the Temenos and stranger places doesn't grant them immunity to the hazards of extradimensional travel. Not only can these realms' natives prove just as hostile to a Beast as any human community, most possess Numina and Influences to back up that hostility. A Beast must weigh the advantages of having a Chamber linked to the Underworld against the risk that an angry chthonian will execute him for breaking some obscure Old Law.

Some Children less concerned with teaching lessons than with maximizing their personal security find ways to cheat when creating a remote Chamber. The Beast kidnaps an ordinary human and takes him to some suitably remote location – to the top of a high mountain, for example, or deep into a trackless desert. She then tortures and torments him, visiting Nightmares upon him until he finally breaks down enough to make the spot ready to serve as a Chamber. The Beast then murders her victim and incorporates the Chamber into her Lair. Sometimes the victim is a terrible human being arguably deserving of some form of punishment. Most aren't, however, and even the most despicable piece of human garbage probably deserves a better end than being tortured to death in a cave five miles beneath the Earth's surface.

HIVE TRAIT

Every region has an Apex, and every Apex imposes a Hive Trait on all the Chambers within its territory. If the Apex is a Beast, the Hive Trait usually matches one of its Lair Traits. Otherwise, it reflects something essential about the Apex's nature and powers. A vampire could have the Poor Light or Darkness Hive Trait, for example, while a Promethean's could be Stench or Electrified.

At times, the Hive Trait might be at odds with the brood's Lair Traits. A Flooded mountaintop eyrie might seem like a contradiction in terms, after all. In these cases, troupes need to exercise a little creative license. The mechanical effect of the Hive Trait is more than its literal expression. A Flooded mountaintop might be covered in a deep blanket of snow, for example — one whose cold aspect is strangely absent but that makes traveling on foot difficult and slow. And in truth, just as dreams don't always make sense, neither do all Hive Traits. Sometimes a Flooded mountaintop eyrie manages to be under three feet of water in defiance of mundane physics.

The Children do not enjoy an immunity to the Hive Trait as they do to their own Lair Traits. In some cases, this is hardly more than a mild inconvenience. Swarms of cockroaches that gum up machinery and open terrain where no one enjoys the benefits of cover can actually be an advantage even if they affect the Beast, in fact. Most Hive Traits can cramp the Beast's style at least occasionally, however, and some Major Traits can render what the Children normally consider a safe place dangerous even to them. A Lair where everything is on fire is great for a dragon, for example, but it is a serious problem for a frost giant.

Children who find their region engulfed by an exceedingly-difficult Hive Trait don't have a lot of options. Killing the Apex is certainly one, but this isn't often a good idea. An Apex holds that title because it is the strongest, toughest, and most powerful supernatural creature in the region — and that's just the ones that kick up Minor Traits. Major Traits are much more likely to annoy local Children, but any Apex that imposes a Major Trait on the Chambers of the surrounding Hive is exceptionally powerful. Such a creature is likely more powerful even compared to the Apexes of all the surrounding regions.

Helping another monster topple the Apex is another option. This is slightly less dangerous than going toe-to-toe with it personally, and the new Apex might be grateful to the Children who put it in power. Then again, it might also regard them as potential threats to its newfound dominance.

Moving away is always a possibility, but not one Beasts exercise lightly. A new region means unfamiliar territory — both in the literal, physical sense and in terms of the social

and political landscape of the Kin who live there. This is more likely to stay on the table if things are already so bad for the Beast that an oppressive Hive Trait is the last straw.

The easiest and simplest solution is to go with the flow by purchasing the same Lair Trait at the next opportunity. This allows the Beast to ignore the deleterious effects of the Hive Trait, which may feel like surrender but is quite often the only practicable solution to the problem. It is not unusual in regions with an especially harsh Hive Trait for most or all Children to implement this adaptation. This tends to work in the Apex's favor, because many Beasts would rather endure the Lair Trait they never wanted but that no longer actively harms them than risk the possibility that the next Apex's Hive Trait will be even more disruptive.

INVADING HEROES AND HORRORS

Beasts are not the only ones who haunt the Primordial Dream. Roaming Horrors, invading Heroes, wandering mages, and other Astral travelers can all make their way into the Lair of one of the Children.

The Horrors of starving rivals can wander far afield in search of sustenance, and sometimes their paths take them into the Lairs of other Children. A Beast is strongest in his own Lair, true, but a powerful enemy Horror can still be a threat, and even a weak one might prove an ill-timed distraction if it makes its way into the Beast's Heart.

Many Heroes have ways of entering a Beast's Lair — and not just the Lair of the Beast that made them what they are. Once there, these killers collapse Chambers, harry the resident Horror, and take aim at the Heart of the Lair. While some Beasts hold Heroes in contempt, only fools discount their threat entirely.

Some mages have means of entering the Oneiros of others, and a few stumble into Lairs during these Astral journeys. Such warlock explorers run the gamut from largely-harmless tourists and unwelcome guests to over-curious investigators and dangerous invaders. Mages capable of entering a Lair through the Primordial Dream likewise possess powers that can ward off or even destroy a Horror — especially if the Beast underestimates them.

Certain natives of the Astral Realms occasionally slip into Lairs, as well. The majority play by the same rules as the Horror, and while many are no match for it in its Lair, some powerful ones can damage or kill it. Stranger beings from yet more alien worlds, on the other hand, frequently do not play by the rules of the Children and their Horrors, but that makes them no less dangerous on those rare occasions that they find themselves in a Lair.

None of this discounts the threat other Children present to a Beast's Lair. After all, they have the means to

forcibly join their Lairs to another Beast's. Whether the motive is conquest or obliteration, they of all creatures understand how Lairs work — their purpose, strengths, and vulnerabilities.

MAPPING THE BROOD LAIR

A successful assault on her Heart can be fatal, and so every Chamber serves as an additional layer of security against that eventuality — another decoy to prevent intruders from reaching the Heart. A Beast has an upper limit to the number of Chambers she may incorporate into her Lair, however. A brood Lair, on the other hand, can greatly increase the size of the Lair and the protection it affords — just as long as the Beast can trust the Children who share her Lair.

Creating a defensible Lair isn't just a matter of creating the longest possible string of Chambers leading to the Hearts of the brood. Each Chamber corresponds to a physical place in the world, and Heroes and Children alike can use that location to access the Chamber. A fortress with a dozen layers of sturdy stone walls is useless if an invader can simply sneak in through a tunnel that leads directly into the innermost layer.

Front Gate: Many broods select a single Chamber as their Lair's front gate. Whenever possible, the Beasts enter and exit through that Chamber, which corresponds with a physical location that is conveniently located, well hidden, and defensible. Quite often the brood will fortify the area on the exterior of the front gate to their Lair with a mundane security system and traps. This is likely to be the first place enemies attack, since it has a clear connection to the Lair. While it might seem like a potential liability, or certainly a significant limitation, maintaining front gate discipline has advantages. First, investigators, monster hunters, and Heroes who are less familiar with Beasts might assume that it is the sole entrance to the brood's Lair. This is a potentially fatal conclusion to reach when the brood actually has eight or more Chambers at its disposal.

If the brood doesn't share many Lair Traits, or if its members can spare a Chamber apiece, it is sometimes helpful to make the Front Gate a shared Chamber. This makes the front door especially inhospitable to intruders, more accessible to the brood (even if some of its resonance has been stripped away by circumstances), and offers more options when defending the exterior access point to the Chamber.

Back Door: Some broods also manufacture a physical location that resonates with their Lair but does not correspond with any place used to create a Lair. Like the front gate, a back door leads to the Chamber on the outermost edge of the Lair. However, because the Children have complete control over its location in the physical world, it is frequently easier to defend

than one left to the vagaries of circumstance. True, the front door remains vulnerable, but the Beast who routinely enters and leaves his Lair through a specially-built room in a sturdy building surrounded by a high wall, monitored by a security system, and laid out as a trap-filled maze has fewer worries about a Hero following him home than one who routinely enters his Lair by way of an abandoned building in a neighborhood the police don't even bother to patrol.

Inner Ward: While each Beast who shares a Lair could connect his Heart to a different Chamber, doing so blunts two of the main advantages of a shared Lair — its capacity for layered security and its ability to obscure the location of the Hearts by throwing up additional Chambers as decoys. For this reason, a brood whose members trust each other enough often places all its Hearts in a cluster around a single, heavily defended Chamber known as the inner ward.

The inner ward is typically a shared Chamber in order to make it as dangerous as possible for invaders. Beasts usually choose the Chamber that has the most remote and inaccessible physical location. Entering or leaving the Lair by means of the inner ward is among the worst possible blunders, since this can lead a Hero straight to the Beasts' Hearts.

Mountaintop Structure: Some shared Lairs are little more than a series of Chambers leading from the front door to the Beasts' Hearts. This carries some risks even for a brood that practices good front door discipline, since every Chamber can still be accessed through its location in the physical world by anyone with the ability to open Primordial Pathways. That aside, there is something to be said about forcing enemies to contend with layer after layer of Chambers. It means even a well-prepared antagonist has a long road ahead of him, giving the Beasts and their Horrors more time to respond to the invasion before their Hearts come under attack. A common tactic in such cases is to place nearby, less defensible Chambers closer to the front door and to reserve especially-inaccessible ones for the innermost wards.

Labyrinth Structure: A second common structure for shared Lairs is to connect every Chamber to the front door, to the inner ward, and to every other Chamber in the Lair. While this means a lucky enemy could reach the Hearts by simply clearing the front door and passing through two other Chambers, this is unlikely — especially if the Burrows leading to the inner ward are much better-hidden than those leading to other Chambers or to the front door. An invader lost in a labyrinthine Lair could wander its Chambers forever and never reach the Hearts. Mounting evidence that he is wandering around in circles — returning to Chambers he has already visited several times — can dishearten an intruder, and some Beasts consider that element of psychological warfare well worth a statistically-improbable risk. Finally, it offers more freedom to use back door Chambers without

compromising multiple layers of Lair security in the process. An intruder might initially avoid the inconvenience of the front door, but she isn't able to "skip" three or four chambers along the road to the Hearts. This structure has one final disadvantage, however, which is that it costs a lot of Satiety to create so many Burrows.

Lair Trait Selection: The ability to manifest Lair Traits in resonant locations can be useful to lone Children sating their Hungers among ordinary people, but they can mean the difference between victory and defeat when the brood must face an enemy that requires them to work together just to survive the encounter. The more Lair Traits the brood can bring into play, the greater their advantage. Choosing a Lair Trait that resonates with an environment that occurs frequently in the material world (such as Echoing or Darkness) or that the Beast can easily create (such as Fog or Stench) gives him more opportunities to call upon other Lair Traits.

Similar advice holds true when building a shared Lair. In this case it also helps if broodmates share Lair Traits. If several have the Fog trait, for example, they might develop a tactic that involves carrying and lighting smoke bombs when they run into trouble, which then allows them to bring other, more devastating Lair Traits into play. As an added advantage, any of them with the Fog trait suffers no impairment from the obscuring effects of the smoke.

Taking this to an extreme, a brood made up of established Beasts could even "daisy chain" their Traits. One with Fog and Stench takes advantage of a cloud of mist or smoke to bring the horrid smell into the environment, for example. Then an ally with Stench and Electrified uses that odor to create electrical hazards in the area. A third Beast with Electrified and Extreme Heat uses those hazards to impose stifling heat. A fourth Beast with both Extreme Heat and Fog need not do anything additional, but if the first Beast had been unable to impose Stench, she could have started the chain of Environmental Tilts, instead. The Lair Traits must make sense for each Beast, of course, but some strategic selection can make the brood a force to be reckoned with.

CHAMBER

Within the context of a **Beast** chronicle, Chambers serve several purposes — some narrative, others mechanical. They are set pieces, prizes, and constant reminders of the horrors that lurk in the shadows.

SCARS IN THE PRIMORDIAL DREAM

Any ordinary person's encounter with a supernatural creature has the potential to create a Chamber. No mere handshake from a vampire will suffice, however. It must be

an occasion so momentous that it shakes the mortal down to his very soul. The event strips away all delusions that occult powers are nothing but stories and obliterates the pretense that humanity has tamed the Earth and everything in it. A Chamber is the memento of an object lesson: This one strayed into the shadows, and a part of him (if not all of him) was lost as a consequence.

Whether or not the victim walked away from the encounter — nor even whether he *remembers* it — the Chamber remains. It marks the Primordial Dream like a wound that has scabbed over. Like a scab, it will gradually slough off and fade, leaving a faint scar on humanity's collective unconscious.

A region's Chambers serve as a reminder that supernatural creatures lurk in the darkness. They measure the impact the Kin have on the people who live in a region. Some areas have only a few Chambers — either because only a few occult horrors dwell there or because the monsters have done a good job hiding from view. Others have many Chambers, telling a tale of either a large number of monsters or a handful of monsters who don't care how much attention their predations attract.

Similarly, the age of local Chambers hints at trends. Most regions have a relatively-even distribution of new and old Chambers, which shows a measure of stability in local supernatural activity. This doesn't tell the whole story, of course. A savage war for territory might not create any Chambers if both sides carefully avoid bringing their fight to places where ordinary humans might witness the battles. However, the steady creation of Chambers throughout such shadow wars shows that any power ceded by one faction is consistently seized by another.

A region where most of the local Chambers have all but faded hints at either a recent collapse of the population of supernatural creatures in it or a seismic shift in their behavior toward greater caution and secrecy. In rare cases this might be a consequence of some internal crisis or catastrophe. A high-level betrayal among local changelings leads to dozens of them being snatched up by the masters they escaped, for example, or the mummy that was the region's Apex returned to slumber, leaving a power vacuum that no one has filled, yet. More often, though, humans are to blame for such major dips in supernatural encounters. The proliferation of monster hunts — sometimes, but not always, led by Heroes — can have a profound impact on the number of new Chambers in a region.

On the other hand, a region that sees a spike in new Chambers warns of increased contact between humanity and Kin. Perhaps a shadow war between factions turned into a shooting war, and people are getting caught in the crossfire. Maybe a handful of Kin have grown especially reckless. Possibly one of the Rampant or some other mindless monster incapable of considering the consequences of its

behavior was unleashed on the area.

Quite often, however, a spike in paradigm-altering encounters with the occult reflects an abrupt increase in the population of supernatural beings. Some events swell the population from within — such as vampires creating more vampires or a mysterious convergence of arcane pressures that causes more mages to awaken to their power than is usual. Others result from sudden influxes of new arrivals from places beyond the region's boundaries — whether because some supernatural event in the area drew them to it or because something drove them out of a nearby region where they resided previously. A handful of regions even experience natural occult cycles that affect how readily moments of human terror generate new Chambers.

Any sudden increase or decrease in the number of new Chambers should concern the region's Children. Dips often mean threats that could endanger all the Kin in the area — including its Beasts — or herald the emergence of a new Apex capable of enforcing secrecy among those living in its territory. Spikes are even more alarming, because regions with many Chambers attract Heroes like freshly-spilled blood draws sharks or rotting meat brings maggots and flies.

SET PIECES

An immutable law of Chambers is they cannot simply appear anywhere. They are only born in places with qualities that resonate with one or more Lair Traits. This means that an Environmental Tilt gripped the physical location during the event that spawned the Chamber. Perhaps the attack took place during a violent storm (Downpour) or while the house burned down around the victim (Burning). In many cases, however, the Environmental Tilt persists after the fact.

Frequently, this quality has a mundane explanation. The space under the bridge echoes. The cave is dark. The chamber at the sewage processing station smells unspeakably foul. In other cases, it's firmly supernatural. That part of the basement is unnaturally cold; even on the hottest day of summer you can see your breath. No matter how many times they sweep that alley, anyone walking down it cuts himself on a broken bottle or steps on a rusty nail.

A Chamber isn't an ordinary place. It is a set piece — an interesting location worthy of a visceral description. One that has a lingering Environmental Tilt (whatever its nature) provides a starting point when thinking about its design and surrounding environs. A Chamber formed on a foggy night might look innocuous to ordinary people on a sunny day, but a Beast recognizes it for what it is. The songs of the birds sound desperate to her ears. The perfectly-manicured grass feels somehow sick, even though it looks just fine to anyone else.

Quite often, the creature that inadvertently spawned a Chamber still haunts the area, and so a confrontation with it might very well take place in the same spot. This is doubly true for a rival Beast who has added the Chamber to his Lair. Such a place is a potential point of entry, but it is also the home turf of an enemy. Either way, any confrontation that takes place in the physical location of a Chamber could reflect its nature and the circumstances that created it.

Remember also that even an unclaimed Chamber exists within the local Hive and connects to others via Primordial Pathways. Whereas the Chambers of a Beast's Lair are home and those of an enemy Beast are hostile territory, unclaimed Chambers can run the gamut between the two extremes, and a visitor never knows what she will encounter when she enters one. They can make for exotic locations haunted by alien entities. An enemy capable of using Primordial Pathways might flee into one, hoping its nightmarish landscape is harsher for the players' characters than for her. The brood might also use a similar tactic against an enemy they dare not lead into a shared Lair. Walking into an unclaimed Chamber can also provide hints about the event (or events, in the case of Chambers formed by compounding moments of horror) that spawned it — even if the Beast's initial investigation of it failed.

PUZZLE BOXES

Every Chamber has the potential to be added to a Beast's Lair, but unless the Beast was present at the moment of genesis she must first identify what happened and what supernatural creature was involved. A Beast's preliminary investigation only provides the first clues about the event (see **Beast: The Primordial**, p. 95). Before she can incorporate the Chamber into her Lair, she must uncover more details. This process might entail anything from research in a library with a substantial collection of occult lore, to examining the victim to interviewing other Kin in the area, to capturing the monster responsible, or even entering the Chamber through a Primordial Pathway and looking for clues there.

Any of these methods of uncovering a Chamber's secrets can be a story in itself. A Chamber is a riddle or puzzle for the Beast who wishes to add it to her Lair. The story behind its creation also fleshes out the region and the world in which the Children live. Even if the brood has no natural curiosity about the tenor of the region's supernatural activity and inhabitants as hinted at by its Chambers, they might discover some important plot points in the course of studying one they wish to add to a Lair.

PRECIOUS TREASURES

In some ways a Beast is its Lair. Every Chamber she incorporates into it increases her chances of surviving an invasion into this most sacred of inner sanctums. A

larger Lair also serves as proof of a Beast's power among other Children. An old Beast with only a few Chambers proclaims to all that either she has been lax in claiming territory or she has suffered a major setback that destroyed many of the Chambers she once possessed. Either way, it means she is not as powerful as she might claim to be, and some Beasts will take such evidence of weakness as an invitation to seize her other Chambers by force – to increase their own power and prestige among the Children.

Although the number of catalysts for creating a Chamber is potentially infinite, they are hardly commonplace. Densely populated regions might produce more Chambers, but they also tend to attract more Children. Sometimes claiming a new Chamber comes down to being in the right place at the right time – at the time and place of its creation. No Beast can reliably produce Chambers, however, and those who attempt to do so by repeatedly seeking out new victims to terrify tend to attract monster hunters and Heroes, instead. Luck always plays a role in the process.

In areas where many Beasts operate, Chambers are prizes to fight over. Sometimes such competition is a race – such as when two Beasts attempt to learn enough about the same Chamber in order to add it to their Lairs. Other times it is a game of king of the hill as the competitors physically occupy the Chamber to prevent rivals from seizing it before they can complete the process of researching and assimilating it. In both cases, competition can turn violent as rivals sabotage, intimidate, or attack each other.

In regions with a low population of Children and a good selection of Chambers, successfully incorporating a Chamber usually puts an end to any rival's ambitions. In regions where Chambers are rare, however, battles for initial control frequently escalate into wars of conquest. The loser attempts to incorporate the Chamber into his own Lair, as well, joining the Lairs and forcing his rival to choose between fighting the invader, inviting him to share her Lair, or severing the connection. An especially desperate Beast seeking to expand her Lair will even kill a rival who shares her Lair Trait in hopes of claiming one of his Chambers afterward.

A Beast can only claim a Chamber that has a Trait that matches that of her Lair. For this reason, Children who share Lair Traits can become fierce competitors for Chambers. On the other hand, those who have no such Traits in common are unlikely to come into conflict – at least not over their control of Chambers. The more Traits a Chamber naturally possesses, the more the Beasts in the region will covet it. A Chamber with only the Extreme Heat Trait is only valuable to Beasts who have the Extreme Heat Lair Trait, for example, while one with the Extreme Heat, Steam, and Burning Traits is a prize for any Beast with at least one of those Lair Traits.

ASSEMBLING THE PRIMORDIAL DREAM

As with the region building of Chapter One, the Storyteller and players should work together to design the local Primordial Dream. The rest of this chapter discusses some considerations your troupe should bear in mind, so now we're going to ask a number of questions to help you put the pieces together to build your own local Primordial Dream.

DREAMSCAPE

Consider the local dreamscape to answer some of the following questions together. For each one, the person answering the question might describe *either* the cause, how it reflects in the dreamscape, or what impact it has had on the behavior of residents. It tends to be less interesting if the players know all the variables of the equation upfront.

Each troupe can approach the process of building a dreamscape in whatever makes the most sense to them, but here are some simple approaches:

Areas of Expertise: Every player creates and fleshes out at least one aspect of the region's dreamscape. Some Storytellers will limit this to just one of each. Others will set a higher maximum number. A player's character doesn't *necessarily* know about these, but it is often a good practice to assume that she has some awareness of most or all of them. First, this makes it a little easier to keep player knowledge vs. character knowledge from becoming an issue. Primarily, though, it serves as a way to reward players who are willing to put extra effort into building the setting for the chronicle. If the troupe wishes to emphasize cooperation among the brood, they may choose to share all this information. If they would prefer to assume that all the Children keep some secrets from each other, it is wholly appropriate to limit sharing until the inevitable moment when the information becomes important to the plot. Both can be fun, but the Storyteller and players should be on the same page. If the details are kept secret, the Storyteller should mediate to ensure that players don't choose to flesh out the same aspect of the dreamscape, as well as to iron out any contradictions that emerge.

Shared Lore: Each player answers a single question about the region's dreamscape. For example, a player might choose an interesting historical event she feels would have impacted the region's nightmares. The troupe then passes the descriptions around the table, and each player answers another question about that aspect of the dreamscape. The Storyteller might include herself or may choose to act as a moderator to throw in suggestions if someone gets stuck.

This continues until each setting detail is fleshed out to the troupe's satisfaction. As with the first method, the Storyteller might ask the players to repeat this process until she feels that they have created enough juicy hooks for her to build into her chronicle's dreamscape.

Combination: If the Storyteller intends for her players to add a lot of the detail to the dreamscape, she could combine the two approaches above. Each player chooses and fleshes out a couple of elements of the region's dreamscape, but they also participate in the cooperative dreamscape design for other aspects.

Some questions about the mundane causes for the region's nightmares:

- What larger historical events have shaped the region's nightmares?
- Describe a famous crime that was committed in the region – one that all the locals can tell you about.
- Are there specific locations in the region that are associated with nightmares?
- What upcoming events (holidays, high-profile trials, etc.) are currently affecting nightmares in the region?
- Are there mundane organizations or figures (police, politicians, trade unions, etc.) that are currently impacting the dreamscape?

- What natural phenomena (floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, etc.) affect the dreamscape?

- Have any local current events (unexplained kidnappings, a terrorist attack, etc.) made an impression on the nightmares in the region?

- What nightmares have newcomers from neighboring communities brought into the region with them?

- What works of popular horror film, TV, or fiction are fueling local nightmares? Don't forget to include internet phenomena such as creepypasta stories.

- Which events outside of the region have inspired nightmares due to media coverage of them?

Some questions about the effects of supernatural creatures and events on the region:

- Which supernatural creatures are making the significant impact on the region's nightmares?

- Which conflicts between differing factions in the occult community have begun to play out in the region's dreamscape as innocent bystanders get caught in the crossfire?

- Which noteworthy behavior or tactic of a local supernatural creature or group has made its way into the local dreamscape?



- Who or what is the Apex, and how does she manifest in the nightmares of the region (beyond the Hive Trait)?

- Describe one local ghost story or other tale of horror that everyone in the region knows but that virtually no one outside of it has heard.

- Has the region ever experienced a large-scale supernatural event that they have forgotten?

- Is there a unique or unusual supernatural phenomenon in the area that twists or informs the local dreamscape?

- Describe a supernatural creature or organization that used to operate in the area but doesn't anymore. Who or what were they? What made them memorable among the Children? What mystery surrounds their death or disappearance?

- Does anyone in the region dream deep? Who are they?

- Does anyone in the region experience nightmares that are utterly alien – not a part of the Primordial Dream or anything the Beasts can readily classify?

- Has anyone in the area ever produced a fictional work of horror that has drawn the attention of a Horror? Has a Horror ever inspired someone in the region to create such a work?

Finally, some questions about any Unfettered that might haunt the region. If multiple Unfettered lurk in the area, these questions could apply to any of them:

- Who was the Unfettered before he underwent the Retreat? Was the Beast a minor player or a force to be reckoned with – one whose name no one even remembers or one that still causes local Children to shudder or whisper in awe? To which Family did he belong? What was his Hunger, and how did he prefer to feed his Horror? Did he have any noteworthy allies, rivals, or enemies who might still be around? What Atavisms and/or Nightmares did he favor? Are there records of his feeding behaviors – newspaper articles about people always getting lost in the forest west of town and showing up a week later, wild-eyed and emaciated, perhaps?

- How did the Unfettered die? Who or what killed her – a Hero, a fellow Beast, some other supernatural creature, a mundane monster who got lucky, a bizarre accident, or her own hand? Did the method of her death impact her behavior as one of the Unfettered? Does the Unfettered have a known

Bane – the Anathema used to kill her or some other cause of death?

- What is the role of the Unfettered in the chronicle? Is she a force of nature that the Brood must endure? Is she a de facto enemy only because the Heroes she creates threaten all Children in the region? Is she an old antagonist who retains a spark of malice toward the characters or has she developed a taste for foiling those Beasts who have not yet surrendered their flesh?

LAIR AND HIVE

Discuss the Hive and the characters' Lair (or Lairs, if they don't have a shared Lair). Unlike the dreamscape, creation of a Hive and shared Lair tends to work better when arrived at by consensus. Individual players can decide on their characters' Lair Traits, but, as we mentioned earlier, it is often advantageous to cooperate on these if the brood does or eventually will share a Lair.

- Who or what is the Apex, and what is the Hive Trait it imposes on the Hive? How does the brood cope with the Hive Trait? Have they adapted their Lair Traits to it, is it only a mild annoyance, or is it a serious problem for them?

- Does the brood currently share a Lair, or do they maintain separate Lairs? If the Lair is shared, how have the Beasts joined them together – shared Chambers or links via Burrows? Whose Chambers are whose for the purpose of Lair Traits, and what are those Lair Traits?

- Map out the Lair, especially if it is a shared Lair. How has the brood structured it to protect their Hearts from enemies? Is it a mountaintop or a labyrinth? Do they use an established front gate, or are they less disciplined about their comings and goings? Do they maintain a back door for use when the front gate is unavailable or disadvantageous? Does the Lair have a shared inner ward as a last line of defense for the Hearts, or are the Beasts' Hearts scattered throughout the Lair? What makes the inner ward Chamber especially defensible? Is its physical location heavily fortified, well-hidden, or far beyond the boundaries of the region?

- If the Lair is shared, how long ago did the brood join their Lairs together? What were the circumstances that prompted such sharing – a happy accident (or at least grudgingly accepted), a tactical alliance, or an invasion that turned friendly to address a mutual threat? If they have shared a Lair for quite some time,

have there been any notable events in the intervening time — such as invading Heroes, unexpected visitors, or bizarre interactions between the Beasts' Horrors?

- Consider the individual Chambers of the Lair (including its Hearts). Answer the questions in the Chambers section below. Keep in mind the connection between the Beast and the Chambers of her Lair — how her Lair Traits, Family, and Hunger might manifest in the physical world and in the Primordial Dream. How did each Chamber come into the Beast's possession? Was she in the right place at the right time, did her actions create it, or did she edge out one or more competing Beasts to incorporate it? Are all the Chambers local, or does the brood have one or more far-flung Chambers? If the brood has Chambers outside of the region, how did it acquire them and did the Beasts make enemies in the process?
- What dangers to the Lair lurk in the region's Primordial Dream? Are there active Heroes or hints that a Hero has begun to operate in the area? Does the Horror of a starving Beast roam the Hive? Do local mages, demons, werewolves, or other occult wanderers of alternate worlds explore the Primordial Dream? Has an entity from the Astral Realms — or a yet stranger otherworldly being — found its way into the Primordial Dream? Do unfamiliar, rival, or enemy Beasts have designs to conquer or destroy the brood's Lair, and who are they?

CHAMBER

Chambers are self-contained locations in both the physical world and its dreamscape. Any of the methods of designing elements of the Dreamscape (see above) apply to Chambers, as well. However, it is usually a good idea to limit the total number of player-defined Chambers to the number of players in the group — whether that means each player defines one or that the players take turns adding details to the four or five Chambers they are designing together. If the brood consists of Children who are outsiders or new arrivals in the area, it might make sense to greatly limit how much input the players have in developing the region's Chambers.

Start with the general considerations:

- What is the region's Chamber density? Are they common, uncommon, or rare? Are most of them claimed by other Beasts, or do unclaimed Chambers dot the landscape? Are they denser in some parts of the region than in others, and if so, is there an obvious explanation for that discrepancy?

- Is the total number of unclaimed Chambers relatively static, or has the area seen a pronounced increase or decrease in the number of new Chambers created in the last month, year, or five years? Is it clear why — rising conflict between factions, increased population of supernatural creatures (whether internal or due to immigration), human activity (including Heroes), occult cycles, or something else?

Consider the Chamber as it appears in the dreamscape:

- What are its Traits, and how do they manifest within the context of the dreamscape?
- How does it look beyond the mechanics of its Traits? How large or small is it? How many Burrows lead into and out of it, and what lies at the other end of these corridors in the Primordial Dream? Does it have weather patterns, recurring inhabitants, or noteworthy patterns of color, sound, or light? Does it have too many moons, not enough stars, rivers of blood, or other strange details of the landscape that betray its alien nature and nightmarish aspect?

Think about the Chamber's physical location:

- Describe the location. What is the first thing a visitor notices about it? Does it have a distinctive odor, visible clues about the event that created it, or a faint rumbling noise? Does looking at it make the blood go cold? Does standing in it cause the hairs on the back of the neck to stand up? Or does it seem altogether too ordinary?
- Describe the location's surrounding environs. Is it in a bad neighborhood, an upper-class neighborhood, a seedy industrial part of town, or in a busy part of downtown? Does that neighborhood have a history of supernatural encounters, or is this Chamber part of an isolated phenomenon? Are there other Chambers nearby? How easy is would it be to hide, fortify, or defend the Chamber from rival Beasts and other enemies?

- Does the Chamber's Trait manifest in the physical location? If so, is it an active presence or just a residue — such as the burnt-out husk of a house that marks the spot with a Chamber that has the Burning Trait?

Consider the history of the Chamber:

- What supernatural creature created the Chamber, and if the monster is still at large, what are its nature, motivation, and habits? What happened during the Chamber's genesis? Did the victim survive, and if so, who is he, where is he now, and how did the experience affect him?

- How old is the Chamber? If it isn't new, why has no Beast claimed it for her Lair, yet? Have other supernatural encounters occurred in the same place before or since the Chamber's genesis? If so, what were they? Does the Chamber possess any particularly confounding mysteries or hazards that have thus far prevented it from being incorporated into a Lair?
- Who wants the Chamber, or would if they knew about it? Does it have a Trait none of the region's Children share, or does it have Traits that make it an excellent addition to any Beast's lair? Are two or more Beasts actively contesting control of the Chamber? If so, is this contest best characterized as a race, a game of king of the hill, or an invasion of one Beast's Lair by another of the Children?

EXAMPLE: THE TWINS' CITIES

Riffing off the twin Apex concept, the troupe decides that the local dreamscape also shifts back and forth between the two monsters at the top of the Twin Cities' supernatural food chain. For one, it is dreams of bitter cold – blizzards, blinding snow fields, frostbite, howling wind, and being unable to get warm even when standing before a roaring fire or at the lip of a live volcano. When the other Apex is dominant, local dreams emphasize being hopelessly lost in a flooded cave system where deep pools of water and pockets of noxious fumes threaten suffocation.

Unlike the Apex Trait, when the two monsters approach equal influence over the Primordial Dream, the dreams they inspire bleed into one another. The underground river is instead a lake covered in a sheet of thin ice that collapses, plunging the dreamer into freezing water. Trapped under the ice, the victim's only hope is to find the hole they fell through before they succumb to hypothermia or drown in the icy water. Or else the dreamer finds herself wandering through waist-deep snow during a blizzard while dressed in her pajamas – aware that a warm, dry, safe place waits for her somewhere in the howling storm but unable to find it.

LAIR

The brood is new to the Twin Cities, and so the physical locations to which their Chambers correspond are not

there. This creates an additional complication in that they don't have an easy way to open Pathways into their Lair until they can find secure places in the Twin Cities that share their Lair Traits. Meanwhile, those physical locations in their old hometown provide a back door entrance for their enemies. For the moment, there isn't really anything they can do about this, but in the long term, the players know they will probably need to find replacements for their Chambers.

They spend a little time designing the structure for their current shared Lair using a mountaintop structure. Their Lair's front door is a Chamber with the Eshmaki's Steam Trait, figuring that they can rent an apartment with a small bathroom and turn on the hot water to create the necessary entrance to the Lair when they need one (they'd prefer a nice house with a basement sauna, but none of them has enough dots in Resources to justify that). After developing their Chambers a bit more, they have a Lair with the Maze Trait, so that particular Apex effect shouldn't trouble them too much, but they don't have a good way to cope with the Extreme Cold Trait other than not spending too long in their shared Lair. No wonder other Beasts haven't taken up residence in the region, right?

CHAMBERS

The Twin Cities has a fairly typical number of Chambers for a city of its size, although almost none of them have been incorporated into another Beast's Lair. This means that Chambers are there for the taking. As new arrivals in a strange region, however, the brood doesn't know where to find them. For this reason, Aaron limits the troupe to describing how some of the local Chambers appear in the Dreamscape and rumors of how they were created. Finding their physical locations will be a significant plotline during the early part of the chronicle. Because the players intend to replace their existing Chambers with ones they discover in the Twin Cities, Aaron encourages them to describe undiscovered Chambers with Lair Traits that match their characters'.

Noel also suggests a few details about some of the Chambers his friend had before her disappearance, although it's unclear whether they're still around. Meanwhile, Jake suggests that one of the Chambers in the Twin Cities that the troupe described has already been claimed by a Beast who resides in a far-off city – a remote Chamber adjacent to his Heart.



PART THREE CHRONICLE

In the previous two chapters we brought the players into the process of creating the region and Primordial Dream. This chapter will focus on helping the Storyteller take the disparate elements of that pre-chronicle session and stitch them together into a unified chronicle. This isn't to say that none of this should come up during the region-creation session, but the emphasis will be on how to approach this process as a Storyteller.

OUT-OF-GAME CONSIDERATIONS

However important the Storyteller's role in the chronicle, she is not writing a work of fiction over which she has complete control. Roleplaying is a highly collaborative process, and a Storyteller who attempts to lead that process without thinking about the troupe's predilections and quirks is likely to struggle in the role.

DURATION AND FREQUENCY

How often will your troupe meet and for how long? Some troupes (college students living in the same dorm, for example) might find it relatively easy to meet one or more times a week and to play for eight or 10 hours at a stretch. Parents with small children and online gamers who live in different time zones, on the other hand, might only manage a few hours at a time every month or two. Some troupes prefer short stories consisting of one to five chapters, but others tend toward chronicles that last years — or even decades!

The answer to this question can help the Storyteller determine how ambitious his chronicle should be. A heavily-thematic and immersive chronicle that can go hours without interacting with major plot arcs can work beautifully for troupes that meet for several hours at a stretch, but for a group whose gaming consists of tightly-scheduled, three-hour sessions it can make for a chronicle in which "nothing ever happens." A massive, sprawling plot with dozens of major characters with elaborate political relationships could be perfect for a troupe that meets almost weekly, but if sessions are a month or more apart it can be difficult for players and the Storyteller to keep track of what is happening from one chapter to the next. A chronicle in which the players' characters begin play with a very large number of Experiences can be a lot of fun for a handful of chapters, but it might get stale after dozens of sessions of epic badassery as players run out of things to buy.

Understand, too, that play schedules can change as a chronicle progresses. New jobs, new players, and all the vagaries of life can increase or curtail table time.

**"First he got the Earth ready;
then he got the Sea ready;
and then he told all
the Animals that they could
come out and play."**

**— Rudyard Kipling,
"The Crab that Played
with the Sea"**

THE PRAGMATIC STORYTELLER

A lot of advice aimed at Storytellers focuses on in-game details — how to create a compelling world, how to make interesting characters, how to develop a satisfying plot arc, and so forth. All of those things are important, and we'll be discussing them a little later in the chapter. However, outside of a few internet forums, you don't see a lot of discussion of how to plan a chronicle for a troupe whose players can't all make it to a gaming session every week for several hours at a stretch. Some people manage to play pretty regularly in spite of a job, children, a non-gaming social life, and the whole host of obligations that comes with adulthood. Even roleplayers who are not yet up to their eyeballs in responsibilities will sometimes have a conflict.

A lot of people stop participating in roleplaying games because they don't have as much time for them as they once did. Those of us who have managed to stay in the hobby in spite of that, and without shirking those new responsibilities, have done so in no small part because we have learned how to make the most of the time that we have. I have six parents of children under the age of six at my gaming table, for example. If we canceled the game whenever one or two couldn't be there, we'd never play. Learning how to manage things like player absences is every bit as important to the success of our games as plot, pacing, and theme. They wield just as much influence over the kinds of stories we tell as do our house rules, and like our house rules, it is important to discuss them and consider how they will affect the game before implementing them.

TROUPE SIZE, ABSENCES, AND QUORUM

In a similar vein, how many players are in your troupe, how does your troupe handle absent players, and what is the minimum number of players who must be in attendance in order to play? A small group makes it easier to share the spotlight without giving it much thought, but it also means likely gaps in the brood's skill sets and a much lower tolerance for absent players without resulting in cancelation. Larger groups require more effort to give players roughly equal screen time, but they tend to be a little better-equipped to deal with obstacles, and an absent player is less likely to leave a gaping hole in the brood's capabilities.

A chronicle that unfolds in a series of cliffhangers can work for a troupe that rarely plays unless everyone can meet, but a troupe with seven players and a three-player quorum is going to have trouble explaining the constant, sudden disappearance of half the brood in the middle of tense moments. Individual absences can factor into this, as well. If a player's job or other obligations force her to miss frequently, for example, having major plot threads hinge on her being present for several consecutive sessions is dicey.

Some Storytellers routinely "write out" the characters of absent players, finding some explanation for why they are not present during the chapter. Others allow players to assume the character is minimally there — able to lend resources and use powers that he habitually used to aid the brood. A few troupes even go so far as to allow another player to assume control of the character, within reason. The first tends to be less jarring if each player creates an excuse that can be used to pull her character out of the action from time to time — such as an external obligation that occasionally takes precedence over the brood's immediate goals.

The second solution works particularly well for frequently-absent players of support characters — such as those tasked with performing research, working social contacts, or engaging in stakeouts. This creates an built-in explanation for why the character isn't as directly involved in the events of the current chapter, essentially making her an Ally or Contact of the brood whenever the player cannot be present, while allowing her to rejoin the story at any time as an active participant whenever the player is available.

Both the second and third approach might make important combats or other scenes that require the combined skills of all the characters less likely to end badly due to an unlucky confluence of scheduling conflicts. However, scenes that focus on an absent player's character or are intended to draw a reaction from that player tend to fall flat, and it is usually better to postpone those events until the player can be there.

CHRONICLE STRUCTURE

Not all troupes tell stories the same way. This is partially a function of the Storyteller and players. Some players prefer a clear plot thread to follow and get frustrated with open-ended "sandboxes" in which plots either seem completely absent or overwhelmingly prolific. Others want to interact with the setting and Storyteller characters without constant interruptions by crises and catastrophes. Players can be so reactive that they will not take any action until presented with clear, in-character instructions to do so, and they can be so proactive that they sniff out, investigate, and resolve a plot thread at the merest hint from the Storyteller that something might be relevant later. Most fall somewhere

in between. A chronicle can be episodic to the point where the players' characters are the only common thread holding them together, or it can be a well-oiled machine in which no detail is disconnected from the overarching plot. It can be a sandbox where any story depends on the characters' actions within the setting, or a road trip where the players and Storyteller have a clear idea where the story is headed, even if the path it takes is full of surprises.

Similarly, Storytellers have different styles. A few inveterate improvisers rarely need to plan from one chapter to the next. You might spend many hours brainstorming and detailing the region in its inhabitants before the first chapter and then use those details to carry on from week to week with only a few minor tweaks along the way, or you might put in a few hours of planning before each gaming session.

As a Storyteller, it is important to know both yourself and your players and to make reasonable adjustments to your chronicle to accommodate them. If you tend to freeze up when you haven't had time to plan, make sure you find the time for that planning. If you like making it up as you go along, but your players tend to pay close attention to details and bring them up later, make sure you take plenty of notes whenever their eyes light up or narrow after you deliver what you thought was just another random throw-away line. If you know your players expect you to introduce the plot to them and won't go looking for it, find ways to introduce story hooks. If you know your players are more interested in interacting with the setting than with exploring an overarching plot, you don't have to throw a new crisis their way every time they decide to play out their Feedings. If your players enjoy your slow-burning story arcs, that's great, but if the troupe has a lot of unavoidable absences it might be a good idea to consider a more episodic chronicle with few cliffhangers and only rare multipart chapters.

COMMON STRUCTURES

Episodic: The chronicle consists primarily or exclusively of short, self-contained stories. Continuity must emerge from recurring Storyteller characters and references to the events of prior episodes (as well as their physical and psychological effects on players' characters) to prevent the chronicle from stagnating. An otherwise episodic chronicle also permits "multi-episode" arcs that are a bit longer and potentially build on previous events. This structure does not require as much initial planning, but it does tend to demand detailed planning prior to each chapter because tightly-plotted episodes are usually the most successful. If the Storyteller creates a means to introduce new episodes in an unambiguous fashion, this structure can help motivate reactive players and less experienced gamers to

interact with the story. Even proactive players prone to unorthodox approaches to problem solving can improvise around the theme of each episode as long as the Storyteller communicates the story's overall arc. Episodic chronicles don't usually have a built-in conclusion, but while some troupes might be okay with a chronicle that continues until it peters out, many will want more of a sense of closure than that. This usually means a final story that hits on the highlights of the chronicle's episodes and provides a good stopping point.

Sandbox: The chronicle builds on a complex web of previously-existing relationships between Storyteller characters, factions, and forces in the setting, with stories emerging from the players' characters' interactions with these. A good sandbox requires a tremendous amount of preparation before the first chapter of the game begins and demands a significant amount of note-taking throughout (or an almost superhuman memory) to track which plots the players have chosen to pursue and what impact they have made on the setting and its denizens, for any coherent and satisfying plot cannot develop unless the players' characters are having a measurable effect on events in the chronicle. A handy list of drop-in plots and characters (see below) can be a lifesaver, for this structure encourages a proactive play style that will force the Storyteller to improvise frequently. As long as the Storyteller is willing to go with the flow most of the time, however, this structure allows players to approach problems in unexpected ways without disrupting some critical plot structure. After all, there are always more antagonists or weird phenomena where that one came from! Reactive players may struggle with a sandbox chronicle unless they are given some entry point into the setting before the first chapter opens and fed fairly clear plot threads. Even proactive players might feel a little rudderless in early chapters until they've had some time to engage with the setting, so it is beneficial to have an inciting incident to act as an introductory episode for the chronicle. It is easy for a sandbox game to go on too long, since there is rarely a clear end point at the beginning. At some point, the Storyteller will need to decide upon the climax to which all the previous events were building and use it to plan a final story and bring the curtain down on the chronicle.

Long Arc: The Storyteller has a pretty good idea of the overall shape of the chronicle, which she designs based on the input of the players. The chronicle likely has many shorter stories within it, but most of them build toward an ultimate conflict or story goal. This is probably the most time-consuming structure a Storyteller can attempt — both before and during the chronicle. We'll discuss this structure in greater detail later in this chapter.

CHRONICLE FOCUS

As with structure, the Storyteller should make sure that she and the players come to some consensus about the chronicle's focus before play begins.

THEMES

What themes will the chronicle explore? The **Beast: The Primordial** core book outlines several themes for Beasts, but your chronicle might choose to focus on one of them or to introduce a different theme entirely. This is especially important in crossover games, where an overload of themes specific to each character's type can result in a chronicle where no clear themes come across in play. Don't feel irrevocably bound to the themes you've selected. Just as players often have a different vision for their characters when they're choosing traits and writing backgrounds than the person they turn out to be once play begins, so themes can emerge as a chronicle continues.

A chronicle has themes, but characters have themes, too. A Beast who is protective of the inhabitants of his region and feeds only on outsiders introduces a different set of themes than does his broodmate who has ambitions to topple the local Apex. To some extent, a character's theme defines the trajectory of her story arc over the course of the chronicle. Life and Legend make good starting points for character themes. As with chronicle themes, the troupe should review the themes their characters bring to the table to ensure enough compatibility that all the players' characters can explore their individual themes.

MOOD

Whereas themes tend to convey a sort of lesson or general story arc, mood captures the means by which the chronicle expresses that theme. The chronicle with the theme "You don't choose your family" that recurrently shows that Beasts are rejected by ordinary people and can only find acceptance among their own kind has a different mood from one in which the players' characters have to deal with the fallout of Beasts whose carelessness or strange appetites continually attract threats to the Children at large, including the brood. As with themes, conveying mood is largely a matter of repetition. Mood can come both from the Storyteller's choice of scenes and from the way in which she presents those scenes. If the mood is "Everything is Falling Apart," for example, include scenes that show characters and organizations in a clear state of decay or fallen from grace, or drive it home more subtly by describing buildings as crumbling, introducing complications resulting from that decay. Cars break down. Aging electrical wiring blows fuses or catches fire. Nothing seems shiny or new.

The Apex Trait also makes a good starting point for a chronicle's mood. A region dominated by a weather mage may or may not have unusual weather patterns, but virtually every description of an outdoor scene could include some mention of the weather, and even interior scenes might include a description of the sound of rain as it lashes the windows or of the overworked radiator in the corner that can't quite banish the chill from the room.

SCALE

What is the chronicle's scale at the beginning? How large do you expect it to get by the end? This is partially a question of starting rank – whether the characters begin with no Experiences, 100 Experiences, or something in between – but it also includes the kinds of stories it tells and how much these stories vary. Will the chronicle spend a lot of time showing the characters seeking prey, deeply focusing on the psychology and horror of the hunt, or will Feeding be relegated to the background as the story revolves around the political maneuvering of local Children or other supernatural creatures? Can the characters overcome most of their antagonists with brute force, or must the solutions to their obstacles be as varied as the obstacles themselves?

VELOCITY

How quickly do you expect the chronicle to progress from its beginning state to its end state? The relative gap between starting scale and ending scale is a significant factor here, as is the chronicle's duration. A troupe that meets every week and plays several hours at a stretch might be able to move from 0 Experiences and low-powered threats to 100 Experiences and world-shattering events over the course of a year, but maintaining a down-to-earth scale in a chronicle with that troupe will require some adjustment. At the other extreme, a troupe that meets monthly but hopes to rise from newly Devoured to Eldest of the Eldest over the course of the chronicle probably won't get there on the strength of Beats earned as-written. This isn't a flaw in the Beats system – it's simply a case where the Storyteller will need to either provide supplemental Experience awards (i.e. hand out 3 or 4 Experiences per chapter, in addition to what the players' characters earn in play) or increase the value of Beats (such as by changing the exchange rate to three Beats, or even one Beat, per Experience).

ALLIES

Review everything the troupe discussed from Part One, as well as their characters' backgrounds, to determine who their friends are. You should definitely think about those Social Merits. If a player bought an Ally, Mentor, or Retainer she'll expect you to include that person in the chronicle. Don't stop there, though. Who else do the



characters know whom they can draw on later? The changeling who lives next door might not be a close friend, for example, but knowing he's around might be a way to bring the characters into a story involving him, or a way to give them access to resources they might not otherwise have. Not every player's character is going to move in the same social circles, but there will likely be at least some overlap in their associations.

Humans: Who do the characters know from the time before their Devouring? Are there ordinary people they still have regular contact with — coworkers, acquaintances with a shared interest, that teenager at the seedy motel who will let them have a peek at the names of everyone currently staying there if one of them slides five bucks across the counter? Is there a paranormal investigator who is fascinated with the brood and would do just about anything to tag along on one of their hunts? Looking at each character's Life makes a good starting point for this conversation.

Beasts: Are the characters familiar with other Children in the region? Did they do someone a favor? Did another Beast lend them a hand when they needed it? Are they on a bowling league with other Beasts?

Kin: What other supernatural creatures do the characters know? Who have they established Family Ties with? How involved are they in their friends' occult societies, and how much of an interest do these friends have in the doings

of the Children? Do they have a werewolf drinking buddy or regularly attend performances of the local orchestra with a music-loving vampire?

Organizations and Factions: An ally isn't always a single person. Sometimes it is an entire group with an interest in the characters' success — whether it is a mortal institution, a secret society of scientists that studies monsters, a network of Beasts who get Children out of trouble, or any of the innumerable occult orders to which other supernatural beings claim membership. Have the characters earned the favor of an entire group? What kind of influence does that faction wield that might be useful to the characters?

The Storyteller doesn't need to create full character sheets for all of these characters. A name, description, and three-sentence summary of their role should suffice in most cases. You can always flesh out their traits later if the need arises.

THREATS

As you did with allies, review the potential threats the players presented to you in their character backgrounds and the group discussion. These can be threats to individual characters, to the brood, to all the Children in the region, or to the region as a whole. The Storyteller should also look

at the history of the region and other factors to consider threats the players may not have considered or that will not be introduced until later in the chronicle.

Humans: Most ordinary people are little more than potential prey to the Children, but it is foolish to discount them entirely. Occult investigators can make it harder for the characters to keep their secrets hidden, and monster hunters sometimes get clever (or lucky). Mortal institutions can complicate a brood's existence incidentally by doing things like demolishing an abandoned building that serves as the entrance to a chamber or expanding police presence in a neighborhood that serves as a favorite hunting ground. Pushed far enough, just about any human could become a Hero dedicated to wiping out the Children.

Heroes: Are there any Heroes currently active in the region? Who are their current targets?

Other Beasts: Who among the local Children dislikes, works against, or stands in the way of the characters? This could include rivals as well as antagonists.

Kin: Who among the other supernatural groups active in the area is a threat to the characters? Such an antagonist need not regard the characters as an enemy. He might simply have goals or engage in behaviors that place him on a collision course with them, and is unlikely to merely back down if asked politely to knock it off.

Forces of Nature and Occult Phenomena: Are there other supernatural forces at work that pose a threat? This can be a fixed phenomenon the characters will need to confront from time to time, a mindless being or alien intelligence that meddles in the region, or a one-time event that strikes like a natural disaster.

Enemies of Friends: Look at the characters' list of allies. Who are the enemies of those friends? Who or what threatens them? The friend of a friend might yet be an enemy. Are some of the characters' friends enemies of each other, or are some of the characters' friends on troublingly-good terms with the brood's enemies?

Traitors: Not every apparent ally is as friendly as she appears, and even an otherwise-loyal friend might turn against the brood under the right circumstances. Who among the characters' friends is secretly their enemy? Which of them can be turned against the characters and what would it take to convince them to betray the brood?

As with allies, the Storyteller doesn't need to create full character sheets for every enemy the brood might face. However, as these Storyteller characters are more likely to be called upon to oppose the characters on the battlefield or in the social arena, it is usually a good idea to include more details than are usually required for allies.

RELATIONSHIPS

Once you have as many Storyteller characters as you think you'll need for your chronicle (or at least the early stages of it), work out the relationships between them. You can lay this out visually as a network of names connected with arrows showing how each character or faction perceives or feels about the others, or include a few connections to other characters in whatever notes you keep for each character. Arrows pointing away from a character describe the feelings he has for the character the arrow points to, while arrows pointing toward the character show the feelings another character has for him. Don't try to connect every character to every other character. It's usually enough for each character to have between one and three arrows pointing in each direction.

The players' characters will often have more arrows, defined during the region-building session prior to the first chapter. If the characters begin the chronicles as outsiders, you might add more arrows pointing in their direction as they make first impressions and establish legends for themselves with the locals. If they start out as a known quantity in the region, they might have friends and enemies the players don't yet know about.

It can be tempting to reduce a relationship to a word or two, but it will usually make your job easier later on if you have a pretty good idea of the general whys of one character's feelings for another. "I want revenge on her for the way she treated my brother" or "I think her attitudes and behavior are abhorrent and dangerous to the Children" both offer clearer plot hooks than "I hate her." On the other hand, sometimes it's good to leave some empty space to fill in later. Both you and your players might know that Adelle Helix has a deep hatred for Bianca Shipley from the start, but the reason for that old enmity might be better kept to a much later chapter.

BUILDING CHARACTER

One of the most important jobs a Storyteller has is to play everyone in the chronicle who isn't a player's character. It is not realistic to expect that the Storyteller will have a full character sheet for everyone she introduces to the chronicle. In many cases, it is enough to have two or three details that you can build on later if needed. This is true whether you're running a sandbox chronicle for which you create dozens of characters before the first chapter opens, designing the villain of the week for an episodic chronicle, or throwing in a random person you had no idea existed until halfway into the current scene.

GETTING TO KNOW YOUR STORYTELLER CHARACTERS

While no one expects every Storyteller character to be a fascinating and fully-fleshed out collection of needs, wants, and quirks, it can be easy to fall into predictable patterns. One way to push out of old habits to create an interesting character is to start with a handful of unrelated (or even randomized) traits and find a way to synthesize them into a single person. This serves the same creative purpose for a Storyteller as scene prompts do for an improvisational actor or writing prompts do for a writer. A blank slate does little to set the wheels of imagination into motion, but introducing a few disparate elements as a starting point often makes the creative process proceed more smoothly.

To that end, we present several examples of character needs, emotional states, physical descriptions, and capabilities. For any new character, use two or three of these categories as a starting point to quickly sketch out the character. You can choose these details or let fate decide, use a list of drop-in characters or create them at the moment the story needs them.

NEED

What physical, emotional, or supernatural drive(s) motivates the character most? For Beasts, the Hunger makes a good starting point, but other, more human needs, are possible even for the Children.

Accomplishment: The character likes winning. She is competitive in all areas of her life and is constantly striving to improve her skills. This can be a healthy need when the goal is a worthy one and so long as her methods are honorable. Few people will object to an athlete who tries her hardest to win but also plays fair and respects her competitors. On the other hand, the cutthroat entrepreneur who is willing to resort to sabotage, blackmail, or murder to increase his business's market share won't make many friends.

Acquisition: The character is driven by a desire for stuff. This can be a miser's excessive frugality, a hoarder's indiscriminate piles of junk, or a collector's prized collection of specific kinds of items. In most cases this need forms the basis of a harmless hobby or, at worst, reflects his struggles with or a fear of poverty. If it reaches the level of obsession, however, it might drive him to take dangerous or illegal actions in order to add to and preserve his hoard.

Altruism: The character needs to help people or to further some noble cause. She is generous with her favors as long as she feels it is the right thing to do. Usually regarded

as a virtue, this need can nevertheless drive a character into antagonistic roles. She might insist on helping someone who doesn't need or want her help – offering redemption to those who do not wish to be redeemed, for example, or tagging along when her presence only complicates the task of those she hopes to aid. The causes she adopts influence her role in the story, too. A well-meaning character who truly feels that the region's inhabitants swore allegiance to the alien horror under the warehouse is bound to make a few enemies, and an altruistic character who hunts and kills monsters is quite low on the list of characters the Children want to spend time with.

Association: The character wants people to like him. He is always looking for opportunities to do people a good turn or give them what they want in hopes that they will let him associate with them. Taken to an unpleasant extreme, he might fall in with an unsavory crowd that encourages him to perform distasteful favors or engage in acts of cruelty he hopes will win the approval of his friends.

Conflict: The character loves to fight. He might be the kind of bully who expresses this need with his fists or one that prefers verbal confrontations – whether they're little more than strings of profanity or carefully-considered exercises in rhetoric. Unlike a character who craves accomplishment or power, victory or defeat is largely irrelevant to him. What matters is that he can express his anger and contempt without restraint and without considering the consequences.

Destruction: The character likes seeing things fall apart. Some are content to watch the destruction wrought by others or by natural forces, but many feel compelled to break, ruin, or defile things personally. This can be a relatively-harmless impulse if its manifestation is socially acceptable – such as a pyrotechnics hobbyist or professional demolitions specialist. Exercised with less regard for legality or the property of others, however, it can lead to charges of vandalism, arson, cybercrime, or terrorism. Even worse is one whose appetite for destruction includes people in its definition of "things," regardless of whether her victim's body, mind, or possessions are her target.

Fame: The character wants people to take notice of her when she is around and to think of her when she is absent. Unlike a character who needs association, she doesn't expect, and might not even want, the approval of her audience. The important thing is to have made an impression. This can be a relatively-harmless drive in an artist or performer, but it is also the province of sociopathic media personalities and serial killers.

Independence: The character needs to feel free and capable of making her own choices. This can be the healthy autonomy of adulthood, the occasionally quixotic rebel-

liousness of a teenager, or an insistence on radical freedom that puts her on a collision course with any authority figure who tries to curtail her freedom.

Justice: The character wants to see wrongs righted and will go to great lengths to make this happen. Some focus on ensuring that the guilty receive punishment, while others work to protect the innocent from wrongful accusations. An intense thirst for justice coupled with a blindness to his biases can cause a character to perpetrate even greater injustices. He might condemn someone for a crime she did not commit, or the punishments he levies might be out of proportion to the crimes. An advocate for the innocent might refuse to admit the guilt of someone he has chosen to protect, allowing a monster to walk free and harm other victims.

Knowledge: The character wants to understand and seeks the truth. She might have a scientific mind that cannot resist investigating anything that challenges her understanding of the world, or she might just be nosy. Curiosity can be a dangerous trait to have in *Chronicles of Darkness*, but sometimes it leads to important discoveries. Taken to an extreme, curiosity can reduce thinking beings to mere specimens, valuable only for their potential as objects of study.

Martyrdom: The character feels a compulsion toward self-deprivation. She might hold strong convictions that require her to resist the urge to indulge her desires. She defines herself in no small part by her refusal to give in to temptation – whether its source is money, drugs, sex, food, or freedom from physical discomfort. In extreme cases, this drive can lead her to self-harm or even self-destruction, whether or not she sees it as such. Many martyrs look down on or openly criticize those who do not engage in their preferred forms of self-deprivation.

Order: The character likes for things to fit into a pattern. He dislikes chaos, confusion, and disorganization, and tends to impose structure on anything he encounters. This might merely come out as habitual neatness and a tendency to insist on adhering to clear schedules, and it can be valuable to have a retainer or ally who seems to have everything you need handy when you ask for it. Sometimes those who crave order will create organization systems that make sense to them but seem counterintuitive or downright bizarre to anyone else. Some characters who need order have trouble coping with surprises or chaos, which can cause them to panic or, in rarer cases, rationalize what they experience to convince themselves that it fits into their understanding of the world. Others might destroy anything that threatens order, whether that means becoming (or supporting) a tyrant or destroying the source of chaos.

Power: The character likes to be in control of her environment and the people within it. Whereas a character who

craves order will accept any role within a structure compatible with his own vision, regardless of who imposes it, a character who desires power will insist on being in charge even if the result is less compatible with her other desires. Not every character with this need seeks to topple everyone higher up the ladder than she is. Many acquire power by convincing others to delegate authority to them, and that can provide satisfaction enough for this need – at least for a time. Not everyone abuses the power they acquire, either, although it is a sad fact that those who seek power often need some proof that they actually possess it, and that might mean wielding power simply to prove its efficacy.

Safety: The character hates taking risks (or certain kinds of risks), whether they be physical, emotional, social, or financial. Even if he learns to accept some amount of danger, he tends to plan for every eventuality and can become excessively paranoid. Taken to a destructive extreme, he prioritizes his own need to feel safe over the well-being of others – cheating to minimize his exposure to risk or making preemptive attacks on those he merely suspects of conspiring against him.

Succor: The character longs for the sympathy and care of others. He wants someone who will comfort him when he's feeling down, praise him when he feels he deserves it, and generally ensure that his physical and emotional needs are met. A person with an intense need for succor might expect others to care for him to the exclusion of their own needs and wants – whether out of laziness or a sense of entitlement.

EMOTIONAL STATE

What mood or emotional state is the character in right now? This might reflect a short-term Aspiration, a reaction to his environment, or something disconnected from it. It could be his default mood or one that is unusual or even a bit out of character for him, but it is likely to inform his responses in the current scene. Here are some broadly-defined emotional states:

Afraid: The character's actions are colored by fear. This might be the simple, primal concern for life and limb, but it could easily be concern about threats against her overarching motives, including her inability or failure to achieve her goals. Frightened people are frequently unpredictable. Some shrink from the source of their fear, while others stubbornly confront it and those who embody it.

Angry: The character is angry. This could be a cold fury or a white-hot rage. She may express her anger with words, physical violence, or passive-aggressive behavior. Some people channel their anger in harmless, or even productive, ways, but most act out at least to some extent, whether that takes the form of venting to a third party or confronting the source of provocation directly.

Bored: The character is doing her job, completing a chore, or otherwise doing something that is an unremarkable means to an uninspiring end. She is likely to welcome a distraction from the monotony.

Comfortable: The character is in his element. He exudes confidence and competence at whatever he is doing. A comfortable character is more likely to let down his guard unless given cause for suspicion or anger.

Curious: Something has piqued the character's curiosity, whether it is an interesting stranger or a mysterious noise. She probably doesn't have any deep attachment to the mystery this presents, but she's interested enough that she might engage in risky behaviors.

Ecstatic: The character is having an extraordinarily strong emotional reaction akin to a religious or mystical experience. Maybe she saw or heard something that brought this on, or maybe it came upon her suddenly. Depending on her temperament, she may want to talk about it or may want to be left alone to bask in it, but she certainly doesn't want to be bothered with trivial, mundane details right now.

Excited: The character has recently experienced or is greatly anticipating a momentous event. It could be a major milestone in pursuit of his goals or an uncomplicated source of delight, such as a visit with an old friend or the unexpected praise of a personal idol. Excited characters are often eager to express their excitement, and even those who tend not to wear their hearts on their sleeve are more apt to be in a noticeably good mood.

Focused: The character's attention is focused on something or someone to the exclusion of all else. She might be reading or programming, lost in the eyes of her lover or in her own thoughts. Regardless, she probably won't welcome a distraction and is unlikely to be easy to engage in social interactions.

Guilty: Feelings of shame and remorse grip the character. She might have recently indulged her Vice or violated the dictates of her Integrity — or maybe she is only seriously considering doing so. Maybe the events of the current scene remind her of a time when she did not live up to the expectations she had for herself. Another person's guilt can be a powerful tool in the hand of someone willing to exploit it.

Happy: The character is in a generally pleasant mood that doesn't immediately demand any action or thought. She might be eating a good meal, listening to pleasing music, playing with her child, or anything that offers her simple emotional satisfaction. Happy people generally welcome the presence of other happy people, but while many can be gracious toward those who are struggling or suffering, some might avoid or reject the company of those who do not share their general good mood.

Lethargic: The character is lacking in energy. He possibly didn't get enough sleep, or maybe he slept too long. This might be the bodily exhaustion of intense physical activity or the weariness of taxing intellectual tasks or social circumstances. It could also be the mark of illness or the effects of a drug. Lethargic characters are likely to miss details and make careless mistakes. Most try to avoid additional exertion, and many become short-tempered, emotionally vulnerable, or absentminded.

Lost: The character is outside of her comfort zone. Maybe she wandered into the scene by mistake or is too intoxicated to remember where she is, or maybe she is alone among strangers or among friends who are behaving in ways that make her uncomfortable. Regardless, she is in an unfamiliar situation and isn't confident that she can navigate it successfully. She is likely to welcome anything familiar and to accept help if it is offered to her.

Sad: The character is morose or unhappy. This could be the wholly temporary sadness of watching a tragic movie or listening to a sad song, or the emotional intensity immediately preceding a moment of catharsis. It could also be the persistent, exhausting sadness of great personal tragedy, harsh and inescapable circumstances, or clinical depression. Sadness usually arrives as an unwanted guest, and most people will welcome anything that distracts from or dispels this mood, whether that is the comfort of a friendly face or the indulgence of a Vice.

Suspicious: The character is not convinced that someone or something is what it appears to be. This could be baffled disbelief upon encountering something contrary to his worldview, practiced skepticism of something that seems too good to be true, or paranoia born of past negative experiences. For better or worse, the character doesn't take things at face value and is likely to regard those who prevaricate or act contrary to expectations with distrust, if not outright hostility.

Thoughtful: The character is lost in a labyrinth of her own unfocused thoughts. She might be recalling past events with wistful nostalgia, considering all the things she has to do today, or idly daydreaming about the future. Every thought follows after another, but the overall progression meanders in unexpected directions. A character lost in thought is unlikely to initiate conversation or to take note of oddities in her surroundings that do not demand her attention.

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION

A character's physical description is one of the first things the players' characters are likely to notice. It can provide an easy starting point for bystanders or for characters whose emotional state and true motives might not be immediately obvious and whose names will not be revealed

A FEW NOTES ABOUT PHYSICAL DESCRIPTIONS

Be mindful of the physical descriptions you choose for your characters. It is easy to fall back on stereotypes, especially when making up a character on the fly. On the other hand, randomizing these traits is an exercise in futility, as it will result in absurd combinations more often than not. It's generally better to pick a category or two and choose a trait that makes sense for the time and place.

If you choose to describe a character's clothes, consider the color or pattern of the clothing. If a character is wearing a t-shirt, describe the picture, saying, or sentiment it might have. A character wearing an otherwise plain tie-dyed shirt will come across as a very different person than one wearing a t-shirt with a picture of a dragon on it or one wearing a charity marathon participation t-shirt.

during the current scene. The Storyteller can also use physical attributes to reveal something about a character's personality or history or to deliberately obfuscate these qualities. The lean man with the unkempt beard and filthy clothes reeking of old sweat might be a homeless man, for example, but he might also be a billionaire who got lost in the wilderness for two weeks before finding a highway and hitchhiking to the nearest city. Possible physical descriptors include the following, none of which are exhaustive lists:

Race: Black, Chinese, Indian, Japanese, Korean, Latino, Middle Eastern, Mixed Race, Native American, North African, Pacific Islander, Somali, South African, West African, White

Sex Presentation: Androgynous, Female, Gender Fluid, Male, Mixture of Traditional Gender Markers

Age: Infant, Toddler, Child (Xth grader), Teenager, early/mid/late 20s/30s/40s/etc., Middle-Aged, Elder, Old, Ancient

Hair Color: Ash Blond, Black, Blond, Brown, Colored (dyed an unusual color like blue, purple, or green), Dark Brown, Fawn, Grey, Multi-Colored (dyed two or more colors, either in zones or layers), Raven, Red, Salt-and-Pepper, Strawberry Blond, White

Hair Type: Curly, Kinked, Straight, Wavy

Hair Style: Afro, Asymmetric Cut, Back-Length, Balding, Beehive, Betty Page, Bob, Bowl Cut, Braid, Bun, Buzz Cut, Chonmage, Comb Over, Conk, Cornrows, Crew Cut, Crown Braid, Curtained Hair, Devilock, Dreadlocks, Fade, Fauxhawk, Feathered Hair, Flattop, Flip, French Braid, French Twist, Frosted Tips, Hime Cut, Hi-top Fade, Ivy League, Jheri Curl,



Liberty Spikes, Mohawk, Mop Top, Mullet, Pigtales, Pixie Cut, Pompadour, Ponytail, Professional Cut, Rattail, Razor Cut, Shag, Shaved, Shoulder-Length, Spiky Hair, Surfer Hair, Thigh-Length, Undercut, Waves, Wings

Facial Hair: Clean-Shaven, Five o' Clock Shadow, Peach Fuzz, Pencil Mustache, Small Mustache, Wispy Mustache, Waxed Mustache, Full Mustache, Trimmed Goatee, Long Goatee, Close-Cropped Beard, Full Beard, Bushy Beard, Long Beard, Unkempt Beard

Height and Build: Short, Average Height, Tall, Towering, Gigantic, Malnourished, Gaunt, Waif-Like, Thin, Slim, Athletic, Broad-Shouldered, Muscular, Hugely Muscled, Paunchy, Pregnant, Buxom, Overweight, Fat

Physical Details: Acne, Birthmark, Blind, Brand, Burn Scar, Deaf, Fake Tan, Freckles, Hands (dirt-caked, grease-covered, food-grimed, grass-stained, etc.), Limp, Missing Digit/Ear/Hand/Foot/Limb, Orthopedic Defect, Scar, Sunburn, Tattoo(s), Teeth (Bad, Missing, Gold, etc.)

Disability Aids: Artificial Hand/Foot/Arm/Leg, Brace, Cane, Cast, Crutch(es), Electric Wheelchair, Glasses, Hearing Aid, Insulin Pump, Medical Bracelet, Reading Glasses, Walker, Wheelchair

Clothing: Jeans, Jean Shorts, Cargo Pants, Cargo Shorts, Skirt, Miniskirt, Slacks, Capris, Sweatpants, Swim Trunks, Surf Trunks, Speedo, T-Shirt, Polo Shirt, Tank Top, Jersey, Blouse, Oxford, Turtleneck, Sports Bra, Bikini Top, Windbreaker, Raincoat, Suede Jacket, Leather Jacket, Winter Coat, Trench Coat, Sweater, Vest, Sweatshirt, Unitard, Summer Dress, Evening Gown, Everyday Dress, Swimsuit, Tracksuit, Three-Piece Suit, Tuxedo, Snowsuit, Cloak, Robe

Clothing Descriptors: Stained, Dirty, Clean, Freshly Pressed, Designer, Filthy, Worn, Frayed, Tattered, Threadbare, Vintage, Muddy, Loud, Punk, Nondescript, Conservative

Jewelry and Accessories: Amulet, Backpack, Bracelet, Briefcase, Brooch, Chain, Crucifix, Earring (stud, hoop, dangling earring, etc.), Envelope, Gift, Package, Clipboard, Binder, Pentacle, Stack of Papers, Eyebrow/Nose/Lip/Tongue/Septum/Bellybutton/Nipple/Cheek Piercing, Handbag, Headband, Messenger Bag, Necklace, Pet, Pin, Ring, Purse, Shopping Bag, Sunglasses, Tie, Wedding Band/Ring

Scents: Cologne/Perfume (deodorant, faint, sweet, musky, strong, eye-watering), Bad Breath, Animal Odor (cats, dogs, horses, cows, goats, sheep, chickens, ferrets, etc.), Plant Smells (pine needles, hay, mown grass, garlic, etc.), Occupational Odors (Smoke, Disinfectant, Food, Sweat, Gasoline, Leather, Vomit, Booze, Sewage, etc.)

Other Noticeable Traits: Allergies, Alto, Avoids Profanity, Baritone, Bass, Brings Politics Into Everything,

Coughs Frequently, Foreign Accent, Gesticulates, Hums, Physically Affectionate, Loud Voice, Maintains Distance When Talking, Paces, Pedantic, Quiet Voice, Regional Dialect, Smoker Voice, Smokes/Vapes, Soprano, Stands Really Close When Talking, Swears Like Sailor, Talks about Hobby without Prompting, Tenor, Uses Business/Industry Jargon, Vegetarian/Vegan, Voice Cracks, Whistles

CAPABILITIES

What does the character do well? What does he do poorly? Does he have any special powers? Does he have access to resources that allow him to pursue his goals or that may be of value to the players' characters?

If you want to give a minor character some numbers but don't have time to stat her up in depth, here are a few quick solutions:

Choose one Skill for which she rolls eight dice and three Skills for which she rolls six dice. If desired, choose up to three Skills for which the character rolls a chance die. She rolls four dice for any other Skill.

Assign primary, secondary, and tertiary to the character's Mental, Physical, and Social Skills. Rolls in the primary category use seven dice. Rolls in the secondary category use five dice. Rolls in the tertiary category roll three dice. To reflect a less well-rounded character, make this eight dice, four dice, and one die (a chance die if Mental is tertiary). You may use either of the methods above, but instead assign categories by Finesse, Power, and Resistance.

If desired, choose up to three appropriate Merits or a supernatural type. Apply only the most basic information for any supernatural template. You don't need to design a Beast's Lair unless you expect the players' characters to end up in it, for example. Instead, pick a few signature powers and assign reasonable dice pools to them.

INTRODUCING UNFAMILIAR FACES

While players will undoubtedly interact with Storyteller characters you've already fleshed out, you will never have the luxury of a full character sheet and background for everyone the brood encounters. In the same vein, you will eventually find it necessary to introduce a Storyteller character who can play an important role in a story (such as delivering exposition or posing a threat to the brood's interests) that you didn't know you would need until that moment. In these situations it is helpful to have a strategy in place.

DROP-IN CHARACTERS

An especially useful trick in a sandbox game, the Storyteller spends some downtime between gaming ses-

sions brainstorming characters she might introduce to her chronicle. Pick a motive, emotional state, physical description, and/or capabilities for each one — again, two or three sentences is usually enough. Think about how you might use the character. Is she a source of exposition, a minor antagonist, a quirky stranger, a powerful Beast they need to get on their side, or just someone with a resource they can't otherwise access? Expect that you'll never use every character you come up with. The goal is to have an appropriate character on your list who can provide whatever your story calls for — one with a little more flesh on his bones than one you adlibbed.

If you're running an episodic chronicle or a long arc, review this list of characters when you're planning to see which ones leap out with inspiration for the upcoming chapter. Sometimes this will be a recurring character, but it could also be one you haven't introduced previously. Give some thought to the role the character will play in the chapter and add a bit more of the kinds of details that will make it easier for him to play his part. If he's an antagonist the brood is likely to fight, add some combat traits like Initiative modifier, Defense, and Armor. If he seems likely to become a recurring character, be sure to amp up the elements of his physical description that will make him stick in the players' memories. If the brood needs something the character has, consider picking Aspirations, Virtue, and Vice for him that the players can discover and use as levers to get what they want from him.

If you're running a sandbox chronicle, whenever a previously-introduced character doesn't serve your narrative purpose, review your list of drop-in characters. If you've spent a goodly amount of time building your stable of Storyteller characters, you'll often find someone who is a good fit for the current scene. If none of them fits the bill, pick a drop-in character you think would be fun to play and give her whatever resources, connections, or powers will make her what you need her to be, add those to your notes for her, and bring her into the scene.

For example, the players ask whether there's a Beast who claims territory on the seedy east side of town, but you haven't considered whether such a character exists. Consulting your list of characters, you don't see any Beast who fits the bill, but you find a street con artist you've been itching to play for months. You grab the street hustler, slap a Beast template on him, and give him just enough Nightmares, Atavisms, and other resources to re-skin him as an Ugallu Collector with a fondness for credit cards and state-issued IDs. You now have both your excuse to play your street con artist and the character the brood needs to achieve the next phase of their plan.

RECURRING-CHARACTERS

Just because a Storyteller character began her life as a few sentences doesn't mean she will remain that way. Whenever you introduce a new character, pay attention to the way your players respond to her. If they extend their interaction with her more than you expected, take steps to ensure future interactions, or cheerfully speculate on her role in the chronicle as a whole; you have quite likely unearthed a good recurring character. Don't be ashamed to bring her back simply because you enjoyed playing her, either, but be mindful that you don't force her on your players if they don't find her as interesting as you do.

Once you identify a recurring character, spend some time between gaming sessions fleshing her out, and reveal a little more about her with each interaction. Pay attention to your players' speculations. If they come up with a more interesting twist than the one you originally had in mind, by all means use it — albeit with a little bit of modification. It will make your players feel clever, and it will make it look like you had it planned all along. It also tends to result in a more collaborative style of storytelling, which is a win for everyone in the troupe.

As part of fleshing out a recurring character, don't be afraid to let him improve his abilities. This is especially true of emergent major antagonists, but it is equally useful for major players in the region. By the same token, it is essential that you not cling too tightly to any recurring character. If the players decide that your favorite villain must die and take reasonable steps to achieve that end, it will only frustrate and disappoint them if you continually invent clever ways for their antagonist to cheat fate. The players' beloved Storyteller characters likewise shouldn't be completely safe. While it is gimmicky to kidnap, mind control, or kill everyone the brood cares about, the occasional heroic sacrifice or hostage situation makes for good drama, especially in a long-running chronicle.

THINKING ABOUT PLOT

While it is neither possible nor desirable for a Storyteller to retain absolute control over the chronicle's narrative, most troupes will not find a story especially satisfying if it lacks any structure whatsoever. This is especially critical in a long arc or an episodic chronicle, but even a sandbox game needs structures within it with which players can interact. Different Storytellers have different approaches to building a chronicle, with some starting with the macro level of overall chronicle arc and some letting a pattern emerge in response to player engagement with elements of chapters or stories.

DESIGNING A CHRONICLE

Sometimes the Storyteller knows the chronicle's overall arc from the beginning. This usually involves coming up with a structural model that allows for a great deal of flexibility. "Each story focuses on a different player's character, and then the finale story focuses on a final antagonist," for example, or "each story focuses on defeating a different major antagonist, with the final story focusing on the powerful antagonist behind most of the brood's enemies" provide a clear guideline while allowing plenty of variation along the way. In some cases, the Storyteller has a pretty clear vision of the final story from the beginning, and it's merely the execution that will depend on the players' actions. In other cases, such as in most episodic or sandbox chronicles, the exact nature of the final story hinges on the interests of the players and the actions of their characters.

A Storyteller who intends to plan the chronicle arc first will find it critical to get buy-in from her players before the first session — preferably before anyone sits down to create characters. Come up with an elevator pitch. "You're all new in town and have to contend with other supernatural creatures who consider this their territory" suggests a fairly antagonistic relationship with other Kin, while "you have established connections with most of the supernatural groups in the region and are often called upon to solve problems for them" suggests the opposite. Both have promise, but if a player who expects the first chronicle finds himself in the second, the character he brings to the table might seem disruptive, and the fault lies with the Storyteller for failing to communicate the chronicle's premise.

Some Storytellers prefer to come up with high concepts for chronicles, which they pitch to their players in advance. Players who like the concept join the game, while those who aren't as interested opt for another way to spend the time. Others sit down with their players weeks or months before the chronicle's pre-planning session and come to a consensus on the overall concept before even beginning to plan the direction of the chronicle. The most important thing is that the Storyteller and the players know what to expect. That way the players will find it easy to brainstorm character concepts that fit within that high concept, and the Storyteller can worry less about shoehorning dissimilar character concepts into the narrative, and instead focus on building entertaining stories and chapters for the agreed-upon structure. Players are much more willing to accept direction from a Storyteller they trust to give them ample opportunity to explore the story arcs they want to tell anyway. In fact, they often learn to anticipate the story's beats and cooperate — if not actually conspire — to heighten their dramatic impact.

BUILDING A STORY

Stories are plotlines that take several chapters to introduce, explore, and bring to a satisfying conclusion. Most begin with an inciting incident or hook that introduces them. If the initial plot hook interests the players, the characters will pursue the story. The course they follow to reach its climax will never be quite what the Storyteller was expecting, and in some cases the players will have a different idea about how the story should end, too — winning over an antagonist instead of destroying her, for example. You should have some idea of how the story is likely to unfold but also need to be able to adapt to the players' response — including the possibility that they simply aren't interested in the story you're trying to introduce.

Throw obstacles and twists in whatever path they choose, but never force them to solve a problem in exactly the way you expected them to. Players will take just about any inciting incident in stride, and any ending that either meets with their expectations or surprises them in an entertaining way will usually satisfy them, but most are unforgiving of a Storyteller who gives them no latitude when it comes to how they get from the beginning of the story to its end.

While some chronicles will focus on a single story until its completion (what is known in TV series lingo as its "A plot"), many will intersperse smaller, minor plots ("B plots") within the same chapters. Stories should also provide opportunities to develop the stories of the players' characters (their "character arcs"). This is true of all chronicles, whether they're episodic, long arcs, or sandboxes. Whereas long arc and episodic chronicles tend to focus on a single A plot, sandbox games frequently throw out several different hooks at a time to see which one "sticks" for the players. Chronicles can also benefit from incidents and B plots that foreshadow stories the Storyteller doesn't intend to introduce for several more chapters. Not only do these add a sense of continuity to a chronicle, they allow the Storyteller to gauge player interest before she puts in several hours of work building that story.

As with drop-in characters, a Storyteller running an episodic or sandbox chronicle will often benefit from spending some time brainstorming drop-in stories. These are plots that could happen at any time in the chronicle or that are easy to modify to fit. You can use them to foreshadow later stories, to fill time when the players get through the A plot of the chapter more quickly than you expected (or when they decide they're not as interested in the originally-scheduled plot as you thought they would be), to advance a character arc, or to make a session happen even though you didn't have enough time to plan.

WRITING A CHAPTER

Just as a story is a plot thread within the larger chronicle, so a chapter is a little story within a story. Because of their shorter duration, however, chapters tend to begin in medias res and end with either a winding down or a cliffhanger.

Perhaps the easiest way to improve your chronicle is to ask your players what they plan to do next chapter at the end of every gaming session. Arguably, the second easiest is to recap the events of the previous chapter at the beginning of each session and to include in that the plans the players had for the current chapter. Taken together, these simple things will make it much less likely that your planning for each chapter will go to waste. There will still be times when the players set out to do one thing and end up getting distracted by something else entirely, forcing you to improvise (or use a drop-in plot), but the probability is much lower when the players communicate their intentions to the Storyteller and the Storyteller essentially tells them what she has planned for the current chapter.

As with planning a story, it is possible to plan a general arc in advance — or even a specific climactic scene or three — but a Storyteller should expect, and even welcome, the surprises the players throw him along the way. If your troupe's gaming sessions are roughly the same length each time, it will get easier for you to gauge how much you can expect to accomplish within a single chapter and plan accordingly.

While you can't always know how each chapter will end, consider what you expect to accomplish before its final scene ends. Then, during the chapter, skip planned complications or introduce new ones with an eye to keeping on schedule so that you can leave off at a good breaking point. Sometimes this will be at a cliffhanger or reveal, which will get you some good-natured groans. Other times it will be following a scene of planning or in the aftermath of a climax, which is just as good most of the time. What you want to avoid, especially if members of your troupe have inflexible ending times, is beginning an involved social scene or lengthy combat with just enough time to get into the scene but not enough time to finish it.

EXAMPLE: THE TWINS' CITIES

Even before the planning session, Aaron knows that he tends to build sandbox chronicles. Aaron runs his game approximately every two weeks for three hours at a time, and his chronicles typically last 12-18 months. The shorter sessions make it hard for players to earn more than a Beat or two per chapter, so Aaron supplements Beats with a full

Experience per player per chapter. Aaron feels comfortable with a brood that begins play as starting characters. They're still beginning characters, but given his penchant for long chronicles and generosity with Experiences, he's confident that they will rise to be true terrors before the final curtain falls.

Aaron's players are reliable and usually pretty good about providing advance warning of any absences, and he will only cancel if either he or three players can't be there. Jake has a growing family, however, and sometimes he has to stay home to take care of a sick kid, or needs to take the little ones to Grandma's house on game day. Noel and Rachel are immersive roleplayers who enjoy interacting with the characters and are perfectly content to make their own stories. Marc and Jake prefer a little bit more structure and enjoy roleplaying as a game to be analyzed, played, and defeated. Jenny is a more casual gamer who can hold her own, but she isn't likely to take notes during sessions in order to keep up with the 100 different plots Aaron's chronicles tend to have.

CHRONICLE STRUCTURE AND MOOD

Although Aaron expects to run a largely sandbox chronicle, it's clear to him, based on the material the players gave him, that it will follow a rough three-act structure. In the first act, the brood will be exploring the region — finding and claiming its Chambers, finding living arrangements, adapting their methods of feeding to the new environs, and familiarizing themselves with the supernatural creatures who reside there. The second act will involve identifying which factions serve which city's Apex, and the characters will need to choose a side to back in the conflict — whether that is one of the two currently shaping the local dreamscape or a third party that can topple them both (or who can fill the power vacuum left when the brood does so). The third act will be in the execution of whatever strategy the brood ultimately chooses, with the chronicle ending when they've elevated a replacement Apex and consolidated their power in the region.

Originally, Aaron had contemplated making the choice between Minneapolis and Saint Paul fairly obvious — once the brood successfully identified the lines of power. After the decision to make the mage conflict between the Diamond Orders and the Free Council, though, he believes his players will appreciate some additional ambiguity. Each Apex is served by some benign and some malevolent groups. The Free Council (probably unknowingly) supports the Apex candidate of Minneapolis, while the Diamond Orders help prop up the Apex candidate of Saint Paul. He recognizes that this will probably encourage lateral thinking as the players decide they can't support either of the current

contenders and have to find a third solution to the puzzle. Aaron is okay with that, though. Half the fun for him is seeing how his troupe solves impossible conundrums of exactly that kind.

ALLIES AND THREATS

Aaron contemplates the fate of the missing Beast. The brood isn't likely to solve this mystery until the second act, but Aaron knows Noel is the kind of player who will pursue this investigation much earlier in the chronicle than that. While Aaron isn't prepared to hash out all the details yet, he decides it will be more interesting if the friend's disappearance was the result of something other than the conflict between the two cities. Noel's character has been in his friend's Lair (as has Jenny's Eshmaki), and he knows exactly where her Chambers touch the world. Aaron decides that the brood will discover that those Chambers still exist but that their dreamscape reflections have been altered to the point of being unrecognizable. He posits that the constantly-shifting Apex Trait has attracted some kind of dream creature – maybe an Unfettered Horror or maybe something else entirely – to the area. Whatever its nature, however, this dream monster represents an additional threat that the brood will eventually need to deal with.

Next, Aaron uses Rachel's list of local friends as a starting point from which to build a stable of drop-in characters. By the end, he has a few dozen characters, including at least three or four more detailed character sketches to represent each faction of supernatural creatures active in the area. In the same vein, he comes up with a few plot hooks meant to get the brood involved in the affairs of the various groups – whether in friendly or antagonistic roles. He assigns each group of supernatural creatures to one of the two contending Apexes and picks a couple to be turncoats or spies.

Finally, he creates a character sheet for the jaguar monster, which is likely to be an early threat. He'll have to find some way to keep Jenny's character involved in the story once she takes this quarry prisoner. He makes some notes to the effect that it should escape or be rescued and recruited by whichever faction of supernatural creatures has most reason to hate the brood at that point.

BUILDING A STORY AND CHAPTER

Knowing that the first story will focus on finding and claiming Chambers in the area, Aaron fleshes these out in detail – including the physical locations, dreamscape reflections, and origins. He picks one to be the mysterious Beast's remote Chamber, of course, and he creates half a dozen other Chambers for the players to discover along the way. In several cases he doesn't have a specific physical location in mind, expecting to drop them in at appropriate times and places as the chronicle unfolds.

Finally, he decides how to introduce the first chapter. He could start outside of the Twin Cities, with Marc's revelation about the jaguar monster, but that seems likely to lend itself to a lot of time wasted discussing the logistics of the move, and Aaron wants to skip right past all that. Instead, he settles on a less action-oriented opening:

The brood is in a rented van in early January. They can just make out the skyline of Minneapolis as they drive north on 35W. As they enter the city limits, the vehicle's display notes that the exterior temperature has dropped significantly in just the last 10 miles – from 20 degrees to -10 degrees. The GPS directs them to exit, but a road construction sign warns that the exit is closed. The next sign doesn't suggest a detour, instead helpfully suggesting that they “use alternate routes” to get to their destination. They soon find themselves in downtown Minneapolis, at the peak of rush hour. And that's when the GPS suddenly loses satellite reception. Welcome to the Twin Cities.

EVERY STORYTELLER IS DIFFERENT

If this example used another member of Aaron's group as the Storyteller, the process would have unfolded very differently. Rachel excels at running long arc chronicles with a clear high concept. She would have worked out many of the region's details in advance, and the troupe would have spent more time connecting their characters to each other and to the region's occult society. Jake, meanwhile, has a reputation for good episodic chronicles. He would have had the troupe spend more time creating local legends to inspire new episodes and less time hashing out minor supporting characters.



CREATING A CHRONICLE IS REWARDING...

... so why should the Storyteller have all the fun? The whole troupe should get in on the action, making for a chronicle that reflects the preferences and predilections of all the players.

Building a Legend is a guide for doing exactly that — making a cohesive chronicle, starting with character creation, for *Beast: The Primordial*. It includes advice on creating Storyteller characters, folding in real-world history, and populating the Primordial Dream.



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