

Mind's Eye Theatre

LAW S

of the

Wild

CHANGING BREEDS: 3



A Supplement for playing Ananasi
and Ratkin

WEREWOLF
THE APOCALYPSE

Mind's Eye Theatre

LAW S

Wild

CHANGING BREEDS: 3

Won't You Come Into My Parlor?

The vermin are always swept aside — few consider what they see. What does the rat see from his hiding-spot under the wharfs? What does the humble spider, spinning in the corner, overhear? No one asks and no one knows. The Ratkin continue their earth-wars from the shadows, and the Ananasi prepare for a time when balance will return. One day, these not-so-meek will inherit the earth....

The Rats in the Walls

Changing Breeds Book Three comprises the worlds of the Ananasi and the Ratkin. Here the Ananasi build their webs and plots in deference to their hostage queen, serving the primal forces of the universe. Here the Ratkin nurse bitter grudges against the Garou and humanity who hunt them, and fight the Weaver's strangling webs with their own brand of eco-terrorism. Patterned after the first two Changing Breeds books, here is everything a player could want to create and play one of these strange shapeshifters.



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CHANGING BREEDS: 3.



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By Way of Introduction

If you've already seen this because you own **Changing Breeds Book 1** or **2**, you can head on over to what you're looking for. If this is your first outing with the **Changing Breeds**, you'll want to pause and look at this.

Welcome to the **Changing Breeds Book 3**, the second supplemental book covering the other shapeshifters. Here are the icy, predatory Ananasi, whose devotion to their imprisoned queen has earned them few friends. Here are the cunning Ratkin, who fight a dirty war to take back what was stolen from them. Here you'll also find notes that refer you to **Laws of the Wild**.

It's inevitable when putting together a supplemental book that something gets dropped on the way due to space and other considerations. In this case, there's a number of effects that are identical to **Garou Gifts** or systems, and we figured it would be a bigger bang for the buck to have new material here rather than yet another rehash of a Gift or Trait from a book you already have.

So, if you want to get the most out of this, you'll need **Laws of the Wild** to assist with basic character creation, definitions of some Gifts and a framework for the cosmology. Chalk it up to these sneaky critters who decided the best way to hide secrets was to make others go looking for them.

This is also a good place to note that these critters often espouse views that are, well... extreme. We at White Wolf do not advocate such extreme views as the Twitchers espouse, and certainly we do not condone terrorism on any level. Please don't go out and take the Twitcher philosophy to heart. Most of you already know this; some need a reminder. Thank you. Now go have fun.





Ananasi

Introductions

In the sacred caves, the Ananasi gathered. The chosen had guided the newly changed ones to the caves so they could learn and understand. More importantly, they had to listen and, because of the lessons, to obey. The first teacher, a girl barely out of her teens, stepped forward to address the youngsters....

Welcome to Ananasi 101. This is a short course and there are no repeats. We only offer this lecture series just once. Feel free to ask questions — we'll answer the best we can, but we don't know it all. Only one of us knows it all — and I do mean *all* — but she'll be by later.

When did you first feel the changes happening? Was it when you cut yourself and licked the cut and the blood tasted different, or was it when life seemed to lose its color and excitement for you? Did you give your family cause for concern? For a good half of you, I suspect you became aware of your changes when you suddenly fell out of your web and realized with great wonder, you suddenly had legs and logic. I'm sorry if you crushed your garden when you became human — the Metamorphosis is sometimes shocking. For some of you, I know the change was traumatic, but there is a reason for it. There is a reason for nearly everything. I will start by telling you about my own Metamorphosis, to explain what occurred to you and what you've become. If you don't understand this, you're a danger to yourself and others.

My name's Monica Austin. I was a typical teenager — I liked going out on Friday nights to football games, I went to school dances. My parents loved me, I had many friends, even had a boyfriend who was good-looking and smart. But I stopped caring. I know some would think I had the perfect life, but it left me dissatisfied. I knew there had to be more than trig class and



making out behind the bleachers. I became what some would call clinically depressed. My boyfriend dumped me. I lost weight and I wasn't even dieting. I spent all my time listening to the radio and lurking in my room. Even my mom, whom I loved, couldn't persuade me to get help. I wasn't really unhappy, though. I was just apathetic. This is one of the blessings of our kind, or at least, during my adolescence it was a blessing. Who wouldn't want to not give a rat's rear end if they had a pimple the day of the prom?

Well, while I was having a lovely wallow in my teen angst, I started noticing some things. I call it "feeling the spider under the skin." I'd get these tickly, strange sensations as if something moving around under my skin. Kind of horror movie-ish. It didn't freak me out. I found it to be quite cool. If I looked carefully, I could literally see the skin moving in waves and the muscles contracting underneath. I didn't tell anyone, though, didn't want to be sent to a shrink when I was just fine. I felt sick, but didn't want to go to the doctor, and boy, am I glad I didn't! By this point, I was already part spider, like all of you who were human born. The doctor would have had some unpleasant surprises examining me.

The weird skin sensations went on for another week before the change began in earnest. I had one of my spider eyes pop out of my forehead. I felt it emerge — it didn't hurt, just felt funny, and I looked in the mirror. There was a perfectly round black eye over my human one. It was so interesting, but I knew it'd make school difficult, not to mention the panic my parents would have when they saw I was more of a freak than they thought I was. With concentration, I was able to will the eye to go away and had the impression I had dreamed the eye up when the Hunger hit me. It hit hard. I went down to the grocery and bought myself a few steaks, then I ran them through the juicer while my mom was working and my dad was away for a long weekend on business. Juicers work surprisingly well on meat, they even remove the gristle. Just gives you the stuff you crave. Don't wrinkle your nose at me; you likely did something worse to end your Hunger! How many of you fed from your folks or friends the first time? Thought so. Look, there's no shame in that, as long as you didn't kill them. Okay, back to the story...

I had undergone my Metamorphosis and was as clueless as you are now. I spent a week trying to live a normal life, I felt a lot better now and had even found out I could become a very large, very ugly spider during that time. Lots of fun, that trick. Not long after that, the teachers came for me as they did for you, and I sat where you're sitting. Since then, I've worked hard to achieve our goals, and when I'm not doing that — and occasionally when I am — I work as a chef at a five-star hotel. Yes, even cooking can work to serve Ananasa. The way to *anyone's* heart is through their stomach, and great skill with kitchen knives and cleavers as sharp as wit come in handy.

Okay, storytime's over. This is the important stuff. What is our business? Restoring the Symmetry is our business, and business is booming. Ananasa gave us the order and we have carried it out for ages, even since the era of



Neanderthal man. What is this Symmetry and why does it need restoring? Because it was lost.

The Genesis

Before I tell you how it got lost, you need to know how it was founded. Once upon a time, there was nothing but the Wyrms. There was nothing, a void without light or darkness or sound. That nothing was the Uncreator. We call him the Wyrms. He was sleeping and sated, his belly full from having eaten all that had come before. He was little more than a fat, bloated tick in this state. While the Wyrms slept off his appetite, the Wyld came into existence. The Wyld was all that the Wyrms was not. She was the Creator, full of vibrance and chaos and slightly crazy. Wyrms hated Wyld from the beginning. Wyrms was unable to tolerate the changes and variables the Wyld created from the stuff she made, like noise and light. Wyld created and the Wyrms destroyed, and they'd have fought forever, undoing each other's works if it hadn't been for the Weaver.

Wyld claims she gave birth to the Weaver to curb the constant feeding frenzy of the Wyrms. The Wyrms likewise claims responsibility for the existence of the Weaver, saying the Weaver was created to set off the constant changes of the Wyld and add stability. Weaver claims she was created to strike a balance between the two forces. From the chaos and entropy of the Wyld and Wyrms, order was created and order was the Weaver. There was finally symmetry in the Universe, a delicate balance between existence and oblivion. It was in this state that the world as we know it was created.

Wyld and Wyrms continued on with their chores, but Weaver created balance between their duties. What Wyld created, Weaver prevented Wyrms from eating immediately. Wyrms saw how futile his constant wars with Wyld were and allowed the changes to occur. Wyrms was still as voracious as ever, but agreed to wait longer between meals. To reward Wyrms, Weaver shaped the things in the Universe and gave each a different shape and texture. He would rather wait to eat the best cookies than eat them hot out of Wyld's oven and scorch his tongue. Wyrms ate some things more quickly than others because they were delicious and he could not hold himself back. Wyrms's gluttony was not cured, but the agreement was an appetite suppressant. Wyld liked this deal of Weaver's because it allowed her creations to live longer, even if Weaver restricted them to certain shapes, times and places.

Eventually, the cycle of the universe became boring. Wyrms munched away, Weaver shaped and made her skillful placements on the plates, and Wyld created on and on. The same-old-same-old routine bored Wyld to tears and she wanted something more. So Wyld created life. She gave minds to life. Life were minute creatures, simply plopped into existence, so far removed from the Triad (that's Wyrms, Wyld and Weaver) the things were barely noticeable, but they were tasty. Wyrms ate the life when its allotted time ended. This bothered Weaver, who nearly always had a bee in her bonnet and



needed something to do, so she started shaping life. Weaver saw life's situation as a challenge and began to give form to life. The Wyrms never agreed to these changes to creation, however. Weaver had changed the flavors and the seasonings just weren't to his taste. Weaver touched life and made it into singular entities, each one special and not like any other, that would live, die and be forgotten. Wyld did not approve of Weaver adding to her stew without consulting the master chef, and seasoned the Life again, allowing life the ability to change the forms the Weaver had begun for them. This is where the troubles we Ananasi work to correct truly began.

Weaver was hurt that Wyld had changed what she had already finished. Weaver's work would never be done at this point, and Weaver wanted time for a slice of Linzer torte with whipped cream and a nice mocha latté. Wyld declared she did not like the forms that Weaver had given the life creations, and therefore she gave them the ability to change. Wyrms were very upset because the alterations changed their diet, and Wyld had given herself the ability to make changes to life without their stamp of approval after it was completed. He demanded the right to taste-test the things before they were sent out of the cosmic kitchen. Since Wyld had done that, Wyrms saw their agreement as having been broken. If Wyld could create without permission, then the Wyrms could destroy things without permission and he did. Wyld and Wyrms' arguing destroyed many of the forms Wyld created. Many other things survived, and while her siblings were caught up in their arguing, Weaver touched these things and reweave their patterns, altering them as she saw fit. When Weaver was done, she asked her siblings to look at her handiwork. She believed she had perfected things while they were wrestling. They would age and die eventually, but before they did, they would have an opportunity to create more of their own and so, life would continue in a different form. Weaver believed her changes made for an excellent compromise. The menu would change but still be edible and could be presented artistically.

This brought a halt to the fighting, and the Triad considered these things and watched as life grew on Gaia's back. Gaia was Wyld's first creation and we live on Gaia's back. Evolution began, and the amphibians and reptiles crawled from the primordial ooze. It was at this time that the insects came into existence. The life cycle was as it should be. There was balance. For each life-form that died and satisfied the Wyrms' hunger, new ones were born and nothing was wasted. Things grew and prospered at this time, but Wyld was not satisfied — it was all too clean and neat. Wyld didn't mind cat hair on the countertops. She was willing to upset the delicate balance yet again and turned to creating something completely new. She created spirits and gave a spirit to each thing that lived, even the worlds she had created, but only Gaia, where we live, is significant to our tale.

Gaia was bright, beautiful, and like her creator, she wanted constant change. However, Gaia saw the merit in following the directions exactly, and permitted the Weaver to shape Her and give Her purpose, and allowed the Wyrms to uncreate. All things on Gaia would die, even Gaia Herself, but it



would take a very long time before Gaia would die and be eaten by the Wyrn since Gaia was so powerful. She had to simmer a long time before she was tender enough.

Cosmic Sibling Rivalry

Weaver grew jealous of the Wyld's ability to create. Weaver was sad and resentful because she could only shape and improve upon Wyld's original creations. Wyld was reckless in her creating, and Weaver went about tweaking them and redefining their shapes. Wyld would come and radically change the things after Weaver was done, and Weaver grew more and more frustrated that her work was never done, that Wyld kept changing what she had perfected. She'd never get her coffee break at this point, and it started to make her go as nutty as a cashew. Wyrn stayed out of this quarrel and simply killed things, but that was his job. After a long time of seething and brandishing her bread knife, Weaver decided there was no symmetry in the Universe. Wyld was complete in herself as part of the Triat, but she was alone and empty as she could neither create nor destroy. Weaver decided to create a companion to keep her company. This was how Ananasa was born into the Universe.

Ananasa was created from the Weaver's own energy and was kneaded and shaped until Weaver was pleased with the results. Weaver was happy with her and named her creation Ananasa. She said to Ananasa "You will be second only to me, and you will help me in my duties." In the beginning, Ananasa did what she was designed to do, but the tasks given to her were too simple. She was far better suited to greater things than being a mere prep cook. She began to make changes of her own, making the insects less like their brethren, giving the world more than it had to thrive, breaking the pattern of the hive and creating non-flying insects. Soon there were many types of insects. Variety is the spice of life, and it provided the Wyrn with new morsels. The Wyld liked Ananasa's work and gave spirits to what she recreated. They became friends and worked together to create the diversity of life we see today.

Weaver was not pleased, however, and did not understand that Gaia was living, and therefore not static. Weaver only wanted perfection, order and perpetual continuity without change. She is very dour and humorless. While many say we get many of our characteristics from Weaver, I beg to differ, of course. Well, Weaver wished for her creations to live forever and never die. Food has to be eaten or it goes bad. No one wants the leftovers from the back of the fridge. The wish to have leftovers that never go bad or are eaten while fresh broke the balance. Ananasa told Weaver that Wyld was necessary to the Universe. Weaver disagreed and left. Weaver set out to capture Wyld believing that she could not alter Weaver's perfection if she was captive. Weaver could not capture Wyld as she was pure chaos and without form, but Weaver tried, and the struggle between the two siblings created harmful



energies that Ananasa caught and used to create new things. While they struggled, Wyrn came to watch the work of Ananasa and asked her what she was doing. She told Wyrn she was creating a new life, one that was both Weaver and Wyld. Wyrn was depressed as he could not cook, only eat, and so she asked his help in her original dish. If a creature were made of equal parts Wyld, Wyrn and Weaver, it would be the perfect creature. Like vinaigrette, it had to be blended. The result was Spider. Ananasa plated her creation and sent it out.

The Triat looked upon the platter and smiled at Ananasa's work. Then Spider did the unthinkable and created its own spirit. The Triat was shocked and had not expected this, but they were proud of it. Spider could hunt and kill on its own, it could create things of great beauty and perfection and it could adapt to thrive anywhere on Gaia's back. It was the forces of the Triat in balance. It was independent, strong, creative, industrious, patient and an efficient killer. It was also delicious and nutritious, as you're quickly discovering. The Triat debated what to do about Spider — it was almost *too* perfect and would unbalance Gaia if left on its own. So Weaver reshaped Spider and made it small to control the insects if they got too hungry and greedy. The Triat agreed to this proposal and Spider was set on Gaia's back and spread quickly, devouring the insects — I'll get to them in a second — that overpopulated Gaia and harried her. There was finally peace, and the other animals came into being. Weaver began to complain again about the constant changes of evolution. Ananasa began to fear the balance would be lost so she sought to understand the Triat better.

Wyld spoke with Gaia, and they decided to give the animals spirits so they could protect the Wyld's creations. Wyld placed the spirit of Lizard in the bodies of the lizards on Gaia and made them Gaia's memory. They agreed and were named Mokolé. The Wyld gave the spirit of Shark to the sharks in the waters and said they would survive any sort of atrocity. They agreed and were called Rokea. Weaver was envious of Wyld's giving the animals a duty to protect and serve (she'd missed the interviews and they were the new waiters on the staff), and Weaver asked her companion for advice. Ananasa told Weaver she also could give her creations spirits and a job to serve. But Weaver would not be outdone by Wyld and made many protectors for Gaia. She created the insect races and charged them with creating order from chaos and told them they would thrive in multitudes. The staff was too large for such a small café. The moths would not agree to this, and Weaver did the unthinkable: she destroyed their spirits. She utterly smashed them out of existence, spiritually. Wyrn was thrilled — someone else *finally* understood his motivations! Wyld was furious and believed the Weaver had gone mad, and struck out against her. They began a catfight of epic proportions. Humankind came of this battle. The Wyld and Weaver battled, and in process of the battle, the Weaver calcified Luna. All life on the moon was lost — it remains now devoid of life and change, but its spirit still lives on. The loss of Luna caused the Triat to stop bickering and see the damage they had done.



While they fought, Ananasa took Spider's spirit into herself and they made children. She placed the little spirits she bore into the bodies of spiders on Gaia's back. Then she told the little ones that she was their mother and loved them so they would do as she said. The Ananasi agreed. And this is how the Ananasi were brought into the world. Ananasa is not Weaver; she is more than her sister and mother. She has a different view of the Universe, and that was apparent when Weaver did the unthinkable a second time. Weaver just will never leave good enough alone.

The Wyrms now wanted Weaver, who was incredibly beautiful to him since she had destroyed. Weaver did not want to share Wyrms' tastes, but did want the sweet taste of revenge. The Wyld's strike against her had set the wheels in motion. Weaver was sick of Wyld changing all she had done and came up with a plan. The Weaver invited the Wyrms to a rendezvous, claiming she wished to learn from him and be more like him, but when the Wyrms reached out to embrace his sister, he became trapped in her webs, and could not escape. Wyld could not help Wyrms escape, and the Wyrms were dragged off to Weaver's home. Ananasa asked the Wyld to protect her creations on Gaia because the Weaver would create a world without change and that was not right. But the statement came too late — the insects were too numerous and destroying everything. Ananasa turned to her children and asked that they stop the insects for the good of all. We obeyed, because we knew she would never betray us and loved us. The war raged on for ages — there were no others to aid our kind, and we knew the insect races could not be trusted. We destroyed them all and feasted on them, taking their spirits and memories into us so they could do no more harm. Only the empty shells of insects remained, mindless creatures. The other Changing Breeds were created during the War in the Heavens and left alone; they were young and harmless then. It was not known how Wyld would change them. Finally, Weaver stopped binding Wyrms in her webs. She looked to Gaia and saw her beloved insects were gone, replaced by mammals. Though she was angry with Ananasa for ordering the Ananasi to fight this battle on Gaia, she was too fearful of Wyld to ever violate the rules again and set to work immediately, creating the Great Web.

Gaia was complete at this time — She even had been sprinkled with parsley. Her land mass was solid and called Pangaea, and She was about to head into the dining room. As Wyld built the Great Web to separate the world of spirits from Gaia's life forms, terrible things occurred. The land on Gaia's back tore apart and became the continents. Gaia became as She is now, injured and in pain but healing slowly from the damages that occurred as the Great Web ripped Her apart. The plate was dropped and shattered. Fortunately, the Ananasi were spread throughout the land and when the fracture came, our kind existed on all the continents but one. After the Great Web divided the single colony, we set out to find new lands and left the green lush paradise of Africa. The first Ananasi who went south found the land to be barren and the native creatures died out in the frigid cold, as did the spiders. Ananasa had made us to live in warm climates. To this day, no Ananasi live in Antarctica



to honor the spirits of the first ones and to remind you always that she made us with a purpose and we must accept it and our frailties. We are not indestructible. Ananasa would not cheat the Wyrms and break the agreement. At this time, humans came into being, and they showed Ananasa more that she would need to do for her little treats. It was the second lesson on how to make her children stronger.

Ananasa saw worth in humans — they were adaptable and had wisdom, so we brought the two forms of life together. We relished our new forms and enjoyed the sensations and experiences of our human bodies. Humans were our companions, and some worshipped us as gods for our power. We used them for blood and their forms to breed with. But gods change, and they went from respecting us to hating us. We went from being revered to being hunted, and it was the result of our own pride. The humans created legends about us, and we became the stuff of their nightmares in our natural form. Use this to your advantage, but hide it for your safety.

Humans were interesting and delightful creations. Each was unique, and all had the ability to change the world around them. This they did with great zeal; they formed communities that grew into villages and then into cities. As humans settled into communities, we joined them. Humans were necessary to us. Before we were able to become human, we only needed the blood of animals to feed ourselves, but in order to remain human in appearance, we needed the blood of humans to breed and survive. The delicate form of a human is not easy for us, so we must have the essence of humans within us. Their blood is their power, although they do not comprehend it, and to drink too deeply of it is to kill them. The strength of their souls lives in their blood.

Humans became the dominant species on Gaia, and the first Ananasi born of a human mother was born 100,000 years ago in the Simvan Mountains of Africa. There were Neanderthal Ananasi, yes. They were destroyed 30,000 years ago so the others Ananasa bred would survive after the atrocity of Krapina in Yugoslavia. They killed all the humans of the city in frenzy, and after all the humans were gone, they turned upon themselves. All died. It was the greatest tragedy our kind has ever experienced and it was so painful for us to recall that Ananasi took the precious human frailty of pain from us. It was to show us the wishes of the Mother were greater than the weakness of her children.

After this, only the modern Ananasi survived — we are their descendants. We spread ourselves across the globe and were soon everywhere, all connected through Ananasa's Web. By keeping in connection with the Ananasi closest to you, all are connected and all serve the will of Ananasa. Her will keeps us alive and keeps us linked. Through this link from our Sylies, we are of one purpose and that is to serve the purpose of the Mother-Queen. The Web that connects us is the expression of Ananasa's immense wisdom and keeps her children organized, despite the distances and differences. We do fight, even



amongst ourselves, but even in our internal struggles, we do so under the leadership of Ananasa.

The colony in the East took a different path than we did and call themselves Kumō. They serve only the Wyrms, and human shape is only a guideline to them. Ananasa has permitted this, however, and we are not to question her reasons. We are to obey and be good boys and girls, and for this, we will be rewarded by our Mother. I will get to that in time.

Change and Chaos

While we adapted to our new forms and were still able to mourn the loss of the earliest Ananasi, the Weaver grew ever stronger, pulling Gaia apart and rending the spirit from the flesh trying to prevent Wyld from creating more Changing Breeds. She made a complete mess of the kitchen, forgetting to wash the dirty dishes and leaving them all over the countertops. Weaver was bound to the imprisoned Wyrms because she called on his powers, and this created imbalance. The Symmetry was broken because Wyld was weaker without the other two helping. Weaver toiled on, creating order, but the Wyrms struggled and thrashed about so much that he was unable to do his work. The Wyrms were hurting and went mad from the pain. His balance was destroyed while he writhed about in Weaver's web. After millennia of struggle, he had forgotten his job was to eat and destroy. Instead of maintaining balance on the Wyld's constant creations, he set out to recreate the world according to his own warped perceptions. The Great Web continues to strengthen, dividing the Umbra from the Gaia Realm and making it harder for the creations of Gaia and Wyld to do their duties. The Great Web is a mess, tangled and flawed, and no spider can tolerate such disorder!

Ananasa tried to prevent Weaver from rending the spirit and flesh, but for her indiscretion, she was punished most harshly and sent away without dinner. Weaver imprisoned Ananasa in a perfect opal of stasis, a flawless cell, and threw her to the Wyrms, believing that Wyrms would devour her. Wyrms disappointed Weaver; if he could not have Weaver, he could have Ananasa. Ananasa became his treasure, a helpless love-slave tied to the opal. But worse, she became a ploy and a tool with which he could control the Ananasi.

The Wyrms kept Ananasa silent for a long time, and we felt abandoned — our Mother and constant advisor had turned her back on us. We call this the Great Silence. Humans had become the dominant species by this time, seasoned by the Weaver. The Weaver hated us for killing her insects and ignored us. In pity, the Wyld blended us with the humans and we became what we are now, part-spider, part-spirit and part-human. As with the other changing creatures, we had a symmetry not found in the other creatures on Gaia's back. During the silence of the Mother-Queen, we did as we had always done, making sure the insects never returned to hurt Gaia again and we snacked on those we found. The Weaver's silence was seen as a bad omen, but the Wyld still cared for us, helped us when she could, and tried to guide us as



Ananasa did. Many of our kind began to look to the Wyld as a surrogate parent, and started living by her tenets, seeking protection from mad Grandmother Spider. Most, however, simply followed our first purpose and killed the insects. Not all of us forgot the purpose the Mother-Queen had given us, although we were grateful to the Wyld for watching over us as we did our chores and remembering that we were created partly from her essence.

The Hope of Anansi and Opinion Turns Against Us

In time, the Wyrms came to us, and tried to play "Let's Make a Deal." He explained, through his minions, that Ananasa was alive but was his captive. He brought this bargaining chip to our leaders. He offered to spare Ananasa if we, her children, would serve him. We had no choice; we agreed. The Wyrms did not force us to follow any path. Instead, his twisted minions brought us his orders, and to keep our Mother-Queen safe, we carried them out. We were ordered to kill entire villages of people, and for Ananasa's sake, we did so. We lied to those whom we had wished to aid, but for Ananasa's life, we did so. The Wyrms worked not only against humans but also against the Ananasi's will. Over the course of some 200 years, the Wyrms' insanity twisted many of our ancestors from the inside. His philosophy made many Ananasi insane and unbalanced. To him, those were more savory. To us, they were neglectful of their heritage. We were never prepared for such a situation, and so we did not stop him. The emptiness that was previously filled by the Mother-Queen was now filled with the Wyrms' poisons for some of the Ananasi. The diet of insanity and poison was damaging to us. Yet, even at its very worst, there were some who had hope, who believed Ananasi was still alive and needed her children.

One of our great leaders at this time had neither lost hope, nor gone over to the Wyrms. His name was Anansi. Anansi was unique; the Blessing of Ananasa that made the hearts of Ananasi grow cold never affected him. He was one who loved emotion and was prone to strong passions. What he lacked in strength from the Blessing, he made up for in wit and perseverance. When he heard of his Queen's capture, he left Gaia behind to find her. His quest took a very long time and was very painful. Anansi ordered his followers to not follow the Wyrms or his minions, and they obeyed him while he was gone in the Great Web. While he was gone, though, the Ovid discovered some of what had occurred and jumped to conclusions. They saw us as having been weak, having become servants of the Corruptor and they lashed out at us. They believed we'd all been twisted by the Wyrms' meddling.

The War Begins and the Ravens Help

The Garou were the most arrogant of all the Ovid and had long bickered with us. We disapproved of their Impergium, and often it was our Kinfolk that were chosen to die at their claws. But they did not understand the ways we



used our Kinfolk to reproduce and they used this claim of theirs, this Impergium, to start the War of Rage. Actually, we are to blame for it. The Wyrms saw what the Garou did to us and fuelled our pride, creating fury within us, and he then demanded we retaliate. By telling many Ovid they were next, we fanned the flames and soon there was an inferno on Gaia's back. All the Ovid warred against the prideful Garou, fighting to make the "Warriors of Gaia" pay for their hubris. We are prideful, but we change, whereas the Garou do not.

Meanwhile, Anansi continued on to Wyrms' lair, called Malfeas. He found the Mother-Queen there, imprisoned and unable to communicate, but she smiled when she saw Anansi, for he was her chosen one. He tried to free her from the Opal but could not. She did not want to be freed, for then the Wyrms would have her as a lover; the Opal protected her as much as it help her captive. Anansi did desire one thing: to speak with her children again and nothing more. Anansi returned to the Gaia realm and came back to a much different place.

When Anansi returned, entire races of Changing Breeds had literally been decimated; some were nowhere to be found. The Garou did not play favorites in their mass slaughter of the Wyld and Gaia's creations, and all races suffered great casualties. After he had learned what had occurred in his absence, Anansi began to plan, methodically spinning a strategy that would stop the slaughters and aid his Queen simultaneously.

Anansi was clever and, like many of us, knew exactly the right buttons to push to achieve his goals. He knew the Corax were incapable of keeping a secret, and could not resist squawking about anything pretty and powerful. To protect themselves, the Corax had remained neutral in the War of Rage, and that made them even better pawns for Anansi. He went to the Corax and told them of a great treasure he had seen in Malfeas. The Corax took the bait he dangled before them and decided they would have this treasure at any cost. But they were aware of their limitations and knew they were too small and weak to raid Malfeas for this wonderful prize. They needed an army and knew the Garou were always itching to fight. The Corax greatly embellished the tale told to them by Anansi when they brought it to the Garou. The Garou believed the treasure in Malfeas to be the very Heart of the Wyrms, and if the Corax could get it, they could destroy the Wyrms' stranglehold and corruption on Gaia. This gave the Garou a purpose other than killing off the Ovid. They decided — and this is amusing — to raid the Wyrms' lair and take the Heart. Hence they'd save the world. They frequently have this delusion that they and they alone can save the world. It is a useful thing for us, as we can use it to our own advantage.

The Garou warriors went off to Malfeas in great numbers to rip out the Heart of the Wyrms. Many died, but they were more fortunate than the ones who did not. Some who survived were eaten alive by the Wyrms and then spat back out. The results were truly disgusting! Their visages and minds were now



as twisted as the Wyrms. They became corruptors and still exist, taking our places in the Corruptor's war on the Universe. The Garou who were not eaten or killed found the Opal and set about trying to break it open, to destroy what they thought was the Heart of the Wyrms. It was impossible; the Wyrms is not so easily beaten, and they did little else but waste vital energy trying to break it apart. For all their effort, they did manage to make a flaw in the Opal, small enough to not endanger Ananasa but large enough to suit her need to speak with us. They planned to move the now blackened, sooty Opal to a safer place where they could continue to chip away at it. Just as the Garou were about to take the stone from Malfeas, Ananasa made her presence known and she thanked them for helping her.

Naturally, the Garou were peeved; really, they were outright pissed off. They had been tricked and immediately blamed the Corax, who they believed had played a cruel prank on them like the Nuwisha did. They would have waged war and destroyed the Corax if Anansi had not come forth and spoken the truth. Anansi did not want the Corax to suffer for being pawns. By taking responsibility for the plan, he did more than spare the Corax, he made the Garou lose face; they had been used. This made the Garou hate Anansi more than the others, and they soon forgot all about the War of Rage and hunted only Ananasi. They had a challenge ahead of them, for we are little and many when it is best for us, and we are everywhere. Often they hunted us successfully. Sacrifices were made so the rest of us would live. Those who died so we may live are remembered. We are tolerant of our sufferings and never forget.

The War of Rage burned itself out, and around this time, the Impergium ended. The Garou stopped culling the humans and allowed them to breed freely. Some werewolves regret this change; others believe it was a boon to them. They disagree among themselves and suffer the flaw of infighting among their kin groupings. We Ananasi are better than that as we have no races or tribes to separate us. We are all Ananasi, regardless of what we believe or what different components compose us. Yet the Garou *still* argue over the end of the Impergium. No matter what, it is too late to return to culling the humans. They are too many and too powerful. Can you imagine werewolves raiding the suburbs to kill humans while they sleep? Yes, it is quite silly! Best of all, most Garou know it!

Weaver was happy now, she could hire a new assistant — humans — to replace Ananasa's chiding and scolding, and humans were eager to assist her in the name of progress. The Garou acted macho and turned on themselves. We watched and learned from them over time, as Ananasa ordered. She also taught us something after the First War of Rage that we do not understand, but perhaps we are not meant to: the structure of the Ananasi.



Organization of the Ananasi

Monica stepped back, and a middle-aged man in a three-piece suit came forward. He began with: "I'm a lawyer by trade, so it was decided I was the best one to discuss the organization of things. Things are easily broken down among our people...."

Ananasa gave us the structure we have now. She gave separate orders to the strongest and wisest of her children. She created the Triumvirate of Aspects and the factions inside them. The Queen has given us the holy duty to take on the roles of the Primal Triat until balance can be restored to the universe. This duty is unquestioned as each of us assumes our role within this proxy Triat. We know that the vertebrate Changing Breeds can never understand our task, and will not end their own bickering and anger to do what must be done. We assume their required roles and work in near silence to heal a universe gone mad. Some of the Changing Breeds do not even wish to heal the Triat and would rather see parts of it destroyed. It cannot be destroyed, and they are foolishly ignorant of what could happen. They only see the wilderness dying as Weaver expands her hold. They do not understand that progress is something to also be embraced and welcomed. It is a double-edged sword they are not fit to wield. We, however, are fit to wield it.

We Ananasi know that the universe is a contradiction, and we treat this knowledge, as with all things, with a cold understanding of our place in the truth. Because the Web is built by manipulating the strands out and then back upon themselves to strengthen the structure, we must be able to break down the delicate architecture to understand the Web. The Great Web truly is the sum of its parts, and we are a part of it as much as any other species. We have advantages over others as we have the wisdom and blessing of Ananasa upon us. It takes great study and concentration to understand the place and purpose of all things, but it is what we were made to do. Woe to the one who is reluctant!

The Mother-Queen told Anansi and his followers to follow the laws of the Wyld, to find beauty in chaos and change, to live as the Wyld willed. She also reminded them that they are, first and foremost, Ananasi, woven of equal parts of the Triat. Ananasi and his followers obeyed her orders and turned to the path of Kumoti. Those serving the chaos of creation are the Kumoti, who try to achieve the goals of the Wyld, which is beaten and weakened by the stasis of the Weaver. The Kumoti have been described as chaos incarnate, but as with other labels of the Ananasi, they do not fit others' perceptions. These children of Ananasi are the ones who strive to create, and recreate — not in an attempt to find the perfect creation but just to create. They will make a hundred variations on the same theme, just so that the hundred variations exist. Think of the Impressionist artist Monet, who painted the same church over a hundred times, with the only differences being subtle variations of light and color. Minor differences? Perhaps to some, but to a Kumoti Ananasi, those minute differences are everything. They are less chaos than the creation



of variations, and are unpredictable for this reason. A Kumoti would craft a wonderful statue, only to destroy it and use the pieces in another creation. They enjoy the act of crafting more than the completed work. To predict a Kumoti is not impossible, only futile and frustrating.

Ananasa spoke to Arachne and her followers, and told them that the Weaver's way was best suited to the Ananasi. She took pains to emphasize their birthright as the first spirits created by Weaver, Wyld and Wyrn, and told them they must respect the sources of their spirits equally. They should not forget that the Weaver is insane and cruel and the Wyrn is warped from his entrapment. The Ananasi who set upon this path created by Ananasa are called the Tenere. The Tenere have been given the task of Primal Weaver, before the Great Mistress went mad attempting to achieve a perfection that cannot exist within itself. They strive for order and precision, but do not try to attack the chaos that could disturb their order. Instead, a Tenere whose ordered world is disrupted simply rebuilds the ordered structure in a new way, stronger and less susceptible to the disturbance. Think of an architect who builds a wonderful building only to see it destroyed in an earthquake. The architect would then go back to the drawing board and design the building with further safeguards and support. These are the shapers and innovators of the Damhàn. They break things down into their components and build on them to improve upon the works of the Weaver.

Last, but not least, Ananasa went to Hatar and gave him her instructions for her remaining children to follow the Wyrn, not as he is now, but as he was. They were to destroy and uncreate, but only when a thing had lived its rightful time and served its purpose as shaped by the Wyld and Weaver. The other Ovid see those who have been given the task of the Primal Wyrn as collaborators and servants of the Corrupted Wyrn. However, that is not the truth. In following the Primal Wyrn, they are the surgeon's scalpels, bringing death to forms that have reached their appointed end. They are the balance between the Weaver and the Wyld, making way for more creation and removing that which has been surpassed. They have no remorse for their tasks, as they do what must be done. As a gardener has no remorse for killing a weed, the Hatar have no remorse when they must be the bringers of death. It is a duty that someone must do and that cannot be neglected. They will kill a sorcerer who seeks immortality with the same cold precision with which they kill a baby who would burden its community. Emotions are great hindrance to the duty of a Hatar. Taking the place of the destructive force in the Universe allows no room for mercy or compassion. They know that from the remains of what they send into the earth, something new and beautiful will rise from the soil, so they do not bother with tears or grieving.

All the Ananasi followed the paths Ananasa set out before them. They were to never forget they were part of the Triat, shaped from all three, and symmetrical in structure as well as in form and spirit. She urged us to carry on, even if we had betrayed the trust of the other Changing Breeds, and warned us to defend each other even though we would walk different paths. Though



we walk three different paths, Ananasa views us all as being the same. The lowliest first rank Kumoti is the peer of a fifth rank Tenere in the eyes of Ananasa. No Ananasi's calling is more important than that of another Ananasi, and we respect the callings of those who are different from ourselves, provided they are Ananasi, of course. Even if we do not like each other and have fought each other, we are family and that must always come first. It was at this time that Ananasa gave us the Laws we follow. Commit these to memory. Yes, I suggest you take notes.

The Laws of Ananasa

Each of the Ovid has rules they must follow. The Garou have laws they call the Litany. The Ananasi follow a far older set of rules set down by Ananasa herself. Ananasa did not leave room in her Laws for interpretation. They are to be obeyed implicitly. Like good soldiers, we must follow orders or risk a court martial that is at best horrible, at worst unimaginable. If the Law says to do something, that is exactly how it must be done. A good Ananasi can use the excuse "I was only following orders" and be rewarded by his Queen. This attention to detail and the prevention of interpretation are part of Ananasa's Weaver heritage. Ananasi allows no room for error. Ananasa treats those who break her orders harshly, despite her unusual kindness to her kin. To those who break the Laws, a fate worse than death is meted upon the unfortunate spider. It is said the screams can last for months and nothing remains after the screams stop. This is only justice. The most important thing for an Ananasi to learn is to obey the Laws of Ananasa and not question them. The Laws are what Ananasa wants for her children and are necessary to help restore balance.

Obey the Mother-Queen in all things.

Do not bend the sacred laws created by Ananasa. Do not question them or her. Her wisdom is our guide in our mission to restore the Symmetry of the Great Web. If she says to do something, do it.

Defend your Brethren from all that would do them harm.

Even if we hate each other, we are a family and must stick together. Someday we may have to meet on the battlefield and kill each other, but we will not allow an outsider to kill us without doing whatever it takes to prevent this. We must show no mercy toward those who would harm a member of the Damhàn. It does not matter if the attacker is your child, your mother, your father, your husband or your wife — you must obey and defend your Ananasi brethren. This law helps assure our protection in this world. It was wise of Ananasa to teach us to work together and to put aside our human ties for our mutual defense. Those fools who have neglected this law have suffered a fate far worse than death.

Ananasi are also extremely territorial, and fighting between Ananasi is more common than people realize. Spiders are not communal creatures, and tend to be extreme and violent loners. To invade the home of an Ananasi is



to gain a merciless foe. We are mostly likely to work together to fight a common foe or problem, or to achieve some task set forth by Queen Ananasa. While we have no problems killing each other, we take great offense when a non-Ananasi tries to kill or harm one of our own. To threaten one Ananasi means retaliation from all.

Follow the Aspect and Faction Ananasa chooses for you.

If Ananasa says you are an Amari Aliquid, you are. You cannot change what she has chosen for you and must trust her judgement. Even if you are a bumbling idiot of the Agere, you are serving that faction and aspect for a reason. Even if you do not like the aspect and faction Ananasa has given you, you would do best to keep that opinion to yourself. No Ananasi are better than other Ananasi, period. What we want as individuals and what all others in the world want are secondary. What matters most is what role Ananasa has given to you in the plan to free her and restore the natural order of things.

Understand the ways of the Triat, both as they were and as they are. Know the difference.

We have a duty to fix the failures of the Triat since it became unbalanced. That is what Ananasa wants and that's what we do. If you are a Hatar and follow the ways of the Wyrms, you will not corrupt the world or create a hell on Earth. You will do what the Wyrms has forgotten and neglected to do: you will destroy and sow seeds of entropy. You will not make the world a better place for the Wyrms to take hold and twist into a reflection of himself. Remember, he holds our mother captive. If you are Tenere, you will remember that Grandmother Spider is as mad as a milliner and hell-bent on creating a static world. You cannot allow her to do so, even if you like her. She is wrong, and we must help Ananasa heal her of the insanity. If you are Kumoti, you are to protect and revel in the chaos of the Wyld. You will not associate with the Garou unless Ananasa requires it for the benefit of the Wyld. You are to be a force of change. You are not serving the Triat; you are assuming their responsibilities and accomplishing the purpose they are neglecting. Know what they were, what they have become and, with the Mother-Queen's guidance, what they will return to.

Know your enemies.

Trust no one who is not Ananasi. Everyone is your enemy. They may play nice and try to win your trust, but they do not serve the same goals as we do and therefore, they are enemies. Do not try to convert them. They cannot comprehend our ways. Do not tell them your secrets because they will use them against you. Do not let them influence you with their religions and cosmologies. They are wrong. Seduce them and use them instead, but remember they are not family, nor are they followers of Ananasa who understand her desires, so they are foes. This is the will of the Mother-Queen.

Know the Great Web for what it is.

The Great Web is the universe as a holistic creation. All things have their place and purpose in it. We were not gifted with infallible wisdom. Whatever



you encounter was meant to exist. Do not destroy it without attempting to fathom its purpose in the Great Web first. We must first understand that thread in the Web and its purpose before we decide to alter or cut that strand. Ananasa guides us in our decisions. Emotional and impulsive actions have no place in the Great Web. That is why we are the "Patient Ones" and must exercise caution in our activities. We are small beings compared to the Triat, and even they have made errors in the past. We have no room for "bad calls" in our work, for removing the wrong strand or changing anything that should not be altered can have disastrous results.

Know your place.

We know our purpose and must follow it. We know our creator and must meet the demands she places upon us. There are also other creatures who do the same, who serve their places and purposes. We respect the Mokolé because they have never given up their purpose and are steadfast. We admire the Rokea for their tenacity and holy duty to survive despite the odds they face off against.

Keep your mouth shut.

Our task is to fix the Great Web by serving Ananasa. No one else will understand this sacred task. They believe we are at war amongst ourselves, and we allow them to believe that we hate each other. They need not know our fights help achieve our task and are our way of making checks and balances between the natural forces of chaos, entropy and order. By sharing our duty with those who are not Ananasa's children, our enemies will eagerly take the place of our system of checks and balances with violence, and this will only put things more askew. Loose lips unweave all our works. Ananasi who interact with the Garou are there primarily to learn about them. While with them, we may help out, but ultimately we are there to gather knowledge. No Ananasi would sit down and give a lecture on our culture or history. We would never describe the War with Weaver's insect changers, their part in starting the War of Rage, or the importance of a Sylie. We would never try to explain the aspects and callings. If they learn by your actions, then maybe there is hope for them, but an Ananasi would never tell the secrets of the Mother-Queen.

Worship none but Ananasa.

We do the work the Triat has neglected since the War in the Heavens. We act on the orders of the Mother-Queen only, not the word of the Triat's minions. Trust her alone. Do not follow the "totems" of the other Ovid as they are twisted and serve the Triat as it is now and do not serve it as it was, as we do. They will mislead you. You have Ananasa and she is your god. Follow her, obey her, and never allow the false gods of the other Ovid to influence and sway you. Punishment for breaking this law is very harsh.

The speaker stepped back, and another of the teachers came forward. He appeared to be nondescript, but his voice carried a ring of authority in the echoing caves. He paused to polish his wire-framed glasses as he began to speak.



Ananasi Biology

Weaver rewarded us with a few weaknesses. Cold kills us, and slowly shivering to death in a deep freezer is not the way I want to go down for the count. I aspire to dying old, happy and successful while dozing off in my Sylie if and when Ananasa wills it. Humans in numbers can cause some serious damage. Gunshot wounds we can cope with, unless a SWAT team is firing on us. Just one with a flamethrower can equal several humans with firearms. We just can't heal like the other Ovid. It takes blood, time and effort for us to heal.

For all the blessings Ananasa has given us, there are also drawbacks. The Universe placed limitations upon us. While our kind is balanced, we cannot be perfect. For feeding, it must be mammal blood. Now, I don't care if that means cats, rats and dogs to you — all are comestible — but it can't be from a cold-blooded creature. We must have *warm* blood. I've heard of those who find clotted blood palatable, but for me, it is like drinking Concord Grape Ripple when Dom Perignon is available. Why deprive yourself of the best? We don't need the blood to live, but it sure as hell helps a great deal. I didn't go through eight years of medical school not to live well. To spin a web, you need blood, and a lot of it.

We're not the only bloodsuckers out there, and no, I do not mean mosquitoes. No matter what, do not drink from vampires; they are horrible and vile-tasting, not to mention disease-carriers. Even their little ghouls taste like rancid cheese and vinegar. Worse, the stuff is addictive, and Ananasa does not desire that for us. Mostly they're competition for resources.

We're also not immune to disease. Blood is dangerous; it's a bodily fluid, and as such, it carries diseases. Our blood isn't fully human — I'll explain in a minute — so we can heal ourselves and purge the virulent stuff out of it, but we can still contract illnesses, ranging from AIDS and even STDs. If it's viral or bacterial, we are susceptible. Just be careful; if we get sick, we pass it on. Frequently, we're carriers of the diseases we have come into contact with through feeding. Pay attention to your body and what it tells you. Avoid those on drugs, and I don't just mean street drugs. Prescription medications also have an effect on us. Blood thinners make us weak — it ruins the hydraulic abilities of our muscles. The elderly are pharmaceutical cocktails that can cause great havoc in our unique systems. Diabetics are a gamble — they're either sickeningly sweet, or they are on so much insulin that if we drink from them, *our* blood sugars plummet and we go "splat" right into hypoglycemia as our brains short-circuit because they're not getting any food. Makes for messy webs too. Those lucky diabetics who wear the insulin pumps are safe; they control it with the help of the Weaver. Weaver may be an unstable lady, but she helps the humans, and that, in turn, generally helps us.

How exactly are our systems unique? The Metamorphosis causes great biological change in our bodies, and these changes are detectable by medical examination. Our blood is no longer normal by human standards, and contains the copper molecules of a spider's blood as well as the oxygen-



carrying molecules of iron-based hemoglobin. Sometimes our blood is not even red. I do not suggest spilling it to find out. Our enemies do that frequently enough, and you will see your own blood one of these days from your dealings with them. The lungs of our kind are a unique hybrid of spider and human lungs. Spider lungs are called book lungs, and in many forms, our lungs function more closely like those of our arachnid roots. Because of our changed structure in human forms, we are biologically unique among all the Ovid. All of the other Changing Breeds can pass muster as the form they assume. Only we have this disadvantage. The best reason to avoid doctors, unless they are also Ananasi, is this: the vestigial fangs and pedipalps behind the teeth of the Damhàn. It makes dental care very dangerous. These cannot be explained away, even to a first-year dental student. They simply are not found in humans at all.

Because of the right hormones and genetic material, we can and often do mate with humans and many still find pleasure in it. Psychologically, however, we are very different than humans. Ananasa's blessing of apathy makes us seem like sociopaths or even more terrifying, psychopaths, so psychiatric evaluations are always a big mistake for the spider who has to have one. Compassion is a luxury we cannot afford in executing our duties, so Ananasa has removed it along with our other human weaknesses. Our lack of remorse has made us stronger. We are not cold-hearted monsters — far from it! We simply care about things that are beyond human comprehension. She has given us patience and removed the pains of humanity from us in return.

We have four forms — Lilian, Pithus, Human and Crawlerling. Lilian forms are as individual as we are. For example, I'm from Indiana originally, so I look like a common garden spider, but I walk on two legs and still wear my glasses out of habit. We will ourselves to change faster by using our blood. I'll demonstrate.... Yes, go ahead, and giggle. I admit I'm a fine sight — this form is used for serious combat and intimidation and appears to be shaped by what we feed on and where they came from. We create our own forms based on genetics and diet. We also develop a hard shell of exoskeletal chitin that makes us considerably tougher. Our kind becomes stronger and faster in this form. We also gain a hundred or more pounds when in Lilian but we can more easily use the spider's abilities to lift and jump. The weight is all muscle. I'm a little spider — yes, this is little. You should see *some* species!

Some breeds of spiders have size differences according to gender. Other species of spider have equality between the genders, but in many spider breeds, the males are smaller and have quicker reflexes to avoid the hungry females. Hey now, I have a deep respect for women and I'm not being a sexist pig! I am a physician and a gentleman! The mating and killing habits of the black widow are proof of this.... Ah, *you're* black widow. It's a pleasure to meet you, Delia. Remind me not to ask you out once you've been properly educated. Now back to the lesson. The females of these species are stronger and bigger, so there's a trade-off. Males have the speed while females have the brawn. It all depends on the species, and each of us is different, but the gender-specific



characteristics of our spider breed carry over. Some even have barbs and spikes on our exoskeletons, which is very useful for self-defense.

Then we have the Pithus, or Pit Spider form, a spider as big as a VW Bug. The body has hydraulic strength in this form, as well as being completely horrifying. The fear factor of our Pithus form makes it very useful. Our spiderlike blood can be willed to move and increase strength wherever the blood is sent. If it is done too often, one has to replenish his or her blood more frequently through feeding. In this form, the other advantages are the ability to use the hybrid lungs most effectively and longer endurance, not to mention our wonderful exoskeleton again. You also put on half the weight you have in human form but distributed evenly.

We have a human form and that's self-explanatory. We are a bit harder than humans, even when we assume their form, and their form does take effort for those of arachnid birth to master.

Okay, time to go human again... and now for the speech about the form you all seem to enjoy experimenting with, our Crawlerling form. Before I turn over the floor to Staff Sergeant Reynolds, if you ever need a physician, or a friend, even, I'm Dr. Clarke Mason, and I can be found at the University Hospital in Philadelphia. Okay, Sarge, you're up!

As the doctor returned to his human form, another man stepped forward. His cropped hair and the muscles rippling beneath his olive-drab T-shirt betrayed his chosen occupation. He barked his lesson like a drill sergeant standing before eager recruits.

While I am sure that some of you have already happened upon your Crawlerling form, for those of you who haven't, I believe a brief lesson is in order. You are a single person. I don't refer to your marital status, but you are one person, with a single sentient mind and consciousness. Imagine becoming several hundred or thousand people and your consciousness being distributed among all of your bodies. We Ananasi can do this. We can literally break down into many little spiders. This is most useful to escape from undesirable situations. It grants us a form of limited immortality if we are fortunate and avoid fire, although we do grow old and die as the Triat agreed upon.

If we're in Crawlerling, it's a lot harder to kill us. It's more challenging to stomp on a thousand spiders than a single one. A single spider has a good change of getting flattened with a book or shoe and turned into an ichorous smudge on the wall. Many will escape, sometimes most if they're fast enough. However, these multiple bodies are a lot smaller, frailer and can only contain one part of your memory. One will house the memory of your favorite food, another will house the memory of your education, another will house the recollections of your Metamorphosis when you became aware of what you are, and so on. Okay, now imagine the spider that housed the memory of your Metamorphosis was accidentally stepped on by someone passing by. It is dead, smashed into oblivion, and those memories are lost along with it. When you reform, you'd have amnesia regarding it. Those memories can never be



recovered, I'm sorry to say. The altered state of mind we have in this form gives us protection and puts us at our absolutely most vulnerable state.

There is a way to deal with the altered consciousness and confusion of this form, and that is to select several leaders. Leaders act like military officers and order the rank and file of the other spiders. The leaders are the only ones that contain your memories and mind. The others follow their orders. That way one doesn't get caught up in the disorientation of being so many places at once. Try it, it's not good. All of us have two or eight eyes. Say you turn into 1600 brown recluse spiders. Suddenly, you're seeing through 12,800 eyes. See? It's simply too much for us. The brain implodes when it's expanded that much, and you can easily get lost in the whole awe-factor of it. How do we prevent that? Again, select leaders. They make sure you don't get too spread out and that all your individual spiders do what they need to do. I recommend designating 10 leaders. Any less, and if anything happens to one, you would lose too much of yourself. On the flip side, if you have more Leaders, it can be disorienting. Therefore, 10 is an ideal number to put your mind into, but you'll find out what works best for you on your own. If too many of your individual spiders get killed though, you're toast. It takes a 90% loss to kill one of us. It's rare that one of us dies in Crawlerling form, but it can happen. Best bet is to go into Crawlerling and scurry away as fast as your 12,800 legs can carry you.

The Crawlerling form also has an advantage that is not defensive. It is a gift from Ananasa. It goes by many names — much like we do if we are smart — but I call this gift the Downtime. Most, if not all of you, will learn the necessary Rite to do this before we scatter to the four winds. It's like you've gotten your triplicate forms filled in and signed and you're free to go on leave. Ananasa knows how hard we work and all that we do to serve her, so she gave us the ability to take vacations. Yes, literal vacations from being what we are. Only we can do this. The other Ovid are always Ovid, but not us. We can revert to our breed form and spend time just living a normal life and getting back to basics. Spider-born can get back to nature and do mundane spider things. Human-born Ananasi, like myself, either go hunt down some sun or find a nice place to live a "normal" life. Me, I spent my last Downtime on the shores of Jamaica, drinking from coconuts and scaring the pretty women trying to get some shade under the palms. I pity the poor soul who bothers me when I'm on my break. During these breaks, we regroup and it serves a great therapeutic purpose. After all, if we are unwell and burned-out, we cannot perform to the best of our capabilities and Ananasa wants us to be the best that we can be.

Half of all the Ananasi are on Downtime right now, and the other half is on active duty. While in Downtime, you can think of it like being in the reserves. Some us have taken breaks that lasted decades and even had children. But when the time comes that either you set or you're needed by the Mother-Queen, that alarm clock goes off and you snap out of it. The break comes to a crashing halt, and on goes the uniform of a werespider again. Willingly or not, it happens. You will respond if she summons you to reform.



Rank, Gatherings, Colonial and Sylies

Often we have to work in groups, and sometimes we choose to. Occasionally Ananasa makes us work as a colony. Who's in charge of the colony? Whoever Ananasa has chosen and has been rewarded with the highest rank. What do I mean?

The other Ovid place a lot more importance on rank than we do but since we occasionally deal with them, it is best to use their system. Unlike us, they have to petition the spirits they follow for recognition for their deeds. This is called Renown. We don't have to jump through burning hoops or save baby Ananasi from burning buildings to be recognized. We need only prove ourselves to Ananasa and petition her through a Rite. If she is pleased with us and believes we have served her well and according to our aspect and faction, she rewards us and we learn greater Gifts from her. All our Gifts come from her. Sometimes she blesses us with Gifts we do not desire, but she does so for a purpose.

Those few others who are loyal to Ananasa who are not Ananasi serve her in the guise of Ti Malice. Rarely will she have one of her non-Ananasi servants share Gifts and wisdom with us. The Garou, the most common Changing Breed, call their Renown Wisdom, Glory and Honor, but as we serve Ananasi and seek a different goal, we classify our Renown as Cunning, Obedience and Wisdom. Cunning reflects our knowledge of the Primal Wyrms. Obedience is a reflection of the Weaver's ways and Wisdom is the knowledge of the chaos and change brought forth by the Wyld. We do not let the Garou know this, naturally. It is highly lethal to give away secrets to the enemy.

We are judged on our understanding of the Triat and what we have learned. When the time is right, Ananasa promotes us. She is a fair commanding officer in that sense. We communicate with the Mother-Queen in our Sylies — I'll get to Sylies in a second — and if she is pleased with our growth and we are worthy, she changes us. If she is not pleased or we have not changed, it is best to first consider what we have done wrong. If we have done nothing wrong, it is advisable to petition for promotion.

As you can clearly see, I have a web pattern in my facial pores. It is far more obvious when I am not in human form, as these markings become part of my carapace. I am a Rank Four Plicare. With each rank I attain, Ananasa changes these markings on my body. They are noticeable only to us. The teacher who spoke first was an Amari Aliquid, so she bore the marks of her rank in a lightning bolt shape. That is universal to all who follow the Wyld and respect chaos. The Malum who will speak to you next bears his rank in the sign of the snakes as he serves Ananasa by questioning the Wyrms and taking up the slack he left in the weave.

Now as for Sylies, this is your special place, your home and domain, be it in the city or in the middle of East Jippip, Nowheresville. Our kind knows how to build their Sylie by instinct. The Sylie is where we rest in whatever form



we desire, and where we commune with Ananasa, or rather, where we listen to her speak to us from her Opal. We draw our prey into our Sylie and must protect our special places at all costs. As Ananasa orders, we obey. (It's horrible to see what she does to those who do not obey. I've seen it. She's harsh, and it's best to love and fear her, and for good reason. Trust me on this one, folks.) Once you've settled in and built your Sylie, you must reweave it into the Tapestry of the Great Web through the *Rite of Building* to set up the link between yourself, Ananasa and those of our kin that are closest. Just as frequently, we'll call each other up and make dinner plans among the colony. Those in the wilderness have more security, but less opportunity to feed on human blood. Sylies can be built in a basement or a closet, or in the treetops. Sylies are a matter of personal choice, but urban dwellers must have smaller Sylies.

This here is as formal of a gathering as we have. We don't have meetings and dance and howl at the moon like others do. Weaver likes names too much, so we don't even have a real name for these educational gatherings when we meet the new faces. We have social gatherings, not organized events. When we gather, we set aside our differences. We can always return to killing each other and plotting and manipulating each other when the mission's done.

Arachnid Life

Sarge returned to where the teachers sat, nodding at a lean young man whose clothes hung from his lean frame like a scarecrow's rags. The young Malum moved to the front of the students, but stood strangely still as he lectured.

Life is different for the half of us who are spider-born. We start our lives aggressively; it is natural and instinct is everything. While the first Metamorphosis is difficult for us, we understand more than the human-born, at first. We know nature intimately, we are more closely tied to it, and we know how to weave and to hunt with great skill. We are more like those whom Ananasa first set upon Gaia's back, but we are not better. The Metamorphosis may allow us to see things in proper scale and show us the world beyond instinct and survival, but even in Human form, we are still the hunters or the hunted. We Ananasi are both at all times. Arachnids understand this view. It is what we were born into. Our enemies hunt us as we hunt our enemies. There is fairness in this.

The spider-born of us prefer the wilderness, where the webs can be greater and we are left alone to our Sylies. Others of us prefer the cities, where we wear human shapes and weave and unweave the patterns of the urban sprawl. Half of the Damhàn are arachnid and have a different way of viewing the Tapestry. We see it plainly — we think with our guts and are more tied to the spider part of our triple nature than those who have never hatched from an egg sac and eaten their siblings to survive and grow stronger. We are driven by Ananasa, but simply act in ways that all do not comprehend while young. After a



Downtime, even the human-born understand. Our roots are important and cannot be forgotten.

There are many of us in South America. We are strong there. On the Nazca Plains, we live in isolation from the Corax, the ravens — bad birds, do not pluck us up from the ground and devour us! They eat spiders, and in the wars of Rage, it is said they ate many of our Crawlerlings. There are plain signs to warn them that the Andes are for our kind only. The Corax obey. They fear us, as they should. In the rainforests, we watch over the Mokolé and respect them from afar. There is an agreement; they are safe from us and will have their lands. They are also few. We are many. In Africa and South America, the great cats dwell. All that we share with them is mistrust and the common foe of the monkeys, or Man. Man fears us more than he fears cats. More cats are forced into servitude than spiders. “When spiders unite, they can tie down a lion” is a saying in the homeland I have seen proven true several times. The lion was displeased. We feasted.

The Garou are most common in Europe and North America, so those who dwell there will have to be more careful and secretive. We have natural advantages. Even the human-born would do well to learn to respect and employ their spider form. It is best to be at home in all of ones' bodies. I do not find Homid foreign any longer. It is necessary to wear it when I work for Ananasa. A spider cannot make phone calls to the right people at the right time. The things I have learned as a human are beneficial. I have had to learn balance. Even if I wear two legs and two eyes, I am still a spider. I am a predator, I am quick, and I am merciless. I do not have, nor will I ever have human weakness or understanding of their fragile mental states. I see the merit in all my other forms.

I have noticed we've neglected something. We have neglected food. I am arachnid. I have also been human. Our sacred duties bring us into contact with many types of food. Sometimes the prey is not easy to hunt. Sometimes the prey is weak. I have lived for over 80 years, but I am still young in the flesh. Ananasa has blessed me. I am not immortal, but I have been fortunate to be favored by the Queen. I have learned to infest and devour food to become my food. I am most truly what I eat. I was not born a man. I was born a female. I am now a man. Only in times of great need, when survival is at stake may we do so and only if it pleases Ananasa. We must start with the brain and make it soft enough to eat. We then spread throughout and inhabit the body. The first hour, we are human. We have lost our heritage and must be simple humans; we become the food we eat.

If we eat a Garou, we do not become Garou; the spirit within that makes a Garou has been eaten, and it is dead. The spirit, or soul, is what makes a Garou unique. We destroy that when we eat them. The blood of their kind is richer than our regular diet. We remain human however, not Garou.

If we eat the Undead, we eat ashes and rotted flesh. There is no gain as Ananasa does not sanction this. It is a waste of time. If we eat their assistants,



the Renfields they make, we kill the unnatural part of them that was vampiric, that blood is not eaten and we are human. The same goes for those who feed on those who shape reality, the magicians. If one eats one of these, they do not become Viskyr humans. Eating them kills the powers they hold. This is the will of Ananasa. Once we have eaten the food, we become the form of the food until the food becomes part of us. All living things with warm blood are food, but the undead and the shadowy dead souls cannot provide food.

We are not mammals. We are Ananasi. You can never be more than Ananasi, and why would you want to? If you would want to, you must be destroyed. I will only be too eager to arrange for it at the hands of an angry mob. We are better than humans and mammals and would do well to remember this always and let it guide our thoughts and actions when dealing with these simple animals. There is a movie where the monster is chased and burned to death by the human peasants. Humans are still peasants and would kill what they do not comprehend. Their tools are no longer torches and they have made progress, but they still cannot and do not understand things that are not like them. They are the greatest tools we have, however, and must be respected for their sheer potential. It falls upon us as Ananasi to exploit their potential and make them reach it. Once the Triat is restored, the humans will still have their place among us.

The Secret Things

The Malum retreated back into the shadows of the caves and a middle-aged woman came forward to stand before the spiderlings. She conducted herself in the manner of a Sunday school teacher dealing with children who'd rather be sleeping or watching cartoons.

I am called Agnes DeVry and am a bookworm of sorts. You have already heard how Ananasa gave us structure to repair the Triat, but to make her children's web tidier, she created aspects under these factions that we must follow as well. It is a convenient and pleasing way of doing things. I frequently have sought to use the principles of our kind in the library. The children of Ananasa are not held to these forms, for within each faction there are the callings of Myrmidon, Viskyr and Wyrsta. The Garou call these auspices. Each Ananasi, besides serving as a proxy for a Primal member of the Triat, also must find their calling. The Myrmidons are the Warriors of our aspects, the ones who seek to bring back the balance of the Triat by trying to bring their truth to the world. The Viskyr are the healers, taking on the role to heal the damage to the Universe. The Wyrsta are the questioners of the unbalanced Triat who seek to understand the goals of the Corrupted Triat. We cannot fight what we do not know.

By instinct, we young Ananasi find our callings assigned by Ananasa. We are not the children of the cosmic Triat; we are the children of Ananasa, the child of Weaver. To her alone do we Ananasi owe our loyalty and obedience, and we serve her vision of a universe freed from the grip of the Weaver's



jealous insanity. Of all the Ovid, we alone know that it is not the Wyrn that must be fought, but ultimately the Weaver, who broke the balance of the Triat. How will we accomplish this? Just wait and I'll tell you before we wrap up class. We are saving the best for last. Be patient — it truly is not hard to do when you realize we have existed since before humankind and have always worked to bring about the restoration of equality amongst the changes in the world.

Now, not all Ananasi obey and are obedient — the Kumo were mentioned before, and we have other enemies amongst our own who ignore the Queen or serve her in ways we cannot imagine. They are anomalies we cannot explain or understand. In time, we will understand: the Padrone and the Kumoti. The Padrone are the vilest things on Earth, even more so than the Kumo. I've heard stories about them, but if I ever saw one, it would likely be too late to save myself. Allegedly, they have a fifth form they can assume, 10-legged, I hear, and they hunt and destroy us in our Sylies. This is not a story meant to scare you before bed! The Padrone are real bogeymen. They are the ultimate silent predator. I don't know how they do it but we must be careful, as they do not recognize Ananasa and go about killing her children in our most sacred places. They live to hunt us, so we are wary of any newcomers in our homes. Ananasa permits them to exist and is silent on the subject of the Padrone. They are Ananasi turned on themselves. They are monsters that stalk us.

Another oddity amongst us is the growing trend of Kumatai, or Holy Spiders. They claim they are something all together different than us, an utterly new breed. Long ago, we lived as gods ruling over humans. The legendary city of Jericho was the first time we used our power to rule over lesser life-forms. Jericho was Ananasi, but he grew too powerful and the love of his people turned to resentment. The walls came tumbling down. He was a leader who ruled with divine right over his community. Some Ananasi are doing this now and are addicted to the power they have over their worshippers. The power shuts off contact with Ananasi and they have become delusional. This is most common in less developed parts of the world and the Near East, where Weaver's hold is growing stronger, but this phenomenon has occurred in America recently. They claim they are not even Ananasi when we investigate them. The Kumatai frequently recruit and corrupt the field agents we've sent to check them out. They are a danger. We are a proud people. They suffer from hubris.

There is also the thing called the Yahwie that has been decimating our kind in Australia. What it is and what it wants, other than slaughter, still remain to be seen. The Yahwie emerged only in the last 100 years, and it has killed hundreds of Ananasi and Kin. It has been seen in several forms, so I can give no concrete description. What I do know is that each time it has appeared, we have sent hunters after it, who insist they saw their prey dead. Within days, it is back at work, usually starting by killing its hunters. The Aboriginal people have legends of the Yahwie, claiming that it is a death-



spirit, one of the first creatures on the planet and responsible for the first killings. Whatever it is, do exercise extra caution in Australia or do not go at all.

Umbra spiders usually ignore us since we are kin, but there are great dangers and drawbacks to not living where Ananasa intended us to live and it takes a very antisocial spider to make the jump to living in the Umbra full-time. If nothing else, there is little blood. Even our homelands are on this world. They are in Africa, in the Simyan Mountains and are called Estotilandia. True enough, they are not on any map, and you will have to find them for yourselves. Our paradise is surrounded by the great cats, so exercise caution when you go looking for the sacred caves we were first born in. It is a place where we may relax and there is peace. I have only been there once, but plan to return someday, though. It's the loveliest spot on Gaia to an Ananasi. You will all be urged by instinct to make the pilgrimage to our birthplace. It is something all of us undertake at least once. It is the ultimate homecoming and journey. There are some Ananasi who never leave the sacred caves of Estotilandia and share a special relationship with Ananasa. Only Ananasi may go there and be welcomed. Even the few humans that may be found there are Kin. That is on the order of the Mother-Queen. Any others that happen upon Estotilandia are trespassers and are considered prey. If they are lucky, it is quick and merciful. Beware of the great cats — many live in the area and they dislike us. There are always skirmishes with the cats that demand more breeding ground or hold us responsible for things in the past. It is not our fault that we are more clever than they are, now is it? However, if a Swara, one of the cheetah-folk, comes to you, pay attention, for they are messengers and always are worth heeding.

Now let us take a short break. Our most honored guest speaker will be arriving soon. Observe this rite; someday one of you may be favored enough to dance it with us.

The Word of the Queen

I am Ananasa, your queen and creator. You must know I am real and will be active in your lives. I love you, for you are my children. I cannot hold my place here for long as it takes much from me, but I could not allow you to go into the world without having met each of you first. You will soon have your teachers back, and you must listen carefully to them before they send you home, for they speak with my tongue while they are here. They have done a fine job. I have faith that you will do well in the world to return things to the way there were. I must speak with you as well, and you always have your Sylies. I will come to you there and offer my guidance. I hope the teachers have made you understand where you come from and what you are and what your calling is. I have given you your callings; you cannot change what is now your nature any more than I could change my current state of existence. Listen carefully to my words also, for after today we may never meet face-to-face again.



I have made you with a purpose, and you must accept it and your frailties. You are not indestructible. I would not cheat the Wyrn and break the agreement. Such agreements are so fragile and it is broken daily by the askew Triat. We must keep true and stay the course. I am much more than the Weaver's firstborn. But now I must return; I have already stayed too long. Obey me always and follow the Laws I have given unto you. I love you, my little ones.

After the rite, the exhausted teachers reformed, then retreated, save for a bright-eyed woman wearing a Chanel-style dress. There was stunned silence in the cave for several minutes. Then, a girl down in the front row raised her hand hesitantly. The teacher nodded to her, and she spoke, unable to quite drive the nervous quaver from her voice. "Thank you for everything you have taught us, teachers, and I'm sorry for the question, but what exactly do we do and how do we do it?" The woman smiled and nodded, as if she had heard exactly what she wanted to hear.

At some point during their initial education, all spiderlings come into contact with and meet the Mother-Queen who assigns them their aspects and factions. Three Ananasi representing the three different aspects are chosen by Ananasa to perform the *Rite of One*. Ananasi rites are slow and meticulous, and this rite is especially long and intricate, a combination of quick sharp movements and slow sweeping gestures. The *Rite of One* is only done at the Gatherings and allows Ananasa to be freed from her Opal and to manifest in the form of an Avatar. It is also the only time most Ananasi meet their creator. The Avatar of Ananasa is a thing of terrible beauty. It is a Pithus-form spider of huge size with a glittering carapace and eight cold eyes that show a truly alien intelligence behind them. She has the form of a perfect monster. The voice of Ananasa is at once sensual and threatening. The presence of the Avatar instinctively affects the Gathered children. Those who are not Ananasi may go insane. She strikes respect and terror into the hearts and minds of her children when she appears. Ananasa wants them to know she is real and active in their lives. She wants to inspire them and perhaps even threaten them a little by showing her power. The result is that the spiderlings have no doubt that their Creator is powerful and wise. They only want to obey after seeing her. This rite is willed by Ananasa and ends when she cannot remain any longer.

The Ultimate Purpose

Now that's the all-important question, isn't it? Brush your hair out of your eyes and look up at me, I want to see your face. Ah... Tenere. I am not surprised a bit, you're always perfectionists. I knew you'd smile sooner or later. You've listened well to your teachers and since you've been so patient, I'll tell you the secret now.



As you know, the world is imperfect and disorderly. Each day, the Weaver grows stronger, binding the chaos of life. She works to create a world where order has encased all else and there is a stagnant perfection. We were not meant to prosper in such a world, and we work against her. We work to put her back in her rightful place, since in her madness she cannot stop spinning and naming, creating order where the Wyld needs change. The Wyrn is still struggling and growing more insane in the Weaver's tangled prison. When the time is right, we will cure his madness, once we discern its pattern. We cannot set things right if we do not know their pattern. He is still too strong and unpredictable to confront right now. The Wyld is weak and trapped by the Wyrn's corruption and the weight of the Great Web. The weight prevents creation in its purest form. Things cannot evolve as they should while the Wyld is in such poor condition. The world cannot continue to exist if Weaver continues her plans; she dehumanizes and limits the creatures of the world with her technology. We work to prevent that.

The Great Web contains all things and the problem is that some creatures do not have a grasp of their place in the web. Therefore, we straighten up and fix the Great Web. We have come forth to fill in for the Triat and replace them until we can heal them. It's a hard goal to achieve but it's what we were designed to do. The Garou do not even realize they are unbalanced and have forgotten the importance of death so that new life can be born of its remains. The chaos of the Wyld unchecked is dangerous; things cannot survive in a state of constant flux. But they do not see this.

Each of us has our aspect and our faction, and by carrying out our proper roles, we achieve our goal of fixing what has been broken and bringing back the lost Symmetry. We re-weave the Great Web. How do we do it? Recall the Laws given to us by Ananasa. We do so quietly and from the shadows. We do not draw attention to ourselves. We do not reveal our secrets, let alone tell the ignorant of our purpose, for they'd destroy or laugh at us. They could not understand.

We are spider people. We hunt when we need to, and manipulate the webs around us. We are the spiders who wait in the web for the prey to come to us. We are the spiders who jump down and snare the target. We use politics, our friends, our allies and our contacts to accomplish our goals. We use the tools that already are in our toolbox — humans. Weaver does not understand them; their emotions make them useful tools. We steer, moving the strands of others to get the desired effect.

Through subtle manipulations rather than grand-scale actions, we do not draw attention to ourselves. We need not brag or fight for dominance. We keep our vast numbers hidden. Only the Garou have numbers close to us and we are still more numerous — not that they will ever know how vast our network is. We are everywhere; look at the havoc we caused when a colony was found under Windsor Castle in June of 2001. That colony has existed there since the castle was built and had been one of the most effective ones



in the United Kingdom. The Garou cannot make such claims. The Garou have a penchant for heroism. Heroism is a form of suicide.

We take our time to do the job right, often working on the same goal for decades before the task is complete. We have all the time we need. We can see the Pattern of the Web like no others and need not be boastful. We are like the Fates of Greece — Clothos, the spinner who manipulates the wool into thread; Atropos, the weaver who works the loom and ensures the weft and weave of the fabric are strong; Lachesis, and the cutter who cuts the strands when they are loose or finished. We shape the events of the world!

The Ovid

We are not alone in the world, as you have already heard. There are others, descended from the other creatures set on Gaia's back. As solitary as we prefer to be, we sometimes cannot help encountering them. Ananasa's Laws are clear regarding our dealings with the Ovid, but it would help you to know something of their behavior.

Bastet

The cats are too emotional and lack the self-discipline to make good allies. In the deep wild, their desire for solitude make them agreeable to work with us at times. In the past, the eight tribes of Bastet have suffered as much as we have, but it has not taught them anything; instead they remain irrational and prone to whimsy. They are overgrown kittens with very sharp claws. Like the Garou, they claim to serve the Wyld, but too many walk the path of the corrupted Wym.

Corax

The very nature of these creatures makes us old enemies. Racial hatred dies slowly, and we are the Patient Ones. They are the truest enemy we have amongst the Ovid because they have eaten so many of our kin who were in Crawlerling. They hold no respect for secrets and run off at the mouth too often and too easily. They also have an annoying insatiable curiosity. We have no tolerance for any creature that seeks to discover our secrets and spy on us. Just remember this: they are easily distracted by anything sparkly or shiny. Throw them something glittery and leave when they get too close to your secrets. Or tell even juicier lies to their allies and watch the Corax fly off to chase the lead.

Garou

They are the worst of all the Ovid, the most misled and barbarous. They are too numerous to avoid and too violent to deal with on a regular basis. Only a few have just now begun to understand what it means to be civilized, and some merely play at being civil. We do not forgive the Garou for their kind's past crimes against us, but we have moved beyond holding a grudge. Some of



them even show progress toward maturing and moving past the violence of the Great Wars when they sought to exterminate the other Changing Breeds, but even the peaceful Children of Gaia tribe are still Garou at heart. The Garou are tribal in structure and politically complex (but not near as complex and intricate as our kind!). Here is an overview of the tribes to help you:

Black Furies: The Black Furies are matriarchal in structure and believe we do the same in our social structure, as more frequently, the female Ananasi lead when we gather. Of course, there is no sexism among us, as is rampant among the Black Furies. We see no reason to set them straight on this, of course, because only one female is truly powerful amongst us. Let them believe what they will about us.

Black Spiral Dancers: If you need to see why the Triat as perceived by the Garou is flawed and twisted, look at the Black Spiral dancers. These Garou worship and serve the Wyrms as Corruptor, not as Destructor. They are mentally deranged and physically defective. The madness of the Wyrms has corrupted their bodies and souls, making them mirrors of that great power gone insane. If you can use them, do so carefully. Otherwise, it is best to keep a safe distance from them or avoid them altogether.

Bone Gnawers: Bone Gnawer werewolves are kin to domestic dogs and are seen as just dogs or half-breeds by the wolves. They are the lowliest of the Garou tribes. They are also easy-going, generous and kind to the humans they watch over. Use their poor self-esteem to your advantage. You can easily win a pawn by simply throwing them a bone of information that wins them favor in the other Garou's eyes. Even if incredibly useful to us, they are still Garou and will betray you without thinking twice.

Children of Gaia: What an interesting anomaly — a tribe of kinder, gentler werewolves. Maybe it is because they have survivors' guilt, or perhaps they want to save their own butts the next time they encounter another Changing Breed that isn't a wolf after they have killed off the majority of the other Ovid. They cannot be trusted, even if they are hospitable. Treat them nicely, play fair and perhaps some good public relations can be gained.

Fianna: When sober, these Garou are fine warriors and are usually honorable. They also like sharing a story or two. Leave these alone and allow them to live, for they'll never forget it. However, when drunk — and from what I know, it's more common to find them drunk than sober — avoid them. A drunk Fianna is a dangerous Garou.

Get of Fenris: Take an immense ego, add homicidal tendencies and claws and you get a Get. The Get of Fenris believe they have a sacred duty to serve Gaia by ridding the world of the weak. If it's not a Get of Fenris, they consider it weak. If they consider you weak, they will challenge you to combat and either try to kill you slowly and carefully or quickly and without finesse. Eventually, they will consider you weak and try to kill you, no matter how you try to present yourself to them.



Glass Walkers: They have left the Wyld to enter a different spider web, that of the Weaver's. By controlling where the cities are built, these urban Garou seek to preserve the wild spaces on Gaia's back. However, the city is a confusing place for even the smartest Garou. They turn to the Weaver for help and become caught up in Grandmother Spider's incessant weaving without even knowing it. There are also several indications that they have already fallen to the Weaver and can never extricate themselves from her insane spinnings. They make good pawns but are dumb as planks. Anything that stupid means they are a real danger, to both themselves and us.

Red Talons: Avoid these near-rabid wolves. They will lash out at anything. They are obsessed, losing their numbers rapidly, and in pain from that loss. They are the polar opposite of the Glass Walkers, preserving the Wyld by any means necessary and are utterly uncivilized.

Shadow Lords: These are the most clever of all the Garou tribes and have finally learned what we have known for ages: subtlety and patience works better than charging in without looking. They have learned that being straightforward is foolish and lackluster. They make fine pupils, and diligent learners, but are too good at subterfuge to be trustworthy. They are almost as good as we are and that gives us cause for discomfort. Never turn your back on a wily Shadow Lord, or you may find he has imbedded his dagger in your lungs.

Silent Striders: These Garou are different than the rest of their species, as they prefer to be alone. Despite their wisdom and contemplative ways, they are still Garou and therefore, cannot be trusted. It is quite regretful, actually.

Silver Fangs: The laughable Garou called Silver Fangs are the self-proclaimed leaders of the werewolves. They are the ones responsible for the time that the Garou waged war upon the other Ovid, claiming that the other Ovid had the wrong idea. That was throwing the baby out with the bath water and they still haven't noticed that the baby's missing! They are inbred and mentally ill and cannot even trust themselves. Avoid them.

Stargazers: These navel-contemplating Garou seek the answers to the Universe's riddles. The few times their belly-button lint has answered them, they realized they had asked the wrong question and had only found a new tofu recipe. Now they've joined the Beast Courts of the East and have left the Western Garou behind. This brings them into contact with the Kumo, so use them and distract them with riddles while you beat a hasty retreat from them.

Uktena: The Uktena are closer than the others in getting on the right path, but they still want to see the Wyrms captured and bound rather than freed and healed. While their hearts are in the right place, they still haven't figured out the right path after millennia of trying. We can't show them the right way, but we can hope they figure it out in time.

Wendigo: The Wendigo have suffered the loss of their homelands and a full tribe of their closer kin at the hands of their fellow werewolves. This opened their eyes and has changed them greatly. They know as well as we do that werewolves can be treacherous, vengeful, hot-headed tyrants and are still



rather irritated about experiencing their own personal War of Rage on their tribe. As a result of their suffering, they've grown militant and bitter. Luckily, the Gurahl and Bastet learned from their sufferings at Garou claws and teeth, and do not wear their resentment and anger as openly as the Wendigo do.

Gurahl

The Gurahl have earned our respect, for the most part. They have patience and understanding that we Ananasi can relate to, so we can appreciate their companionship. Treasure any time you spend with these gentle giants in the wilderness. Learn from their lessons, enjoy their hospitality, but whatever you do, do *not* anger them. An angry Gurahl is a sight you will not soon forget, if you survive the experience. Of the Ovid, these bears are the most peaceful and do not feel the need to kill first and ask questions later. They understand the concept of valor and perseverance, but it is a waste that they are not motivated any longer or seen as a threat.

Mokolé

They were the first of all the Changers. Their raw primal power is a beautiful thing. We share their time on this world but do not associate with them commonly. We quietly respect them and fear for their continued existence as their lands are being consumed too quickly for them to survive. The Mokolé are the possessors of the Universe's memory and when they are gone, all will suffer from their loss unless Ananasa's plans come to fruition before they are extinct. Without their awesome and extensive memories, the world will be a much more ignorant place.

Nuwisha

These are strange creatures, full of laughter. They are like the Garou, but without the violent rage that drives the wolves. They are clever and wise, but we know this and they are hard pressed to deceive us, although many have tried. We do not trust them; we will avoid them if we can and will destroy them if the Great Mother orders it. They seek to know all of the secrets we may hold, but unlike the Corax, they do know how to keep a secret. Never offer them one! Should you happen upon a Nuwisha, be helpful and polite, but do not offer them any information you consider to be important. Knowledge is power, and with true power, the Nuwisha could be a real problem.

Ratkin

These lowly creatures seek to ferret out the secrets of others and are beneath the notice of their targets. They are pathetic scavengers and live off the waste of others. It is unimaginable to us to live such a life. They are disgusting and not to be trusted. But there have the power of numbers and are as omnipresent as spiders. Rats are a dime a dozen and many may be Ratkin. Like us, they are survivors and prefer the urban areas, but the similarities end there. Ratkin live and breed in the darkness of the sewers and dumpsters of the



urban landscape. It is just possible that they also understand Grandmother Spider is insane and fight against her insane methods.

Rokea

You need not fear or avoid the Rokea as you will never see them. We understand mammals, but not cold fish. They are older than we Ananasi and understand things we cannot, but they live in a different environment and have far different needs than we.

The Others in the Great Web

Aside from the Ovid, there are other creatures in the Universe. It is best to be aware of what is out there so when you cross their path, you will be prepared for it.

Humans: These are the greatest creatures, as both an ally and the enemy. No other creature in this world has such possibility or range of emotion. Humans are necessary and will always be, even after the Great Mothers plan is complete. We need them. They will provide us with what we need to carry out the plan while we carry on our work.

Mages: They weave and reweave the web as if they were Viskr. They are horrible and beautiful creatures. If you are daring enough to keep association with them, they are immensely powerful and can change the Great Web in dangerous and drastic ways. Of course, the Weaver reacts violently when her works are tampered with, and it is best to not be so close when they start working the web. We were designed to do this. They were not. They are unwilling servants of the Weaver, and when the time and need comes, we will have to destroy them since they are only human.

Vampires: We understand these predators better than they may even understand themselves. They know the virtue of patience and the excitement of blood. They are useful tools and a perfect disguise. Do not trust these creatures any more than you would trust a Garou, though, for you might become caught up in their games. They are rational creatures and often passionless and emotionally aloof, which we can respect. They understand the fine art of manipulation, but are best manipulated by us. They are disloyal and treacherous at best and will eventually turn on their allies, so exercise all due caution. They will bite the hand that feeds them, so show them to the buffet and let them hunt for themselves. They are cannibals and feed on their own kind as well. We cannot offer the vampires our blood, as it is too alien to ingest. We must be grateful for this, otherwise they'd consider us food as well and be no less vile than the Padrone.

The Restless Dead: The Dead are interesting. They can see and do things we cannot and make fine informants. But all too often, they are resentful and vengeful beings who have issues when they cannot find rest after their demise. They fail to find peace because of the actions of some Ovid and can come back to haunt. Kill only when you must to avoid making yourself a target for the



ghosts. They may have been relatively easy to kill the first time, but the second time is much more of a challenge. It is hard to destroy what you cannot see and feel.

Lexicon

Agere: Myrmidon faction of the Hatar aspect.

Amari Aliquid: Viskr faction of the Kumoti aspect.

Anansi: The first, and wisest, of the Ananasi. He is reportedly still alive and active.

Anomia: Viskr faction of the Hatar aspect.

Aspect: The member of the Triat whom the Ananasi emulates — Weaver (Tenere), Wyrm (Hatar) or Wyld (Kumoti).

Atahsaia (Aht-tah-SEI-ah): The Hidden. The secret weapon of Queen Ananasa, metis monstrosities encapsulated in amber until she needs them.

Cabal: The proper title for each faction of the Ananasi. There are nine total cabals, three under each aspect.

Chymos: Wyrsta faction of the Kumoti aspect.

Damhàn (DOM-hahn): The proper name for the Ananasi.

Downtime: A period when the Ananasi takes a break from being Ananasi. It is also called the “waking sleep” or “recess.” The Ananasi occasionally goes into downtime to relieve stress and avoids the responsibilities of being Ananasi. They may spend their time being a landscaper, a housewife in suburbia or a mass of little spiders happily living in the woods, for example. Before entering a downtime, the *Rite of Reassumption* is performed so the Ananasi may resume Ananasi duties when needed by Ananasa. It’s a vacation from being Ananasi and can last as long as Ananasa or the Ananasi deems fit.

Estotilandia: A secluded territory in Africa, the mythical homeland of the werespiders.

Faction: The given role that each Ananasi follows (like a dharma), which when placed in conjunction with the aspect reveals their place in the Triumvirate. The factions are Myrmidon (Warrior), Viskyr (Wizard) and Wyrsta (Questioners of the Way).

First War, the: The great battles between the Ananasi and the other insect races that led to the destruction of the Insect races.

Gaderin (Gad-ER-in): Wyrsta faction of the Tenere aspect.

Grandmother Spider: The Weaver, one part of the Triat and one-time ruler over the Ananasi.

Great Mother, the: Queen Ananasa.

Great Web, the: The universe as a holistic body. It is no longer perfect and symmetrical and that is what the Ananasi seeks to repair.

Hatar: Wyrm aspect of the Ananasi.



Insect Races: The races of “shapechangers” created by the Weaver that originally threatened the Symmetry and were destroyed by the Ananasi long before most of the Changing Breeds known to exist today came into being.

Kar: The Myrmidon faction of the Kumoti aspect.

Kumo: The Wyrm-corrupted werespiders of Asia.

Kumoti: The Wyld aspect of the Ananasi.

Malum (MAL-um): Wyrsta faction of the Hatar aspect.

Mother-Queen: Ananasa.

Myrmidon (MEER-mi-don): The Warrior faction of each aspect of the Triumvirate.

Ovid (OH-vid): The other Changing Breeds, most of whom are really not considered significant in the grander scheme of things by the Ananasi.

Plicare (PLI-car): Viskr faction of the Tenere aspect.

Padrone: Cannibalistic hunters, once part of the Ananasi, who feed on other Ananasi.

Queen Ananasa: The creator of the Ananasi and the guiding force behind everything they do. Spirit parent and totem of all Ananasi.

Secean (Ses-IAN): The Myrmidon faction of the Tenere aspect.

Sylie (SI-lee): The web-haven and connection to the Umbra and the Great Mother that each Ananasi creates, something like a Baster’s den-realm.

Symmetry: The ultimate goal of the Ananasi and their Queen: The restoration of the Triat to their proper places and roles and, ultimately, eventual restoration of universal balance.

Tapestry, the: Proper perspective on the Universe. According to the Ananasi, the universe is made of endless strands; only by observing the whole of this grand Tapestry can any creature understand its rightful place in the universe.

Tenere (TEN-er): The Weaver aspect of the Ananasi.

Triumvirate: The political body and duties followed by the Ananasi, as dictated to them by Queen Ananasa.

Unweaving: Deliberate alteration or destruction of a part of the Tapestry/Web in order to restore Symmetry.

Viskr (VIS-kr): The “wizard” aspect of each faction of the Triumvirate. Their duty is to repair the damage done to the Great Web

War in the Heavens: The great battles that led to the fall of the Triat and the building of the Webs. A nice way to describe cosmic sibling rivalry.

Weaving: Deliberate creation of reweaving of a part of the tapestry or Great web to restore Symmetry.

Web, the: The Gauntlet, the barrier placed between the physical and spiritual worlds by the Weaver. While this is a hindrance to most of the Ovid, the Ananasi use it to their advantage and use it to serve their own purposes.

Web of Ananasa: The connection and political body of the Ananasi as a race. The whole of Ananasi as it relates to the great scheme of the Mother-Queen.



Wyrsta (WEER-stah): The “questioner” faction of the Ananasi. Their duty is to follow the aspect of the Triat chosen for them by Ananasa, but to do so while trying to understand (and hence, question) the exact goal of that member of the Triat, and what the Weaver, Wyld or Wyrn truly was. Wyrsta seek to return the Great Web to the aspect that follows original goals.

Ananasi Character Creation

Step One: Character Concept — Who and what are you?

- Choose concept
- Choose a Nature and Demeanor
- Choose your breed
- Choose your Trait affiliation and aspect (Myrmidon, Viskyr or Wyrsta)

Step Two: Select Attributes — What are your basic capabilities?

- Prioritize Attributes (seven primary, five secondary and three tertiary)
- Choose Traits

Step Three: Select Advantages — What do you know and what can you do?

- Choose Five Abilities
- Choose five Backgrounds. Ananasi may choose from *Fetish*, *Allies*, *Kinfolk*, *Mentor*, *Resources* and *Rites*. All Ananasi have Queen Ananasa as their totem for free. Arachnid breed werespiders cannot purchase *Resources* for free at the beginning.
- Choose three Basic Gifts (one Basic general Ananasi Gift, one Basic faction Gift and one Basic Aspect Gift)
- Assign Renown based on Renown Charts below

Step Four: Finishing Touches — Fill in the details

- Record Willpower and blood pool
- Record Gnosis (determined by breed)
- Choose Negative Traits (if any)
- Select Merits and/or Flaws, if desired

Step Five: Spark of Life — Narrative descriptions and other details



Archetypes

For complete descriptions, see *Laws of the Wild Revised*
Alpha, Bravo, Builder, Bureaucrat, Caregiver, Competitor,
Confidant, Conformist, Conniver, Perpetual Spiderling,
Curmudgeon, Deviant, Director, Explorer, Fanatic, Follower,
Gallant, Hedonist, Jester, Judge, Loner, Martyr, Monster,
Predator, Rebel, Reluctant Ananasi, Show-Off, Survivor,
Traditionalist, Visionary

Breeds

The Ananasi are alien, even among the Changing Breeds. After their first transformation, homid Ananasi lose all contact with human, or even mammalian, emotions and sentiment. Arachnid Ananasi never had these to begin with. The children of Ananasi are not just lacking emotions, for any psychopath could be seen to lack emotions; the Ananasi instead are apart from emotions, and because of this, others seem them as cold, uncaring and unfathomable. To this, the Ananasi give no response, for any response would indicate emotion. The only thing that could be described in terms of emotion among the Ananasi is the Ananasi's sense of duty and loyalty to their mother Queen Ananasa.

If there are metis Ananasi, no one ever speaks of them during the initial education of a spiderling. Those few who have ever mentioned them speak of them as complete monstrosities. Perhaps the Padrone are the metis Ananasi, but no one seems to know. Metis Ananasi are called Atahsaia, but very, very few know this, and her children know better than to ask her about the possibility of metis breed werespiders. The monsters that two Ananasi create when they mate are taken away into the Umbra at birth by elder Ananasi and never seen again.

Homid: You grew up as a human and lived in human society, but as your Metamorphosis occurred, you realized you were different and had a greater purpose.

Starting Willpower: 3

Starting Gnosis: 1

Arachnid: You were hatched from an egg sac and compelled to devour your siblings simply to survive and reach adolescence. Since the Metamorphosis, you discovered reason and logic and appreciate the abilities of those things.

Starting Willpower: 3

Starting Gnosis: 3



The Forms

Ananasi have four forms. The Padrone, while also Ananasi, have a different form. The forms are Homid, Lilian, Pithus and Crawlerling. Each form has a specific purpose.

Homid: Ananasi homids generally are thin and graceful, and often have tattoos and other body art. Many have human forms that reveal their African heritage, but can come from any ethnic background. All have pore variations on their skin that can only be seen by the other Damhàn that reflect Rank in other spider forms. Trait-wise, human-born Ananasi are the same as Garou for stats. See **Laws of the Wild Revised** for Garou Traits in Homid.

Lilian: The Lilian form stands seven feet tall, thin with six arms and two legs. They are jet black with thin velvety hair covering their body. Their hands are long with sharp claws. However, the Lilian form varies largely based on the spider genetics of the Ananasi. Some are more arachnid, others are more human (relatively speaking) in appearance. This form causes Delirium in humans, and is not like Glabro. They are more like spiders than human in this form. Their bodies are subtly patterned with symbols of their aspect and Rank. Their faces are oval, and while their features are long, they are not at all angular or pointed. They can use human speech in this form, but the result is a hissing mockery of human speech.

Bonus Traits: *Lithe*, *Quick* x 2, *Tough* x 2, *Wiry* x 3

Negative Traits: *Bestial* x 2, *Repugnant*

Other: Clawed hands inflict aggravated damage, but extra hands do *not* translate into extra actions in any way. If they attempt to use multiple weapons, they suffer the same penalties and advantages as any other creature. They cannot initiate Social Challenges (except for those involving intimidation).

Pithus: A big pit spider the size of a Volkswagen Bug. They have eight legs and huge jaws. This is the proverbial “*ohmygawdit’ sagiantspider!!!*” form. Their legs end in large claws. Human speech is impossible in this form. Communication is through hissing and gestures. Other Ananasi instinctively understand this mother tongue. Obviously, this form causes the Delirium.

Bonus Traits: *Brawny* x 2, *Ferocious* x 2, *Quick* x 2, *Tireless*, *Tough* x 2

Negative Traits: *Bestial* x 2, *Repugnant*, *Tactless*

Other: Clawed hands inflict aggravated damage. They cannot initiate Social Challenges (except for those involving intimidation).

Crawlerling: A swarm of thousands of spiders. Taking this form allows Fair Escape from almost any situation. If only one spider survives, the Ananasi still survives, but it may take a long time to replenish her flesh. However, if a majority of the spiders die, the player must alter the character’s appearance — Nature, Demeanor, personality and even gender can change. But as long as up to one-third of the crawlerlings survive, the Ananasi does. It is incredibly difficult to kill a swarm of a thousand spiders.



Bonus Traits: *Athletic, Dexterous, Energetic, Lithe, Nimble* x 2

Negative Traits: *Delicate* x 3, *Puny* x 2

Optional Rules

As mentioned in the story, there are physical differences between male and female spiders. The Traits above are listed for the average spider. Optionally, the Traits above can be considered as being those of a female spider. Female spiders are bigger and stronger, but have a slower reaction time. To reflect these biological differences in game, one can use the following optional Traits for a male spider. Just remember, for Ananasi, size doesn't matter. It how you use what you have that really matters.

Lilian Males:

Bonus Traits: *Lithe, Nimble, Quick* x 2, *Tough* x 2

Negative Traits: *Bestial* x 2, *Repugnant*

Pithus Males:

Bonus Traits: *Athletic, Ferocious* x 2, *Quick* x 2, *Resilient, Tough* x 2

Negative Traits: *Bestial* x 2, *Repugnant, Tactless*

There is also an absence of sexism among the Ananasi. Unlike Garou, there is none of the tension between Ananasi males and females as there is with the Get of Fenris and Black Furies. As long as one is capable, loyal to Ananasa and the Rank reflects it, they are respected no matter what they look like.

Factions and Aspects

Ananasi have no tribes or auspices. Instead they have factions, denoting their Triat affiliation, and aspects, denoting their role in their respective faction.

Factions are Tenere (Weaver), Hatar (Wyrn) and Kumoti (Wyld).

Aspects are Myrmidon (warrior), Viskr (wizard) and Wyrsta (questioner).

Each combination of faction and aspect has a unique name.

Secean Ananasi look to the Weaver's work prior to her madness as a guide and seek to understand the universe. They are curious to a fault and will go to any length to get the answers they seek. To Secean, the devil really is in the details. They have a natural insight into true nature of things. Sadly, they are opinionated and often brutally honest (which, coupled with Ananasi nature, can make them tactless). But as harsh as the Warrior Weaver spiders are with others, they are equally demanding and harsh on themselves. If there is any question, the Secean is searching for an answer. Artists and statisticians,



as well as slightly mad scientists are common professions of the Secean. Secean are Tenere (faction) and Myrmydion (aspect).

Plicare are those who are the perfectionists among the Ananasi. They create their environments for perfect order and are anal-retentive behavior personified. They know how many candies are in the jar because they've counted them several times over. They tolerate change and evolution as long as they can understand the cause of it and analyze it. The drive for order and perfection is not a weak spot to a Plicare. If something's disturbed, they will punish the one who caused the chaos, tidy the mess up and then set things back as they were before the disturbance occurred. These are the accountants, librarians and organizers of the mortal society. Plicare are Tenere (faction) and Viskr (aspect).

Gaderin are collectors. They not only collect things, they sometimes collect people. They collect specimens of whatever they have chosen to collect, and they have a compulsion to have the best, most complete collection of their subject. The desire to finish their collection and take up a new life hobby does not make them reckless. No Gaderin collects the same thing as another. One may collect coins, another may collect Roman coins, and another may collect metal bus tokens. The Gaderin never duplicate collections. The collections are always meticulously catalogued and organized, as Weaver would have done with them. A Gaderin may be found among collectible dealers, antiquarians and obsessive museum curators, though most Gaderin are inclined to collect treasures of a much darker nature. Gaderin are Tenere (faction) and Wrysta (aspect).

Agere Ananasi are nomadic, staying only long enough to have an impact and possibly ruin a life and then moving onto Ananasa's next order, leaving others to repair the damage and take the blame. Their creed is "better to provoke a conflict than get caught in one." They prefer short, direct actions, but enjoy the conflict and the taste of fresh blood so often they do not follow their creed. They have allies only because they can be used and are cold and apathetic to the needs of others. They serve Ananasa and do the Wym's original task and that is all that matters, even if they have been chosen to do the dirty work. They all are confident they will succeed in weakening the Weaver's mad stranglehold on the Wyld so it may be freed and healed. Agere are Hatar (faction) and Myrmydion (aspect).

Anomia are the best and most generous patrons of the arts of death and carnage. While the Agere are direct in their means of creating mass violence and unrest, the strife caused by the Anomia is subtle and more dangerous. They are the manipulators of the strands and pluck them to see the effects their actions have. The Weaver is also an influence on these werespiders. They are the financial officers that launder money for arms deals and back terrorists. They are the ones who create disasters. Humans are too fearful and greedy, so they are easily used to increase the workload for the morgue (or food for the Hatar) with their pettiness and prejudices. The master manipulators



of the Ananasi are often twisted by their aspect, and so usually stay hidden. They are at high risk for being corrupted by the Wyrms and forgetting that Ananasa must also be their master. They take great pleasure in watching the anger, hatred, paranoia and damage they are the catalysts for. Agere are Hatar (faction) and Viskr (aspect).

Malum are a force of entropy in its purest form. Unlike the Anomia, they avoid methods that require long-term planning and the gradual erosion of pawns' morals. They prefer direct conflict by causing riots, terrorist attacks, civil unrest and wreaking havoc on all sides of a conflict. The minions of the Wyrms are as frequently the targets of a Malum's actions as the Garou are. They work toward a primary goal, other than serving their Queen, and that is to break the bonds that imprisoned and maddened the Wyrms so he can be restored to his original duty. Many times they pit themselves directly against the Corruptor's minions. They take up the slack left when the Wyrms forgot he was the Destroyer and became the Corruptor. Of all the Hatar, the Malum are least in danger from corruption because they are true to the ideals of the Wyrms as it was. Malum are Hatar (faction) and Wrysta (aspect).

Kar are the subtlest defenders of Gaia and protectors of the Wyld. By most often using the native spider populations of a natural area, the Kar defend the remaining wide-open spaces left on Gaia. If there was no Gaia, there would be no place for the Ananasi and so they must protect it. They control the pests and predators through a selection process. They are evolutionists and have made great strides in their breeding programs to create more dangerous spiders. They are not arachnid Dr. Mengeles, choosing who shall live and who shall die, but are sculptors of untouched nature. They allow nature to grow and change without the stagnating touch of the Weaver or the corrupting taint of the Wyrms. Of all the aspects, the Kar are least likely to interact with humans. They enjoy the woods and wilds, and appreciate that humans already change themselves constantly. They affect the Wyld in minor ways that have far-reaching consequences. Kar are Kumoti (faction) and Myrmydion (aspect).

Amari Aliquid enjoy change for change's sake. "Gaia provides, and Ananasa commands" is the maxim of this aspect. They enjoy change in its purest form and like the process of change in and of itself. They are wholly unpredictable, driven wholly by instinct and not emotion. They lack human emotion, although they will seem content for days to rearrange furniture or sketch variations on an architectural plan. They only seem sad when a change has occurred without them. Natural disasters that they haven't caused are seen as a failure. If Ananasa orders a change, the Amari Aliquid carry out the orders and make the change. They are the least violent of all Ananasi and most welcome by other factions as they are entertaining. Others usually see the constant activity of an Amari Aliquid as hyperactivity and impatience. They are the most active in human society and are drawn to humans. For better or for worse, the Amari Aliquid is compelled to change things. Amari Aliquid are Kumoti (faction) and Viskr (aspect).



Chy mos Ananasi are the watchers of the Wyld, and like the Wyrsta of the other aspects, their work appears opposite the goal the part of the Triat they follow. Chy mos stop the Wyld from going too far and growing too powerful. They believe the Garou are not respecting the Triat and that by acting so radically in service to the Wyld, they neglect the Weaver and Wyr m's place in the Universe, and are unaware of how closely they teeter toward becoming Weaver or Wyr m's servants. The Chy mos fight against such extremism to bring about Ananasi's goal of Balance. The Weaver's threat to the Garou is great, and the Chy mos use technology to warn the Glass Walkers that Grandmother Spider is insane. However, the Glass Walkers blame Pentex for the actions of the Chy mos and do not see the danger of becoming dependent on the cold, metallic milk of Weaver. Chy mos are Kumoti (faction) and Wyrsta (aspect).

Attributes

For complete descriptions, see **Laws of the Wild Revised**.

Physical Traits: Agile, Brau ny, Brutal, Dexterous, Enduring, Energetic, Ferocious, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Stalwart, Steady, Tenacious, Tireless, Tough, Vigorous, Wiry

Social Traits: Alluring, Beguiling, Charismatic, Charming, Commanding, Dignified, Diplomatic, Elegant, Eloquent, Empathetic, Expressive, Friendly, Genial, Gorgeous, Ingratiating, Intimidating, Magnetic, Persuasive, Seductive, Witty

Mental Traits: Astute, Attentive, Clever, Creative, Cunning, Dedicated, Determined, Discerning, Disciplined, Insightful, Intuitive, Knowledgeable, Observant, Patient, Rational, Reflective, Shrewd, Vigilant, Wily, Wise

Abilities

For complete descriptions, see **Laws of the Wild**. Arachnids have the same limitations as lupus when choosing Abilities.

Academics, Animal Ken, Athletics, Awareness, Brawl, Computer, Crafts, Dodge, Drive, Empathy, Enigmas, Etiquette, Expression, Finance, Firearms, Hobby/Professional/Expert Ability, Intimidation, Investigation, Law, Leadership, Linguistics, Medicine, Meditation, Melee, Occult, Performance, Politics, Primal-Urge, Repair, Science, Scrounge, Security, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Survival



Backgrounds

Allies — Human or spider friends and aides.

Contacts — Sources of reliable information.

Fylfot (Fetish) — A magical item of variable power, with Storyteller approval.

Influence — Sway over the institutions of human society in any number of areas: *Bureaucracy, Church, Finance, Health, High Society, Industry, Legal, Media, Occult, Police, Political, Street, Transportation, Underworld, University.*

Kinfolk — Non-shifting human or spider relatives who do not suffer the Delirium.

Mentor — An older or more experienced Ananasi instructor or patron.

Resources — Material wealth and access to readily available cash.

Rites — The number and/or level of rites one has learned.

Ananasi cannot have the Backgrounds of *Pure Breed* or *Ancestors*. Ananasi does not want her children to dwell on the past, nor do they have ancestral memories. They take what they need from humans and spiders alike so they have no *Pure Breed*. No arachnid Ananasi can start with *Contacts* or *Resources* unless purchased with freebie points such those gained by taking Negative Traits. Ananasi is a totem for all Ananasi and is free.

Totem: Queen Ananasa (Spider)

Totem of Wisdom

Cost: Free for Ananasi, otherwise 5

Though trapped in Malfeas, Ananasa takes an active role guiding and teaching her children. On very rare occasions she will accept non-Ananasi into her ranks (but never the Corax).

Boon: Ananasa grants her children one level each of *Occult* and *Enigmas*. However, to access the gifts, the user must meditate in Sylie form or, in the case of non-Ananasi, meditate alone. Ananasa is more likely than most other totems to directly advise the elders among her chosen.

Ban: Ananasi must obey the rules of their litany. Non-Ananasi must cooperate with Ananasi when asked and enter no situation without a fallback plan.



Negative Traits

For complete descriptions of these Traits, see *Laws of the Wild*.

Negative Physical Traits: *Clumsy, Cowardly, Decrepit, Delicate, Docile, Flabby, Lane, Lethargic, Piny, Sickly*

Negative Social Traits: *Bestial, Callous, Condescending, Dull, Feral, Naïve, Obnoxious, Repugnant, Shy, Tactless, Untrustworthy*

Negative Mental Traits: *Forgetful, Gullible, Ignorant, Impatient, Oblivious, Predictable, Submissive, Violent, Witless.*

Ananasi Renown and Rank

Ananasi have Renown and Rank similar to the Garou, but only other Ananasi will recognize it. Ananasa grants Renown and Ranks personally, and alters her children's skin to display their Rank. In homid form, this shows in a subtle pattern of the facial pores, while in Lilian, Pithus and Crawlerling forms, the marks are more visible on the carapace and around the eyes. The more complex the pattern, the higher the Rank. Further, the patterning announces the Ananasi's aspect — a slithering snake for the Hatar, a lightning bolt for the Kumoti, and an increasingly complex web for the Tenere.

Ananasi Renown consists of Cunning, Obedience and Wisdom, which make up the understandings of the ways of the Wyrms, Weaver and Wyld. Ananasi do not have adjectives that describe their Renown, as only Ananasa knows the Renown and Rank of her children. Ananasi also do not bother with titles for each Rank. They prefer to use a simple mathematic way of denoting experience and favor among the Damhán — the more markings one has, the greater the Rank. What else is necessary? They have no problems regarding their loose hierarchy. The markings on their skin are enough to settle all power struggles when the Ananasi must work together.

Ananasi of no rank have no *Rite of Passage* to face. They simply return to their normal lives (relatively speaking, of course) after the Metamorphosis and their Ananasi education and follow their calling. Ananasi attain Rank One rather quickly as it becomes instinctual to follow the aspect and faction assigned to them by the Mother-Queen. By simply understanding their purpose and place in the Universe and following their aspect (three Renown in that category), they are rewarded with Rank One. Progress up the Ranks slows after that, as Ananasa expects more of those who have learned what they are and understand their place.



Tenere

Rank	Renown Requirement
Zero*	None*
One	3 Obedience
Two	1 Cunning, 5 Obedience, 1 Wisdom
Three	3 Cunning, 7 Obedience, 4 Wisdom
Four	4 Cunning, 9 Obedience, 6 Wisdom
Five	6 Cunning, 10 Obedience, 7 Wisdom
Six**	???

Hatar

Rank	Renown Requirement
Zero*	None*
One	3 Cunning
Two	5 Cunning, 1 Obedience, 1 Wisdom
Three	7 Cunning, 4 Obedience, 3 Wisdom
Four	9 Cunning, 6 Obedience, 4 Wisdom
Five	10 Cunning, 7 Obedience, 6 Wisdom
Six**	???

Kumoti

Rank	Renown Requirement
Zero*	None*
One	3 Wisdom
Two	1 Cunning, 1 Obedience, 5 Wisdom
Three	4 Cunning, 3 Obedience, 7 Wisdom
Four	6 Cunning, 4 Obedience, 9 Wisdom
Five	7 Cunning, 6 Obedience, 10 Wisdom
Six**	???

*This only applies to Ananasi whose education has not begun

**Only one out of every 10 million Ananasi can reach this Rank, and even fewer can aspire to such heights. Those who have been chosen for this honor not only enjoy a worldwide reputation among their kind, but more importantly, these legendary spiderfolk are treated as avatars of Ananasa if they are ever met. It is alleged that Anansi is this Rank.



Ananasi and the Wyrms

Contrary to what Garou think, Ananasi are not Wyrms-creatures. Ananasi who follow the Hatar Aspect are not Wyrms-tainted. Cunning Renown does not make an Ananasi a servant of the Wyrms. When Gifts such as *Scent of True Form* are used on them, they do not stink of the Wyrms whose responsibilities they have taken up.

They are, however, just as vulnerable as the other Changing Breeds to the Wyrms's influence and corruption. It is not a question of *if* a Hatar will serve the Wyrms; it is a question of *when*. Hatar frequently do fall victim to the Wyrms and neglect their role to do his job until he can be healed and restored to his proper place in the Great Tapestry. Few Hatar can resist the seduction of his promises. Most last quite a while before succumbing, some never succumb to the Wyrms's allure, and some barely reach Rank Three before they go insane.

The insanity of a corrupted Ananasi is a cold, calculating madness, no different in appearance than their normal demeanors. The lack of emotions often makes the corruption much harder to detect. Ananasi who become his servants work to prevent the Symmetry from being restored. The human populace is the target of a corrupted Ananasi. They do not change forms as fomori or Black Spiral Dancers do, as they are already monstrous in body. They simply forget the Primal Wyrms's task of destroyer and begin to work toward the goals of the perverse Wyrms incarnation. Certain Gifts and Rites can slow or ward off the corruption, but few Hatar even realize they are becoming corrupted.

Obviously the Ananasi have underestimated the current condition of the Wyrms. Ananasi does not even warn those who are in danger of denying their place in the Great Web. A werespider who serves the Wyrms is a terrible thing, and Ananasi pride does not allow them to admit they are also victims.

Queen Ananasi's Blessings

All Ananasi start with Ananasi as their *Totem* for free. Soon after their First Change, all Ananasi are taught the *Rite of Weaving* for free, which allows them to make their own Sylies. All Ananasi characters start off with this rite unless the Metamorphosis is to be part of the game.

Stepping Sideways

Ananasi do not focus on their reflections to step into the Umbra; instead they assume their Crawlerling form and crawl between the strands of the Great Web. Once all of her Crawlerlings have passed through the Web, the Ananasi can assume any form she wishes.

Because of the way they enter the Umbra, the Ananasi find it easier to enter the Umbra in areas where the Gauntlet rating is high rather than low. In areas where the Weaver has not woven heavy webbing between Gaia and the Umbra, it is harder for them to cross over. Thankfully for the werespiders,



urban sprawl has many strands. The Static Gnosis Challenge is against 7 minus half the local Gauntlet rating (rounding up). Use the **Laws of the Wild** Gauntlet rating chart and reverse the difficulties for Ananasi.

Blood Pool and Usage

Like all spiders, Ananasi must feed on blood (or bodily fluids) to survive. In Crawlerling form, all food is liquefied before eating. There is no remorse, just as there is no remorse when someone eats a hot dog. Unlike vampires who often wrestle with their lingering Humanity, the Ananasi just feed — vampires either relish or despise the act of feeding; to the Ananasi, it is simply eating. All Ananasi have maximum Blood Traits based on their Rank. The Blood Traits can be enhanced with the use of Gifts such as *Tick Body*. Ananasi strengthens their Blood Traits with attainment of greater Rank, but does not exceed the natural maximum, although she does teach Gifts to some Ananasi to have greater use of their blood. Only one Blood Trait may be spent per round unless a Gift allows otherwise. Blood Traits and Gnosis cannot be spent in the same turn, unless required by a Gift that specifically uses both.

Ananasi Rank and Blood Pool

Rank 0	Five Blood Traits (You do not fully understand how to use your blood pool during the brief period before your Ananasi education so you cannot access it effectively)
Rank One	Seven Blood Traits
Rank Two	10 Blood Traits
Rank Three	15 Blood Traits
Rank Four	20 Blood Traits
Rank Five	25 Blood Traits
Rank Six	30 Blood Traits

Ananasi blood may be used for:

Changing Forms: It is used as a Garou uses Rage. By spending a Blood Trait, the Ananasi may automatically shift to his choice of form.

Extra Attacks: As Garou would use Rage. One Blood Trait grants one extra action.

Healing Damage: Ananasi must regenerate and heal by using their blood as vampires do. For example, an Ananasi loses a limb in battle. She must “spend” blood to heal the wound or to regenerate. For each lost limb it will take one week for the body to regenerate. It is not an overnight thing and often the replacement limb is atrophied or scarred. Regeneration is also painful. Without the expenditure of blood, Ananasi heal as humans do. They may also



use Gifts to heal more effectively. A single Blood Trait will heal a single level of nonaggravated damage (no other action may be taken during healing). Five Blood Traits must be spent all at once to heal a level of aggravated damage; this takes an entire scene.

Creating Webs: In Pithus form only, the Ananasi can spend a Blood Trait to create either 10 meters of a single web strand, or enough sheet webbing to cocoon a Crinos-sized target or seal a doorway or corridor.

The blood of other Changing Breeds, while it tastes particularly sweet, does not invoke any special benefits for the Ananasi, nor is it addictive as Changing Breed blood is to vampires. Ananasi suffer no penalties for feeding from other Ovid, nor do they get bonuses for feeding from such a source. Vampire blood provides *no* nourishment. It is immediately vomited up as it goes against Ananasi's wishes for her children to become addicted to any substance. Ghoul blood is so vile it smells bad from a distance and is also avoided. Only human and mammal blood can be ingested. Vampires also get no nourishment from Ananasi blood. It tastes so inhuman that it is instinctively spit out upon the first taste and provides no nourishment if kept down.

Pedipalps do not heal any wounds inflicted during feeding, so Ananasi have to be very careful when feeding. Sometimes fylfots are created to cover up bite marks. Some Ananasi are clever and have set it up so that it looks like their victims suffered an injury from a puncture weapon. A ice pick placed near the unconscious victim of a Pithus bite is a good trick, as long as the Ananasi was careful enough to place the victim's blood on the pick blade.

It is easiest to feed in Crawlerling (although time-consuming) or have a willing (meaning, possibly deranged) victim who really wants to be bitten by a giant spider. Spider-bite marks from a VW-sized spider are pretty obvious. There is also no ecstasy or emotional side-effect of an Ananasi's bite. Life would be easier on Ananasi if they caused pleasure when they fed; instead they cause pain, especially in Pithus or Lilian. Some Crawlerling bites are virtually painless due to toxins injected and the miniscule size of the fangs. Other Crawlerling form bites are dangerous and cause illness and excruciating pain.

On Webs and Creating Webs

Spiders (and Ananasi) can create three main types of webs: cobwebs, sheet webs and orb webs. Cobwebs are made of random webbing and are used to catch prey. These are most commonly found in cubbyholes and corners. Sheet webs are webs that originate in a funnel or cobweb and are flat webs that will trap anything that lands on its surface. Orb webs are the stereotypical spider webs. These delicate and beautiful structures are made of concentric circles on support strands and can cover large areas (some as large as 18 feet!). The immense orb webs of the nephilia spider of South America are used by natives as fishing nets. Some spiders have evolved unique ways to build and use their webbing. The net spider (not to be confused with the Umbral ones) actually throws a web out to catch its dinner.



The webbing that creates the Sylie is always made in Pithus form. For any permanent or semi-permanent web, the Ananasi use their Pithus form. Pithus webs are built to last, and those who ruin a spider's web or force them to abandon it will spend the rest of their lives regretting it. The webbing of a Pithus Ananasi is incredibly durable and strong. The webs are made of natural polymers and protein. They start as liquid and turn into silk due to chemical changes and manipulation from the claws on a spider's back legs. Real spiders can also recycle webs by eating them. The tensile strength of a Pithus spider web is the same as that of steel cables but far more flexible. It has the same physical properties as Kevlar. Certain Gifts can alter the properties of Ananasi webs.

Spider webs can be also used in folk medicine as wound covers. Ananasi web has no healing properties, however. If snaring an opponent, the Pithus Ananasi webs can take four levels of damage before they will give way. Crawlerling Ananasi can also weave webs, but the webs of the Crawlerling are as fragile as a normal spider's web.

Venom and Bites

In Lilian and Pithus forms, Ananasi can produce venom that makes the damage from their bites aggravated. Using venom is a voluntary thing, and the Ananasi may choose not to use it, such as when they are feeding. The injected venom in Lilian form is diluted from the full-strength of the Pithus form.

Without the use of Gifts, the Ananasi can only produce enough venom for two or three solid injections. They cannot make more venom without Gifts. Certain Gifts can alter the properties of an Ananasi's venom, in which case aggravated damage is *not* caused in addition to the special effects of the Gift: *Venom*. While Ananasi venom can hurt a human, and a Pithus bite will certainly kill or, at the very least, paralyze a human for hours, the use of Gifts is required to make the venom strong enough to affect shapeshifters or other supernatural beings. Mages are not considered supernatural against venom; they have human bodies, so venom affects them as it does mundane humans. This same mechanic applies to changelings in their seeming. At Storyteller discretion, physical factors of the target (such as age, body weight and condition) may determine how poorly the target reacts to Crawlerling form venom; after all, a slender six-year-old girl is more likely to die from a single bite as opposed to a large, physically fit 30-year-old man.

Venom is most often produced and used by the Hatar who use it to aid in their goals. The venom is frequently replenished in Crawlerling form by eating little poisonous spiders, because after all, you are what you eat, even if a spider. There are 35,000 choices of spider species on Earth so the world is a grand smorgasbord to an Ananasi eating spiders. Ananasi do not even hesitate to eat their arachnid Kinfolk.

Tarantulas produce paralyzing venom that is rarely lethal but is severely debilitating. They also can eject spines from their legs when threatened,



which cause a painful allergic skin reaction. Gold and yellow sacs produce the same symptoms of the brown recluse spider, but milder. Hobo spider bites produce swelling, malaise, nausea and pain, plus ulceration of the bite and a livid scar. The brown recluse produces a necrotizing bulls-eye bite and causes skin infection, tissue death, joint pain, nausea, fever and illness. Kidney failure is possible if untreated. Black house spiders cause giddiness, nausea and pain (imagine being excited to be so ill!).

Black widows inject a neurotoxin 14 times stronger than a rattlesnake's venom. The venom produces muscle cramps, grimacing, rashes, headaches, pain and difficulty breathing. While not lethal, they are a serious threat. The Sydney funnel web spider, on the other hand, is the most poisonous biting spider on Earth. The primary toxins are a neurotoxin and another toxin that dramatically increases blood pressure and heart rate and can lead to cardiac arrest. There are also a lot of muscle spasms, including those of the involuntary muscle system. The red back spider's venom causes sweating and excruciating pain. Several doses of antivenom must be used to save the victim from the agony of their bite. Deaths are rare since antivenom is available. Either the few red back Ananasi aren't leaving victims alive to report the bites and seek treatment or Pentex is to blame.

Ironically, the cellar spider (the daddy longlegs) produces the most toxic of all venoms known in arachnids but their mouths are too small to bite through skin.

The Triat's Curses

Unlike the Garou, after their First Change the internal organs of the Ananasi never return to a truly human form. They have fangs, called pedipalps, hidden in their gums, a blood chemistry employing copper instead of iron and lungs which are a combination of human and a spider's book lungs. Their alien physiology can be revealed by close medical examination. Additionally the protectors of the Wyld, especially Garou, instinctively hate them with a passion.

Damage

Ananasi take aggravated damage from fire but not from silver. Kumo, the Eastern cousins of the Ananasi, suffer aggravated damage if they are struck with rosewood, but this does not cross over to Western Ananasi. Contrary to popular myth, they are not dangerously allergic to pesticides, and spraying an Ananasi with a can of Raid is more likely to annoy her than accomplish anything. A klaive will inflict aggravated damage, but the damage due to the spiritual enhancement to the weapon and not the metal it is forged from. Magical weapons of any kind cause Ananasi aggravated damage.



Merits and Flaws

Organized (1-Trait Aptitude Merit)

You take the order and structure of the Ananasi to a new level. Organizational tasks such as data-entry and bean-counting are second nature to you, and you can achieve them in half the time it would take another person to accomplish the task and you would not even get bored.

Daddy Long-Legs (2-Trait Aptitude Merit)

While not true spiders, daddy long-legs are some of the most graceful creatures on eight legs. By having the natural grace of a daddy long-legs spider, your Physical Traits are up two on any challenges involving jumping, leaping, dodging and dancing.

Human Form (3 Trait Supernatural Merit)

You appear completely human, unlike most of your spider kin. There are no telltale signs that you have arachnid blood and genetic material. Your pedipalps hide away completely, not even showing up on dental X-rays. Your blood appears human as well, without any foreign antigens or hemocyanin. With this Merit, you still prove to be human, no matter how much medical testing is done.

Venomous (3-Trait Supernatural Merit)

Unlike most of your brethren, you retain your venom sacs even in the Homid form. In this form, you can still use any Gifts that would normally only be available in Lillian and Pithus form. This Merit cannot be taken with the *Human Form Merit*.

Sex Appeal (4-Trait Social Merit)

You may not be the most attractive creature around, but you have that elusive quality that makes you irresistible to others. You may not even be their "type," but your grace, charm or pheromones make the opposite sex turn to putty in your hands. Because of this, you are up two Traits in a Social Challenge even if this will bring you above your maximum Traits. The Traits are only usable on those who are normally attracted to your gender.

Crawlerling Alteration (4-Trait Supernatural Merit)

You can choose the sizes and types of spiders you break into when you take Crawlerling form. You must have consumed at least a few of the spiders you take the forms of and can become any breed you have ever eaten. You cannot adopt the form of a spider species you have never consumed. If you have never eaten a trapdoor spider, you cannot have trapdoor spiders in your Crawlerling form.

Pithus Alteration (4 Trait Supernatural Merit)

You have conscious control over the appearance of your Pithus form, a rare trait amongst the children of Ananasa. The changes are minimal (cosmetic only) but there are advantages to picking your own spider-form. Most Ananasi are recognizable by their appearance, but with this Merit, it is easier to go somewhere where you are not known and blend in. Mostly, the



advantage is psychological. Some people are more afraid of giant tarantulas than of black widows and you can use that fear to your advantage by taking that species appearance in your Pithus form.

Good Reputation (5-Trait Social Merit)

The other Ovid in your area accept you; perhaps the spirits speak highly of you. They may dislike Ananasi, as most do, but they like you and accept you as an equal. Your Rank among the Ananasi carries over to all other Ovid who follow the same aspect of the Triat as you do. This Merit is very beneficial for scouts and those who will interact with the other Ovid. Amongst the Hatar, this applies to Wyrms minions as well, especially if using the Gift *Wyrmling Kinship*.

Lilian Alteration (6-Trait Physical Merit)

An Ananasi's Lilian form rarely changes after the Metamorphosis, however, you have the special ability of changing your Lilian appearance. You are much better suited to face new terrain by using camouflage to hide and by altering your body to move better over the land. You can also alter yourself to appear more or less threatening (useful for Social Challenges). You can even assume human form from the waist up, tricking others into believing you are defenseless as you draw them into your web.

Gender-Morph (6-Trait Supernatural Merit)

By going into Crawlerling and then reforming into human form, you can change your human form's gender at will. Any Ovid pursuing you will be thrown off the trail by assuming you are merely a relative of the Ananasi they were chasing because your scent changes as well. The change in appearance is not radical, as you will look like your "sibling" of the opposite sex and have similar features to your natural gender.

Hive Mind (7-Trait Supernatural Merit)

You have a great advantage over others of your kind. You need not choose leaders and drones in Crawlerling form to avoid the drawbacks and disorientation of that form. You retain full consciousness in all of your individual spider bodies. Killing every single spider that is part of your form is the only way to actually destroy you. However, there's a catch: if any of your Crawlerlings leave your immediate area (a 100-foot radius), they forget they are part of you and revert back into common spiders, losing your memories.

Obsessive-Compulsive (1 to 3-Trait Mental Flaw)

The world sees you as bit of an idiot savant. You take organizational skills far and beyond the point of no return. You are obsessed with the trivial details of your tasks. When doing mathematics, you will add the columns up, down and sideways and repeat the number crunching 10 different ways to make sure the sum is always the same. When doing anything that requires detail work or organization you gain the Negative Mental Traits *Distracted* and *Oblivious*. For the 3-point Flaw, the Ananasi is always distracted and oblivious due to the minutiae of the world around them no matter what she is doing. She must spend Willpower to focus on her immediate goal and can overcome her



obsessive-compulsive behavior for 10 minutes. This Flaw is more common in the Tenere. An Ananasi watchmaker with this Flaw may never get a simple watch repair done on time.

Unkempt (1-Trait Social Flaw)

You are a slob. Both your appearance and your home are a mess. It is annoying to most humans, but to other Ananasi, it is downright revolting. They look down upon you as a lesser, regardless of your rank and will always be reluctant to come to you for help or information. You are a social outcast even amongst the Damhàn because you have neglected order and symmetry in your personal effects. You are down two Social Traits in persuading, convincing, and in respect-related challenges. For example, you will be one Trait down whenever trying to convince the Board of Health inspectors to not condemn your house for being a health hazard or when trying to convince Ananasi to work with you to find your lost Fylfot.

Vampire-phile (1-Trait Psychological Flaw)

You are an embarrassment to the Ananasi; you are obsessed with vampires and their society, to the point you've forgotten what it means to be Ananasi and serve the Great Mother. You've begun dressing like a vampire and have become nocturnal to avoid the dreaded sunlight. While vampires you may cross paths with might tolerate this to a degree, the Ananasi do not and are worried about your strange behavior. Whenever you must act like an Ananasi among your own people and serve the Great Mother, you must spend a Willpower Trait to "break out of character" and drop your vampiric personality quirks.

Impatient (2-Trait Mental Flaw)

The Ananasi are known as the Patient Ones. But you are not patient at all. You want what you want and want it *now*. You cannot plan long-term plans and live only in the here and now, demanding immediate gratification like an impetuous child. When you do not get what you want soon enough, you become irritable and possibly even angry at the delay. If there is ever a time when patience is required or something is taking too long, you must spend a Willpower to avoid taking control of the situation and forcing it to go your way *quickly*.

Vestigial Limbs (2 to 6-Trait Supernatural Flaw)

After your Metamorphosis, you literally were never quite the same. Upon your first shifting into Lilian or Pithus and back to human, you discovered two more limbs were attached to your flanks. Amputation only causes the limbs to regenerate (automatically costing one Blood Trait per limb removed) and the new limbs have the added Negative Trait *Lame*. This is Ananasa's way of discouraging those who'd dare deny their perfection by removing a limb. Others see it as a sure sign she has gone mad as a milliner in Malfeas.

The spider limbs are vestigial (less than eight inches long) and shift to human arms in Homid, giving you the Negative Trait *Repulsive*. (2-Trait Flaw)



In human form, the spider limbs remain spider limbs (but sized the same as your human arms) and must be hidden. This gives you the Negative Traits *Repulsive* and *Bestial*. (4-Trait Flaw)

One set of your Pithus arms remain human hands and arms at all times and remain Pithus-sized even in human making human interaction nearly impossible and giving you the Negative Traits *Lame*, *Bestial* and *Repulsive*. (6-Trait Flaw)

Emotional Attachment (3-Trait Psychological Flaw)

Your traumatic Metamorphosis somehow failed to detach you from human emotions and attachments. You suffer for this among the Ananasi because you have more of your human emotions intact. You cannot see friends and family as mere tools and use them easily. Instead, you long for a “normal” life and human companionship. To resist the emotional pulls of those closest to you, you must spend Willpower to resist your emotions and do your tasks. For example, your grandmother is sick and needs you to stay with her. While sitting with Granny, another Ananasi calls you, needing help, you must spend Willpower to go to the Ananasi in need rather than stay with your granny. Other Ananasi (and Ananasa herself) look on this as a weakness, and you are two Traits down on all Social Challenges with those who know your weakness.

Empathy (3-Trait Mental Flaw)

Like the Garou Flaw *Soft-hearted*, but with the following changes: to avoid the guilt you feel caused by another's suffering and your need to abate it, you may spend a Willpower to avoid acting on your guilt. Your deep-seated need to help others can be as simple as a small donation to a shelter or something that will attract attention and a lot of trouble. You have to worry about spreading yourself, your time and your energy too thin. You even care what happens to your prey, unlike your peers. This only affects you when a situation arises that places you in a position to be the hero or heroine and in which you might be able to assist someone in need. You just want to be helpful, but sometimes good Samaritans aren't wanted.

No Fangs (3-Trait Physical Flaw)

You are at a distinct disadvantage when feeding. You do not grow fangs in any form. In human form, you cannot simply bite someone to drain blood and must create an open wound to ingest blood from. You may still use venom Gifts but you must bite down on the target to break the skin and hold the victim in your teeth until your saliva can transmit the venom and have it take effect. You can ingest only liquid food through normal eating and drinking.

Limited Diet (4-Trait Physical Flaw)

Even in Homid form, you cannot deny your spider heritage. You are limited to the softest foods only, otherwise you suffer from horrible stomach cramps and solid food could even do some serious injury to your fragile gastrointestinal tract. You can vomit out digestive fluids to liquefy your meals, but that's not exactly acceptable at the local diner. Asking for your food to be



liquefied in the food processor will likewise raise a few eyebrows and cause snickers and you can't carry a Cuisinart into the woods. You are stuck with eating mush, pudding and gelatin or have learned to use a blender to make a nice raw meat gelato and a cherry pie "squishy."

Unstable Features (4-Trait Supernatural Flaw)

This Flaw is a major social liability and annoyance. Imagine going to sleep and waking up a different person. For Ananasi with this Flaw, this is a fact of life. While some Ananasi can create a perfect human form, you can't. Your body mass and weight shift constantly. While this is not noticed constantly, over the course of the day you look like a different person. You are visually unrecognizable to the same person you met 12 hours earlier. Your scent stays the same, but your face, body and shape will alter enough to cause discomfort for others. The only relief from the constant changes is to change forms and then shift back into your human form. You will always go back into your original human form (pre-Metamorphosis) after this process, but the physical instability starts again without fail. The result is that it leaves those around you uncomfortable and anxious for reasons they cannot understand. You are two Traits down on all Social Challenges after first meeting a person. After the first impression, it's all downhill from there.

Can't Eat Solid Foods (5-Trait Supernatural Flaw)

All of your nourishment must come from blood or liquefied flesh. Your human digestive system just doesn't work any longer and you must live on a liquid diet. No matter how light and soft the food, whatever you eat will cause you intense pain (down one trait on all Mental Challenges) until you regurgitate it. You need to feed the appetite for flesh and blood far more frequently than other Ananasi, as this is your lone source of nutrition. You automatically lose one Blood Trait per day even if you have not used any to activate Gifts or Rites. If your blood pool goes lower than 3, you run a risk of entering a hunger frenzy similar to that of vampires. The sight or smell of blood in this condition requires you to do a Willpower challenge or immediately feed off the source of blood. Even if the blood belongs to your friends or allies, you will attack them and drain as much as you need. For every Blood Trait drained from your victim, you must do another challenge to come out of your frenzy.

Gifts

All Ananasi start with one General Ananasi Gift, one Aspect Gift and one Faction Gift.

Homid Ananasi do not learn Homid Gifts.

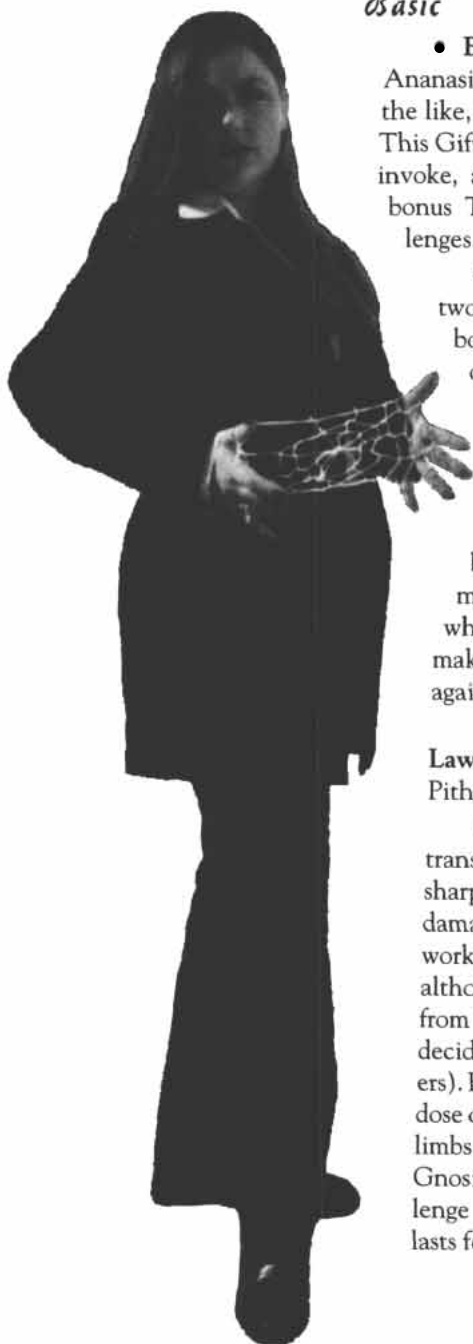
Arachnid Ananasi do not learn Lupus Gifts.

Out of Faction Gifts are learned only if Ananasa herself teaches them.



General Ananasi Gifts

Basic



- **Balance:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can walk on any ledge, rope or the like, no matter how thin or slippery. This Gift requires no special measures to invoke, and the werespider gains three bonus Traits to use in Physical Challenges.

- **Bind:** The werespider may bind two objects together by an invisible bond that is difficult to break. The objects must be in physical contact with each other, and she must physically touch both objects for the Gift to work. Generally this works best with smaller objects. To create the binding, spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Gnosis Challenge. Those who wish to break the binding must make a Static Physical Challenge against her permanent Gnosis.

- **Burrow:** As the metis Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*. Usable only in Pithus form.

- **Hand Fangs:** The Ananasi can transform the ends of her limbs into sharp points that inflict aggravated damage with a successful strike. This works best in Lilian and Pithus forms, although there nothing stopping her from using it in Homid (the sight is decidedly inhuman to casual observers). Further, the Ananasi may inject a dose of venom (one per fang) from her limbs. To create *Hand Fangs*, spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Physical Challenge (retest with Occult). The Gift lasts for one scene.



- **Jump:** As the Lupus Gift: *Hare's Leap* (formerly *Leap of the Kangaroo*); see **Laws of the Wild**. This Gift works only in Lilian and Pithus forms.

- **Many Eyes:** The Ananasi may make her eyes multi-lensed, granting 360-degree vision with normal visual acuity. She does not appear different, although those watching out of the corner of their eyes might see a ring of eyes around her head. The Gift costs a Blood Trait and lasts for one scene. This Gift is most useful in Homid, Pithus and Lilian forms.

- **Morphean Bite:** With this Gift, the werespider can use her natural venom against supernatural targets that might otherwise be immune, knocking them unconscious. After succeeding in the necessary challenge to bite (which must inflict damage), make a Gnosis Challenge. With success, the target succumbs to the venom and falls into a deep sleep for 12 hours. The target will awaken if attacked.

- **Replenishment of the Flesh:** Ananasi restore their flesh through their blood pool, as they cannot regenerate like other Ovid, or with this Gift. A werespider summons spiders and insects into her body and assimilates them into her own flesh to heal her wounds. Spiders become another part of the Ananasi to replace those that were lost; insects are simply eaten. Should no spiders or insects be available, human flesh will do just as well (a fact the Ananasi keep a tight secret, as human "donors" usually do not survive). The human flesh must be fresh and eaten raw. No other action may be taken while using this Gift. Any arachnid or human flesh consumed during the process becomes part of the Ananasi. She must spend one Gnosis Trait per level healed for human or arachnid flesh, two Gnosis for other insects. Two Gnosis Traits are necessary to heal aggravated injuries with human or arachnid flesh (double that if eating plain insects). As she spends the Gnosis, it sends out a summon to spiders and insects, who will come as fast as they are able, depending on location. Humans will not answer the summons; the werespider needs to hunt those herself.

- **Resist Pain:** As the Philodox Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Resist Toxin:** As the Fianna Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Safety Line:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can create an invisible strand of webbing that can save him from a fall or steady him. Since the strand is not actually spun, it can be used in Homid form, and is capable of supporting twice the Ananasi's Pithus weight. The strand can be as short as three feet or as long as 15 feet. Make a Mental Challenge to create the web (retest with *Survival*). The strand must have a single attachment point — the Ananasi cannot detach the web and move it from point A to point B at will, although he can detach himself when he no longer needs it. He cannot move beyond the strand's length without damaging it (overstretching it inflicts a health level of damage on the web). Excessive weight or stretching snaps the web, which has three health levels. If not destroyed, the web lasts for one scene or until the werespider detaches himself.



• **Silencing Webs:** The Ananasi can create a sticky ball of webbing that he can throw at a target's mouth, eyes or ears. These webs can smother a target, but are most often used to prevent a target from biting or shouting a warning. To create the web, spend a Blood Trait, then make a Physical Challenge (retest with *Firearms*) to throw the web at the target. The webs are of normal strength.

• **Spines:** With this Gift, an Ananasi's exoskeleton develops long, needlelike spines, somewhat like porcupine quills. The werespider must be in Lilian or Pithus form to use this Gift. Spend one Gnosis to grow *Spines*. Anyone who is tackled, grappled or immobilized by the werespider suffers two levels of aggravated damage. Anyone who strikes her with bare flesh suffers damage as if he'd struck himself. The Gift lasts for one scene, or until she wills her body to return to normal.

• **Stolen Moments:** This Gift steals the memories of a victim and is often used to prevent the discovery of the truth about the Ananasi. To invoke *Stolen Moments*, touch the target (or make a Physical Challenge to do so), spend a Gnosis and make a Static Gnosis Challenge. With success, the werespider can literally erase the last 15 minutes of his target's life from her memories. No eye contact is required to activate this Gift, only physical contact. It is relatively simple to remove the memory of an Ananasi's feeding or a traumatic occurrence, but it leaves an unnatural gap in the memories of the victim. There is no way to replace memories (as in the vampire Discipline of *Dominate*), which can tip off someone who is in telepathic contact with the victim. There is no way to retrieve those memories short of extended rituals or Umbral questing.

• **Tarantula's Kiss:** Tarantulas are covered with fine hairs that they can slough off, causing a painful, itchy reaction in unprotected skin. This Gift allows the Ananasi to do the same thing with her own hairs (even if her arachnid material is not tarantula), and further, to throw these hairs in the general direction of her enemy. This is primarily a defensive Gift. Make a Physical Challenge (retest with *Firearms*) against *any* target within 30 feet — the hairs cannot be controlled, and will strike whoever's in range. The chitinous quills are coated in a mild toxin, which is extremely irritating. Living targets struck by the quills suffer from an itchy painful rash for six hours. The affected target suffers a two-Trait penalty to Willpower Challenges while dealing with the stings.

• **Web Haven:** Using this Gift, the Ananasi can create an invisible web, which will warn her if anyone approaches her haven or if a potential meal just showed up. Spend a Blood Trait to create the web (unless in *Crawlerling* form) and make a Gnosis Challenge. With success, the web covers up to 100 feet. This web extends into the mortal world and the Umbra. While in the center of this Web, the werespider will be alerted to the approach of anyone touching the web, even while she sleeps. Should someone touch the web, she senses the vibrations and receives three turns to take a defensive action or flee.



The web is invisible to mundane senses, but various forms of heightened senses will be able to spot what appears to be an unusually large spider web.

- **Web of Smoke:** The werespider can construct a defensive weapon from her webbing with this Gift. Spend a Blood Trait to create webbing. The web is of normal strength, not sticky and can appear as a clump of cobwebs or an elaborate pattern. If any portion of the webbing is damaged enough to break it, all the webbing dissolves into a thick, dark cloud of smoke that stinks like rotten eggs. Only the Ananasi who built the web is able to touch the web without triggering its effect. The cloud is 10 feet in radius. Anyone caught in the cloud suffers darkness penalties, and must immediately make a Physical Challenge; those who lose spend the next five turns retching. The effects of the cloud last for a scene or 30 minutes, whichever comes first.

- **Waterwalk:** With this Gift and intense concentration, the Ananasi can imitate the unique fishing spiders who can literally walk on water as though it were a solid surface. She must make a successful Willpower Challenge before stepping onto the water. For each turn while on the water, the werespider must make a Simple Test to continue walking. When she fails a test, the water's surface no longer supports her and she falls through. She may not attempt *Waterwalk* for the rest of the scene. An Ananasi whose arachnid makeup is solely fishing spider may take this as a specialization of *Athletics*.

Intermediate

- **Blood Pump:** This Gift allows the werespider to process ingested blood more quickly than normal. Spend a Gnosis Trait to activate this Gift; the Ananasi may spend as many Blood Traits per round as he wishes for the remainder of the scene. Blood must be replenished as usual. No more than two Blood Traits can be spent for extra actions in combat, but extra blood can be used for Gifts. This Gift lasts for one scene.

- **Bug Lord:** The Damhàn can summon a swarm of insects and arachnids to himself. He can give them simple commands, such as "defend me," but nothing much more than that (Insects generally have one Mental Trait at best). They can be used as informants, and he can speak to them, but their talk tends to be a bit limited. The insects are limited to their normal traveling speeds. Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Social Challenge (retest with *Animal Ken*) to summon a swarm. The Storyteller will determine what insects show up based on the werespider's location.

- **Catch the Wind:** The Ananasi can create an almost invisible webbing envelope around himself, allowing him to glide with the winds. It does not work indoors. Spend a Blood Trait and make a Physical Challenge to create the webbing (which is non-sticky); this effect cannot be hidden. He has some control over his flight, but he is essentially at the mercy of prevailing winds and weather conditions. This Gift lasts for minutes. The werespider can only travel as fast as the wind, preferably in its direction. He can travel against the wind by tacking, like a sailboat, but progress is greatly slowed.



• **Cling:** The Damhàn may climb across almost any solid surface, even upside-down, in any form. While on the wall (or window or whatever), she can perform any action that would normally be possible, and she is not disoriented by the change. Spend a Blood Trait to activate this Gift. The strength of the surface is not the issue, unless the werespider attempts to take more stuff with her — this Gift will only bear her weight. The effect lasts for one scene.

• **Entropic Bite:** With this Gift the Ananasi can inject a very powerful toxin into her victim. This necrotic poison is identical to that of the brown recluse spider, but is much more aggressive. The flesh simply dies wherever the bite occurs. In 15 seconds, a full-grown human would be dead. Worse, the poison spreads, taking more healthy flesh each round. This Gift even works on vampires. Only other Ananasi are immune to this toxin.

To use this Gift, the werespider must successfully bite her target by winning a Physical Challenge. Then spend two Gnosis Traits and perform a Gnosis Challenge with the target. With success, the flesh-eating toxin is injected and immediately goes to work, resulting in agonizing burning pain for the target. Once the toxin has reached the bloodstream, the targets takes one health level of aggravated damage per turn. For each turn after the bite, a Simple Test is made to see how long the poison stays in effect. The poison does not last longer than seven turns. With each success, the poison travels further through the bloodstream, killing red blood cells and all soft tissues. The remains of a victim killed with this Gift are soft enough to drink and can be used like blood to heal any wounds. This Gift can be healed through supernatural means — if done quickly enough — and vampires may expel their blood to rid themselves of the poison.

• **Hydraulic Strength:** The Damhàn uses her blood to dramatically increase her strength. Make a Physical Challenge (retest with *Medicine*) and spend a variable number of Blood Traits. Each Trait gives her an additional Strength-related Physical Trait. The effects of this Gift last for one scene. The amount of Traits can exceed the Ananasi's maximum Physical Traits. This Gift may not be used in conjunction with *Blood Pump*.

• **Iron Web:** The Ananasi can spin a web that is nearly transparent and extremely tough. Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Gnosis Challenge to activate the Gift, then spend Blood Traits as usual to spin the web. *Iron Web* can last for months, even years, if it is properly groomed (take an hour a day to clean out the corpses and repair it). The web is resistant to fire and has the werespider's Homid-form Physical Traits to use in defense. Each cubic foot can absorb five health levels of damage before breaking. The werespider can consume her own *Iron Web* and reuse it on the same project after digesting it without needing to spend further Blood Traits — very useful for performing repair work.

• **Part Webs:** By using this Gift the Damhàn can walk though any web, including the Great Web and those produced by Ananasi, without disturbing



them or attracting attention in any way. Make a Mental Challenge and spend a Gnosis Trait. The Gift lasts for one scene.

- **Preserve:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can create a soft, silky cocoon around an object. The cocoon protects its contents from fire, physical forces and the ravages of time. While covered, the object is in stasis — foods will stay fresh, while living things will be maintained in a comatose state without aging or the need for food or drink. This state of suspended animation does not harm the encased living thing, and when it is freed from the cocoon, it will be healthy and refreshed but unaware of the time that has elapsed since it was enveloped. The effect lasts until the cocoon is broken, an easy task for a werespider with this Gift, but otherwise requiring occult knowledge (*Occult* x 3 at least, or more to be determined by the Storyteller) or supernatural force. Spend a Blood Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Rituals*) to create the cocoon. The Ananasi may cover a single object no larger in square feet than her Gnosis rating.

- **Slick Webs:** Using this Gift, the werespider can create almost frictionless webs. These webs are often used to line tunnels or build traps that targets cannot escape easily. One Blood Trait and one Gnosis point are spent to create the webbing, which lasts until it is burned or somehow destroyed. A victim trying to maneuver in an area lined with *Slick Webs* must win a Static Physical Challenge against nine Traits (retest with *Athletics*).

- **Spider's Grace:** As the Lupus Gift: *Catfeet*; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Spinnerets:** Any Ananasi can spin webs in Pithus or Crawlerling forms, but with *Spinnerets*, she can now produce webbing (or use web-producing Gifts) in any form. Generally, it takes one Blood Trait to produce a substantial amount of webbing in anything but Crawlerling (who still make normal webs) — approximately 20 feet of line or a sheet large enough to cover a mid-sized car. It is possible to stop a helicopter or encase a building with webbing, but that will take more Blood Traits, at the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Tick Body:** Elder vampires are said to be able to concentrate the blood in their bodies, storing more nourishment in the same space. With this Gift, the werespider can do the same. No special means are need to invoke the Gift. Once she learns the Gift, her Blood Traits increase by five Traits per Rank. So a Rank Three Ananasi has a blood bool of 15 and so on. The blood pool can increase over the normal maximum, but cannot ever exceed 40. Unless she also has the Gift: *Blood Pump*, she cannot *spend* more Blood, only accumulate it.

- **Trap Door:** Like the trapdoor spider, the Ananasi can create a pocket in the Umbra where she can hide. The *Trap Door* can be placed almost anywhere, although the Storyteller has final authority on location. Once the location is chosen, she must sacrifice a *permanent* Gnosis to create the pocket, then succeed in a Mental Challenge to camouflage the door. The *Trap Door* is only large enough to accommodate the Ananasi (in any form) and whatever she can carry.



- **Venom Bite:** Some spiders' venom contains neurotoxins that can paralyze a victim or even affect her heartbeat and breathing. With this Gift, the Ananasi can do the same. After successfully biting the target (with the usual Physical Challenge), spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Static Gnosis Challenge against nine Traits for the venom to take effect. One dose is enough to paralyze a victim, causing her muscles to seize up, leaving only her autonomic nervous system (heartbeat, breathing) unaffected. The effect is immediate, and can even drop a raging Garou if properly administered. A second bite (administered in the same way) will stop the autonomic systems, leading to death by suffocation or heart attack. Vampires can remove this toxin by expelling their blood. The Ovid and other regenerating creatures must take the time to heal four health levels of lethal damage. Supernatural healing means will also remove the poison.

- **Web Blanket:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can cause a thick, sticky, suffocating cocoon of webbing to grow from his victim. Spends a Gnosis Trait and a Blood Trait and make a Physical Challenge with the target (retest with *Medicine*). If successful, the cocoon begins to spontaneously grow around the target, taking one round to completely encase him. The web effectively has 10 Physical Traits to resist attempts to tear it open. Burning can damage the cocoon, but it will also damage the unlucky victim. The werespider need only be able to see his target to invoke the Gift.

Advanced

- **Carapace:** This Gift allows the Damhàn to grow a thick carapace over his normal exoskeleton that acts as armor. This Gift costs one Gnosis to activate. The *Carapace* grants him an additional four Healthy health levels, which act exactly like normal health levels and can be healed as normal. The *Carapace* lasts for one scene.

- **Survivor:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Umbral Barrier:** The werespider can spin his web into the Great Web and strengthen the Gauntlet at that spot, making it more difficult for non-Ananasi to go through the Umbra there. The webs look no different than the Great Web when seen in the Umbra, and are not visible or tangible from the physical world. To create the barrier, start by spinning a web of the appropriate size (spend blood as required by the Storyteller), then spend two permanent Gnosis Traits and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*). Success increases the Gauntlet rating in the area by one level. The barrier is considered permanent, although it can be torn down in the Penumbra (with a lot of effort).



Tenere Gifts

Basic

• **Breath of Ananasa:** The Ananasi can create a pocket of air that serves as an alternate breathing source for a temporary period. It appears to be a wispy-looking form hovering near her head. The alternate supply of air costs a Gnosis to create and lasts for a number of rounds or minutes equal to her permanent Gnosis Traits. While this Gift lasts, she is immune to drowning or being overcome by smoke, tear gas or other inhaled contaminants. The supply of air cannot be shared.

• **Camouflage:** Using this Gift, the Ananasi can disguise an object or small group of objects so that they blend into the background. Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Social Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*) to hide the object or objects, which may be no larger than five pounds or a bread box. The objects are coated in a weblike substance that takes on the color and texture of the things around it. A camouflaged object will be overlooked by anyone not actively searching for it. An active searcher must defeat the Ananasi in a Mental Challenge to find the objects. Powers equivalent to *Heightened Senses* at the Intermediate level or above will automatically find the camouflaged objects.

• **Groom:** This Gift insures the Ananasi's appearance in any situation. Whether covered in gore or caught in a rainstorm, she always looks her best. Good grooming guarantee a better response in social situations. In a normal Social Challenge, she can expend an Appearance-related Social Trait to gain a retest. This Gift cannot be used to retest challenges associated with other Gifts. It is available as often as she has Social Traits left.

• **Patience of Ananasa:** With this Gift, the Damhàn is able to stay absolutely motionless in any natural posture without feeling tired or cramped. To invoke this Gift, spend a Willpower Trait. While using *Patience of Ananasa*, the werespider can take no other actions — no talking, no sneaking, *nothing*. This Gift will not hide him in plain sight, but his total lack of motion may cause others to forget his presence; he does not even appear to be breathing to the casual observer. If used in shadows or with cover, the Gift offers a two-Trait bonus for any *Stealth* challenges. Once he makes an action, the Gift's effects end, and it may not be used again for as long as he remained motionless.

Intermediate

• **A Mother's Look:** As the Galliard Gift: *Eye of the Cobra*; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Reshape Object:** As the Homid Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Understanding the Tapestry:** When using this Gift, the Ananasi can see connections between items that seem unrelated, thus giving him insights into mysteries. The werespider begin with the object or person he wishes to



focus on. For each Mental Trait spent, he receives a Simple Test. For each Trait spent and Test won, he may ask the Storyteller a question regarding the focus of his inquiry, which must be answered truthfully. The first question must relate directly to the object or person focused upon. Subsequent questions can relate to the original object, or any topic directly touched on in previous answers. This Gift may be used only once per object or person, and the Ananasi may not spend Mental Traits beyond his Trait maximum. No spending Willpower to refresh the Mental Traits pool for a second go-round; if the Damhàn spends all his Mental Traits, they are gone for the purposes of this Gift. This Gift can only be used once per game session.

- **Web Sheet:** By spending two Blood Traits, the Ananasi can create enough sheet webbing to cover a large area the size of a football field. This webbing is extremely sticky. Anyone or anything caught in this webbing may only break free with a Static Physical Challenge against nine Traits. To traverse the web sheet would require a test every round to break free and move on. Ananasi are immune to being caught on this webbing.

Advanced

- **Spider on a Mirror:** The Ananasi can create copies of himself, turning into a one-spider army if necessary. These copies are essentially mindless drones that possess only his physical capabilities. They will follow his instructions to the letter, but once their task is complete, they will simply stop and await further instructions. Make a Static Gnosis Challenge against nine Traits. With success, the Ananasi may create as many copies of himself as he has permanent Gnosis, plus one Blood Trait per copy. These copies have all the Ananasi's Physical and Appearance-related Social Traits, non-knowledge Abilities (such as *Athletics* or *Brawl*) and Gifts, though he must give the drones verbal orders to make them do anything. The copies last for four rounds, after which they begin vanishing. With each round, a copy vanishes until none are left.

- **Thieving Touch of Spiders:** As the Ragabash Gift: *Thieving Talons of the Magpie*; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Hatar Gifts

Basic

- **Blood of Pain:** Using this Gift the Ananasi can turn her blood into a debilitating poison at will. She spends a Blood Trait and draws fresh ichor from her body (which means an open wound). Any who ingest the ichor become physically ill. Sickened characters must succeed in a Willpower Challenge or be rendered hopelessly sick. If the target wants to take any action other than retching, he must make a Physical Challenge each turn; otherwise, he can do nothing but be ill. The effects of this Gift last for a scene, or until the toxin is neutralized.



- **Wyrmling Kinship:** By defeating minions of the Wyrms in a Social Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*), the werespider may subtly convince them that she is an ally, or at least non-threatening to them. She also gains a one-Trait bonus on all subsequent Social Challenges against them. This works on Banes as well as physical creatures. This Gift only works for one hour. Wyrmservants who realize they have been duped will not be happy to see the Hatar again....

- **Blood of Illusion:** This Gift enables the Ananasi to turn her blood into a powerful hallucinogen. The blood must be fresh from a wound and be ingested by the victim. Affected victims may make a Willpower Challenge in order to end the effect. Otherwise, the victim is plunged into an illusion that is completely real to her. The hallucination affects all five senses. The werespider has no direct control over the illusion, but may whisper some cues to the victim and Storyteller as the hallucination sets in. The illusion does not harm the victim directly, but she can be deluded into harming herself due to her altered perceptions. The Storyteller controls the sort of hallucination the victim experiences. The hallucination lasts for a number of rounds equal to the Damhàn's permanent Gnosis Traits.

- **Call of the Wurm:** As the Galliard Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

Intermediate

- **Corrupt:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can weaken an object by accentuating its natural flaws, thus drawing out the entropy and making it more easily destroyed. This Gift only works against inanimate objects. Spend a Gnosis. The object loses one health level for one scene.

- **Ill Wind:** By using this Gift, the werespider can weaken the Gauntlet for Banes, allowing them to easily materialize and infect the area. She cuts her flesh and spreads three Blood Traits around the area to be infected, then conducts an Extended Static Mental Challenge against the local Gauntlet rating with the Storyteller. Each success reduces the effective Gauntlet rating for Banes in the area. The werespider has absolutely no control over any Banes that may choose to appear, and leaving the area would probably be a very good idea. In cities and places where the Gauntlet is strong, this Gift can be mentally draining.

- **Pulse of the Invisible:** As the Theurge Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Still Blood:** The Ananasi's blood can invoke paralysis in victims if it touches their exposed flesh (that means bare skin, not soaking through clothes). For each Blood Trait that touches or is splashed on the exposed flesh of a victim, the victim must make a Physical Challenge; should he lose, he becomes paralyzed for one scene per Blood Trait. The muscles of the mouth are paralyzed (meaning, no speaking), but involuntary muscles such as the heart and lungs still function normally. The blood must be fresh from a wound on the Ananasi.



• **Touch of Blood:** With this Gift the Ananasi may use the Gifts: *Blood of Pain* and *Blood of Illusion* without the need for the victim to ingest the blood. Those Gifts must both be purchased to use this powerful variation on it. The blood must still be fresh from a wound, but contact with the bare skin of the victim is now sufficient to affect her. This Gift costs nothing to use, but the costs for *Blood of Pain* and *Blood of Illusion* do not change.

Advanced

• **Burning Blood:** With this Gift, the Damhàn can turn her blood into a powerful acid that can burn through metal, stone or flesh. Once she learns the Gift, it requires only an action's worth of thought to invoke. Each Blood Trait that strikes a target with a successful Physical Challenge inflicts one level of aggravated damage. Alternatively anyone successfully striking the Damhàn with teeth or claws (any unarmed attack that draws blood) will suffer a level of aggravated damage. In a similar fashion, bladed weapons used to strike may be destroyed at Storyteller's discretion. Obviously, anyone who bites the Ananasi is in for a nasty surprise....

• **Touch of the Unweaver:** With a touch the Ananasi can prevent a victim from healing her wounds. This Gift prevents the healing of wounds even if Gifts or other supernatural powers are used. This Gift does work on fellow Ananasi. Spends two Gnosis Traits and engage in a Metal Challenge (retest with *Medicine*) with the target. Success prevents the target from healing or regenerating by any means for one day, or until the Gift is somehow nullified. The target also suffers a five-Trait penalty to resist disease.

Kumoti Gifts

Basic

• **Arachnophobia:** By touching his target and defeating her in a Social Challenge (retest with *Intimidation*), the Ananasi can inspire an intense irrational fear of spiders. *Arachnophobia* manifests as extreme fear and revulsion — the victim will either attack the spider or flee from it. The size of spider will affect this reaction — a Pithus tends to inspire flight, while a Crawlerling provokes an attack. The effects of this Gift lasts for one day on un-Awakened creatures or one hour on the Awakened (vampires, mages, the fae) or partially Awakened (ghouls, Kinfolk). Victims may spend one Willpower per turn to act normally. Victims who are naturally arachnophobic are in real trouble; they become catatonic with fear at the sight of any spider.

• **Inspire:** The Ananasi can pass along the spirit of creation, filling his target with creativity or courage. He has no control over how this urge will affect his target, and sometimes those who are inspired become inspired to do some pretty foolish things, such as blurting out something that's been bothering them (whether or not it's the right time and place to do so). The Ananasi must be within 10 feet of his target and spend a Gnosis. The target



does not become susceptible to suggestion, but the Gift merely enhances their creativity for a task they would normally do, granting them a new insight or courage.

- **Inspiration:** As the Ahroun Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
- **Mother's Touch:** As the Theurge Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
- **Insight of the Mother:** As the Theurge Gift: *Sight from Beyond*; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Lead-Line:** If the Ananasi has something personal belonging to his prey, he can use this Gift to track a single target. The *Lead-Line* manifests as a silvery thread of energy that cuts past illusions and obstacles, always dead on course. Spend a Gnosis and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Investigation*) to invoke the Gift. The Storyteller may have the Ananasi make additional Mental Challenges if the target makes an effort to hide or cover his tracks. This Gift lasts until the werespider finds his target or decides to stop the hunt.

Intermediate

- **Alter Lilian:** The werespider can shift around his Lilian form, whether sprouting new limbs or making his features more human. The form must always be distinctly Lilian, and no one's ever going to mistake him for anything other than a large spider, but he can still be creative. To make the shift, spend a Willpower Trait. The new form lasts until the Ananasi shifts forms or he chooses to drop it. If he is becoming more human, his Lilian form loses one Negative Social Trait (spend another Willpower to look even more human). To become more monstrous, his Lilian form gains a Social Trait for intimidation purposes (again, spend more Willpower to increase this). These two effects cannot be combined. The Ananasi may grow an additional limb (and more, one per Willpower Trait spent), but he gains no extra actions or bonuses from it.

- **Mindblock:** As the Silver Fang Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
- **Nature of the Beast:** This Gift reduces the target to a creature of raw, primal instincts. For one scene, reason and logic desert the target, and she is only interested in fulfilling his base desires. Spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Simple Test with the target. With success, the target's desires boil down to a single, natural impulse, usually best described by distilling his Nature to its most simplistic. A Conniver is likely to become completely selfish, a Judge will view situations strictly in black and white, a Martyr may become heedless of her personal safety, and so on.

- **Sense Motion:** By spending a Gnosis, the Ananasi can sense movement anywhere within 10 feet with a regular challenge for perception. This sense is not reliant on sight, sound or any other mundane sense. It is an intuitive sense of motion; indeed, he may even sense the movement of things that are not visible to normal sight. The effects of this Gift last for an hour.



Advanced

- **Assimilation:** As the Homid Garou Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Mass Confusion:** This powerful Gift changes the perceptions of the individuals in the Ananasi's immediate area, causing them to lose track of where they are, what they were doing and who their friends are. Spend two Gnosis to affect everyone within 10 feet. Everyone affected must conduct a Static Mental Challenge against the werespider's Mental Traits before making any targeted action. Individuals failing the challenge must redirect their action to another target (but not to the one who invoked the Gift). This Gift affects attacks, speeches, directions, the use of Gifts or other powers — all actions that focus on a specific target. The invoking Ananasi is immune to the effects of his own Gift, although other Ananasi are not. The effect lasts for as long as he focuses on it, but never longer than an hour and during that hour, he may take no other action. If he leaves the area or partakes in any activity other than a slow walk, the effects of the Gift end.

Myrmidon Gifts

Basic

• **Illusion of Size:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can make others think she is much larger than she actually is, just as some spiders will rear up to make themselves look more imposing. This gives her no physical benefits, but can be useful for intimidation challenges. Make a Social Challenge with the target (retest with *Intimidation*). With success, the Ananasi gains the illusion of height and bulk (treat as the Merit: *Huge Size* for sight purposes only). Those who have skills to see through illusions may attempt to see past her puffery.

- **Might of Ananasa:** As the General Gift: *Hydraulic Strength*.
- **Open Seal:** As the Ragabash Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Pincers:** By spending a Blood Trait, the werespider can transform the ends of her first set of limbs into wicked pincers like those of a crab. These pincers form immediately after spending the Blood, and inflict aggravated damage. The drawback is that the Ananasi has no fine motor skills whatsoever; any task involving manipulation fails automatically.
- **True Fear:** As the Ahroun Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Intermediate

• **Blood Hunt:** Using this Gift the Ananasi can track down any target she encountered in the last 24 hours, or any target she has ever fed from, regardless of the distance. To activate this Gift, make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*) and spend a Gnosis Trait for each scene spent in pursuit. This Gift lasts until the target is found or the werespider chooses to cancel it. While using this Gift, the Ananasi knows the direction of the target, though not its distance or any detail of the intervening terrain. Only one target at a time may be tracked with this Gift.



- **Drying Bite:** As the Ragabash Gift: *Whelp Body*; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Scorpion Tail:** The Damhàn can grow a fully functional scorpion's tail with this Gift. This tail gives her an extra action to attack each round. Spend three Blood Traits to grow the tail, which is considered to have her Physical Traits when she challenges to strike with it. If the scorpion tail strikes its target (with a successful Physical Challenge), it may either inflict one level of aggravated damage or administer a payload of poison derived from another Gift. If using a Gift poison, the Ananasi must already know the Gift and the costs must be paid as normal. This Gift may only be used in Lilian or Pithus forms.

- **Weak Arm:** As the Philodox Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Advanced

- **Image of the Great Mother:** This Gift allows the Ananasi to channel the raw power of Ananasa into her body. She mutates into a huge creature similar to the Lilian form with four spiderlike legs and four humanlike arms, eight glowing red eyes and two huge venom-dripping fangs. The body is covered in thick, chitinous armor. Each arm ends in razor-sharp claws that inflict aggravated damage. This form grants the bonus Traits *Alert* x 2, *Brawny* x 2, *Ferocious* x 3, *Tireless* x 3, *Tough* x 3 and the Negative Traits *Bestial* x 2, *Repugnant* x 2, *Tactless*. Any who view this form — including Ananasi and other Changing Breeds — suffer from the Delirium unless they spend a Willpower Trait. To invoke this form, spend two Gnosis Traits and make a Static Social Challenge against nine Traits (retest with *Rituals*). This form lasts for a scene or until the Ananasi chooses to end it, at which point she is reduced to Crawlerling form for a week. Ananasa does not like this Gift being used flippantly and will always ask any of her children using this Gift to perform a special task.

- **Thousand Hands:** By using this Gift the Ananasi is able to multitask to a supernatural degree, every limb able to act independently and effectively. To invoke this Gift, spend a Gnosis Trait. For the remainder of the scene, each pair of hands that she has at the time she uses this Gift may take its own action. Each pair of hands targets its blow or weapon independently without any off-hand penalty. She must still have the necessary Traits for bidding (lose a level of *Firearms* on a retest with one pair of hands, and any other pairs will also suffer that penalty). Each pair of hands may wield only one weapon at a time (no eight-gun mojo!). Multiple actions from different pairs of hands may have the same target. Additionally, if any actions are successful, the Ananasi may spend Blood Traits as per usual to gain follow-up actions; it costs one Blood Trait to follow up every successful action in a round. This Gift lasts for the remainder of the scene or combat, whichever comes first.



Diskr Gifts

Basic

- **Curse of the Great Web:** By placing invisible spirit fibers on a target that catch on the Gauntlet, the Ananasi can make it more difficult for that target to enter or leave the Umbra. Some Ananasi occasionally refer to this Gift as *Web Velcro*. By touching a target and defeating him in a Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*), the werespider can increase the effective Gauntlet rating for that target by one level for the rest of the scene.

- **Mindspeak:** As the Galliard Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Minor Unweaving:** With this Gift the werespider may negate the effects of any Basic-level Gift, Discipline, Art, Sphere magic or other magical abilities (Psychic Phenomena are not affected by this power). Spend one Gnosis and make a Physical Challenge with the user of the power (retest with *Occult*). This Gift is meant to stop a power in mid-flight, and has no effect on a power that has fully taken affect. Powers that affect a geographical area or large groups cannot be unwoven. This Gift only works on powers that are directed against a single target.

- **Scent of Sweet Honey:** With this Gift, the Ananasi can cause a target to exude a wonderful sweet scent and his skin to become slightly sticky. This attracts all manner of insects, and soon the target will be harassed and covered with bees, flies, gnats and whatever else is in the area. The exact effect of the swarm is up to the Storyteller, but the target might suffer stings and bites, impaired vision, and inability to concentrate because of the buzzing, not to mention the major social *faux pas* of being a living flytrap. To invoke this Gift, spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*). The effects last for one hour. During that time, the smell and stickiness will not wash off.

Intermediate

- **Attunement:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Brethren Call:** The Damhàn can call others to himself in a time of crisis, either summoning a host of spiders or the two closest Ananasi. If Ananasi are summoned, they do not instantly appear; instead, they suddenly know of his location and the nature of his distress. If spiders are summoned, all the spiders in the area will converge on the location with the goal of aiding their summoner. Spend a Blood Trait and a Willpower Trait to invoke *Brethren Call*.

- **Calcify:** The Ananasi can cement a location or inanimate object within the Great Web, preventing anything short of a major disaster (flood, hurricane, thermonuclear bomb) from causing change to his chosen location or item. For each Gnosis Trait spent, he imbues the place or item with another Healthy health level. The effects last for one scene. Staked vampires do not



count as inanimate objects. If the Ananasi wishes to use this to protect a place, it can be no larger than an acre.

- **Cocoon:** As the Homid Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
- **Lesser Unweaving:** As *Minor Unweaving*, but costs two Gnosis and may affect Intermediate powers. You must first learn *Minor Unweaving* before learning this Gift.

Advanced

- **Shattering:** This terrible Gift can unweave the results of a specific Gift or magical power on a target. Depending on the intended effect, *Shattering* could seal a previously opened caern, destroy a created Umbral pocket or fetish, even undo a Gift like *Resist Toxin*. To invoke *Shattering*, spend three Gnosis Traits and make a Static Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*), difficulty based on the level of the targeted power—six for a Basic-level power or rite, eight for an Intermediate-level power or rite, and 10 for an Advanced-level power or rite. Unlike *Minor* or *Lesser Unweaving*, this can affect a Gift or power that has already taken effect.

- **Summon Paradox-Spirit:** This Gift summons a Paradox-spirit into the area and suggests a target for it to punish. This Gift only works on those already affected by Paradox, such as mages or those already marked with the Rite: *Summon Paradox*. Attempting to sic a Paradox-spirit on someone who is not flagged or otherwise a threat to the order of the universe will result in a highly annoyed spirit who will turn on the summoner. To summon the Paradox-spirit, spend a Gnosis and defeat the target in a Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*). What actions the Paradox-spirit takes on arrival is up to the Storyteller. Effects range from annoying to severely crippling, depending on how much the target threatens the orderly progression of the universe. At Storyteller discretion, those who have been particularly naughty get carried off to pocket Umbral realms for punishment.

- **Web of Illusion:** The Ananasi can create an artificial reality in a secured location that acts on all the senses of anyone entering it. The contents of the illusion can be animated either through his direct presence, or actions being preprogrammed to react in response to a particular event (i.e., if someone picks an apple, the tree screams). To create the illusion, spend two Gnosis Traits, then make a Static Social Challenge (difficulty of eight Traits, retest with *Primal-Urge*). Typically the illusion cannot be pierced unless the observer has good reason to disbelieve it, and sensory-related Gifts or Disciplines. To pierce the illusion requires a good reason to believe it is an illusion (“How come the wind’s blowing, but the clouds aren’t moving?”), and a Static Mental Challenge against the Ananasi who created the illusion. Once created, the illusion will remain for a number of days equal to the Ananasi’s permanent Gnosis rating.



Wyrsta Gifts

Basic

• **Alter Mood:** This Gift puts a target's emotions under the werespider's control. She can slightly push her target's emotional state either downwards or upwards, such as making a sad person either depressed or merely maudlin. Such a change may seem minor, but the alteration can make the person more susceptible to suggestions. Some emotions, if nudged in the right way, can inspire results beyond the werespider's control (lust or anger, pushed the wrong way, are fine examples of this). To *Alter Mood*, spend a Gnosis Trait. The target must be within visual range.

• **Beastmind:** As the Red Talon Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

• **Blinding Spit:** The werespider can spit a single Blood Trait at a target's face from up to 20 feet away (spitting counts as an action). If the strike is successful (with a Physical Challenge), the target is temporarily blinded for the rest of the scene or combat. The venom causes no real physical damage beyond a slight burning sensation.

• **Visceral Agony:** As the Black Fury Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

Intermediate

• **Aura of Ananasa:** With use of this Gift, the Ananasi can cause extreme horror and fright in an area around her. Victims do not automatically panic, unless something (such as a loud noise or an unexpected bump from someone) sets them off. Once one victim freaks out, the rest generally follow suit. Spend a Gnosis to enact this Gift. Everyone within 20 feet must conduct a Static Social Challenge against the Ananasi's Social Traits (she may retest with *Primal-Urge*). If they lose, they are affected with the terror. Supernatural creatures may spend a Willpower for a retest. The effects of the Gift last for an hour.

• **Blades of the Mantis:** With this Gift, the werespider's arms (or first set of arms if in another form) become long, scythelike blades similar to a praying mantis. Spend a Blood Trait to grow the blades, which are about two feet long. If she strikes successfully with them, she can inflict aggravated damage. Further, she gains an extra foot of reach on a target due their length. Obviously, these make fine manipulation completely impossible.

• **Tick Body:** As the General Gift.

• **Web Snare:** The Ananasi can spin a web trap, invisible to the naked eye until triggered by anyone entering it. Once triggered, the web strands become visible as the trap ensnares the target, and hauls them into the air to await the Ananasi or worse. Spin the webs as normal, then make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*) to properly hide the trap.

• **Wither Limb:** As the Metis Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.



Advanced

- **Razor Webs:** The Ananasi can create razor-sharp webs that inflict terrible cuts on anyone who touches them. For each Blood Trait spent, the werespider creates enough *Razor Webs* to cover a Crinos-sized target. If she decides to place these in a doorway, the web remains intact until destroyed (and is considered to have six health levels for the purposes of damage). Anyone so much as brushing up against the webbing takes one level of aggravated damage or more, depending on how fast and hard he hits the web (getting thrown through this would be *bad*). A living target bound in these webs suffers a lethal damage every round they try to move or take any physical action. The webs remain until destroyed.

- **Summon Net-Spider:** As the Glass Walker Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Ananasi Rites

The Strands of the Great Web

The Ananasi's Gifts are immediate effects for the individual Ananasi. Rites, however, are long-duration magical effects created from ritual ceremony that serve to aid the Ananasi and his relationship with the Mother-Queen. The Ananasi have far fewer rites than the Garou and the rites do not link them all or foster a sense of community as Garou rites do. Ananasi are already convinced they are the chosen of their creator, so they do not feel that ritual alone brings them closer to Ananasa. The rites of Ananasi brings them closer to the Symmetry they work toward. Ananasi rites only interact with Ananasa and not the rest of the spirit world as the rites of the other Ovid do. Ananasi learn and use only rites that are created to better them personally and thereby, strengthening the Ananasi kind as a whole.

Ananasi rites are generally solo acts and are performed alone in the Sylie. Rites are interactive ceremonies that take time, preparation and sometimes require sacred items (called "Fylfots" by the Ananasi) that can form the cornerstone for a characters goals.

For game mechanics, the guidelines set out by **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** still hold true. Each rite takes a minimum of 20 minutes per level to enact. Unlike Garou rites, an Ananasi rite is not a public event and, more often than not, does not require all the celebrants of a Garou Rite. Very few Ananasi gather to perform rites. The rite must be performed at an appropriate place and with all preparations made in advance, even modifying the Sylie if need be. The Ananasi take rites very seriously and do them where they are closest to their origins.

Ananasi rites are not the beautiful or reverent ceremonies of the Garou. In fact, they are creepy in comparison. They rely on controlled gestures and movements. They are also commonly performed in Pithus form. To the Ananasi, it is a ceremonial dance and interpretation of Ananasi history. To



an outsider who is unfortunate enough to happen upon a Pithus waving their legs about over and over again in a very precise manner, it is terrifying, cold and unnatural, and certainly not spiritual. In MET, half the fun is creating your own movements to accompany a rite. Just remember that spiders love symmetry. If you do a gesture on one side of the body, best to do it on the other.

Ananasi do not have rites that serve specific purposes like the Garou do. All Ananasi rites are mystical rites.

Shared Rites

These rites are held in common with the Garou. The effects and rules are the same, but the actual form of the rite differs vastly. See **Laws of the Wild Revised** for description of the shared rites.

- **Breath of Ananasa:** As the Garou Rite: *Breath of Gaia*.
- **Rite of the Questing Stone:** As the Garou Rite.
- **Rite of Silence:** As the Garou Rite.
- **The Rite of Binding:** As the Garou Rite.
- **Fylfot's Rite:** As the Garou Rite: *Rite of the Fetish*.

First Rites

After Metamorphosis, Ananasa sends teachers to her young spiderlings to teach them her ways and the rites they will need to establish themselves in the Great Web. As the spider grows, the rites grow with him. These rites are taught before the Ananasi are released back into the world.

Basic First Rites

- **Rite of Spinning:** This is the first rite taught to *all* Ananasi before they leave their teachers. This rite is a necessity for all werespiders; without it, they are stuck in a permanent “downtime,” a time when they are not actively pursuing Ananasi goals or aware of their Changing Breed identity and forget what they are, losing their magic and purpose. This mystic rite allows an Ananasi to build his Sylie, the cobweb haven which connects to the Great Web. Sylies can be built anywhere, but most Ananasi build them where they are least likely to be disturbed.

This rite is repeated many times during an Ananasi's life. The Sylie is the first thing an Ananasi builds when he moves to a new place or advance in Rank. The Sylie is rebuilt each time an Ananasi achieves a new Rank. If a Sylie is destroyed, the Ananasi will be furious and will do everything in his power to seek and destroy the one who violated his sacred space.

The rite re-establishes them in the Great Web and allows Ananasa to find her child to speak with him. Only Ananasa may initiate communication when one enters the Sylie to speak with her. She does not take kindly to those who demand an audience or speak to her without being spoken to first. Young



spiders must have perfect manners and speak to Ananasa only when spoken to.

This rite takes a week to perform, during which time the werespider meditates and cleanses the site of the Sylie. The young spiderlings with less than four Gnosis gain the required Gnosis to build their Sylie while preparing for the Rite. Then the Ananasi begins spinning his web. Sylies are spun in the Pithus form as that form closely resembles the Mother-Queen. Four Gnosis and four Blood Traits must be spent during this period. If interrupted, the rite must start over again from the beginning, requiring the Gnosis and blood to be spent again. This rite involves no challenges.

Once, complete an Ananasi may meditate in his Sylie. While doing so, he is able to nearly telepathically communicate with the two geographically nearest Ananasi, or receive the wisdom of Ananasa if she deems to provide it. They may also access any of the vast information in the Great Web's strands at Storyteller discretion.

The Sylie exists in both the Umbra and the physical world, but appears to just be a blob of cobwebs to mundane eyes. Crawling sideways into the Umbra is easily done in the Sylie, taking half the time it would elsewhere.

- **Tapping Ananasa's Wisdom:** Mother is knowledge. When the need arises to learn new Gifts, there is only one source to provide them, and that is Ananasa herself. This special rite opens the Ananasa to learning new Gifts through the connection in his Sylie. The Ananasi must seclude himself in his Sylie, and begin the ritual to await the Great Mother's attention. If Ananasa grants her attention to the spiderling, then the learning of the Gift can begin. Once Ananasa has focused her attention upon the Ananasi, he must practice the Gift until he meets the Great Mother's approval — and Ananasa is a very demanding teacher.

After making a Social Challenge (retest with *Rituals*), the Ananasi must bring something of personal value that disappears during the course of learning the new Gift. Once the object has disappeared, the young spider knows that he has performed the Gift satisfactorily. This might take a short time — a couple of hours or so — but normally takes a much longer period. However, the time typically shortens if the object presented is particularly important to the supplicant. Sacrifice impresses her.

- **Recorder:** This rite can create a simple web that acts as a recording device. The web is “intelligent” enough not to record random sounds, but records that which it was made for, such as wolf-howls or traffic noises. The web is sound-activated, and will record and store up to one hour of sound. It can be played back at any time, and even moved before it is used or played. The system is no different than a standard rite.

Intermediate First Rites

- **Rite of Appeal:** Though it is Queen Ananasa who decides when a Damhàn has reached the proper knowledge and wisdom for an increase in



Rank, the Ananasi may call to her if he feels he has been overlooked. She has so many children and is a doting mother, but occasionally one of them gets overlooked. Ananasa only has eight eyes and cannot see *everything* her children do to bring her goals into fruition, so sometimes she needs to be made aware of what you've done to deserve a reward. It's generally considered appropriate to remind Mother that you've been a very good spider lately, especially if you have been. If she doesn't agree, you'll get sent somewhere to do something without your supper.

To enact the rite, the Ananasi enters her Sylie and fasts and meditates for two days at the end of which she spends two Gnosis. At this point, Ananasa will listen as the werespider recites a list of accomplishments and goals achieved for the further honor and glory of the Mother-Queen. If the Ananasi has indeed reached the required level of Renown, Ananasa will reward them with new Rank.

If, however, the petitioner has fallen short in her estimation, she will set a new task for the errant one which will not provide Renown and serve as punishment. These tasks are usually demeaning or insulting to the Ananasi and serve to teach a lesson in humility and patience. It is not a slight upon the Ananasi whose appeal falls short of rank. It is a learning experience. It will also teach them to think twice and be more confident in the worth of their actions before they appeal to Ananasi again.

- **Guardians:** Ananasi are very protective of their Sylies and other places. This rite allows them to create a defensive perimeter of the animated corpses of their victims (insect or otherwise) and even their own molted carapaces. This rite is very disturbing to those whom the guardians attack and has given some credence to the rumors that Ananasi are of the Wurm; after all, they make the dead walk again and that defies the natural order.

The Ananasi must spend one Blood Trait and one Gnosis for each guardian created, preserving the remains and animating them when they need to fight. The guardians then remain dormant until they are activated by the intrusion of anyone who does not belong in the area. Guardians attack as mindless automatons, they effectively have no Mental Traits and they cannot be affected by mind-altering Gifts or powers. They have half the Physical Traits they had in life (round up) and four health levels. They suffer no wound penalties, have no sensation of pain and will continue to attack until completely destroyed. These shells of living creatures are not shambling stereotypical zombies. They are just not sentient beings.

Triumvirate Rites

Triumvirate Rites are available to any aspect or faction of Ananasi.

Intermediate Triumvirate Rites

- **The Gathering Children:** In time of need, an Ananasi can call for a face-to-face meeting with her cousins rather than sharing ideas through the



Great Web. This rite costs two Gnosis and is carried by the Great Web and not only informs the other Ananasi of the meeting but also informs them of the agenda. Naturally, Ananasi who use this rite frivolously will be met by very angry cousins. There is a story told about an Ananasi who used this to invite his many-legged family to a July Fourth gathering. He was never seen again, but it is said the fireworks were lovely, like glowing spiders in the night sky. The system calls for a standard Rituals challenge.

Advanced Triumvirate Rites

- **Rite of One:** This sacred rite is only taught to the most trusted of Ananasa's servants. Using this rite, three Ananasi, one from each faction, can combine to form an avatar of the Mother-Queen. This rite is only used in one of the sacred places in the Umbra where the Ananasi teach their children.

The three chosen Ananasi break down into Crawlerling form and their spiderlings combine to form the Avatar. The Avatar is awesome to behold, and only the most strong-willed Ananasi are not affected by the sight of their Creator. Non-Ananasi go insane at the sight of the Queen of Spiders and may pick up a temporary derangement (Storyteller discretion). Each chosen Ananasi gives up one temporary Gnosis to allow the transformation to take place. After the ritual, the participants are exhilarated from having been that close to the Mother-Queen. They are also wiped out physically and mentally from their proximity to the Incarna herself. The Ananasi who have participated in this rite are revered by their peers. This rite is an honor to know and perform.

Viskr Rites

The Viskyr have a unique purpose among the aspects of Ananasi. They are the Balancers and weave and unweave the Tapestry to repair it in the Ananasi's effort to return things to their original state. To carry out their role, Ananasi has given them special Rites. Viskyr Rites are mystical Rites and are very powerful. They require a great deal of energy and time. They are the soldiers in the frontlines to restore the Triat to Symmetry, even before Myrmidon.

Basic Viskyr Rite

- **Studying the Great Web:** By consuming special salts and herbs and entering into a trance in her Sylie for two days, the Viskyr gains visions of the Great Web. She then makes a standard Rites challenge to see if she succeeded. In this vision, the most immediate threats to the Great Web's Symmetry are revealed in a symbolic form. The Viskyr will then have to interpret these visions before acting on them.

Several Viskyr Ananasi may perform this ritual individually and then gather to discuss the symbolism of the visions and share their notes to be sure that they all see the same threat. It is a cause for a social gathering and political



meeting before they prepare to remove the immediate threat to the Symmetry.

- **Summon Paradox:** With this rite, the Viskr can mark someone or something as being “wrong,” tagging it for later notice by Paradox-spirits. What happens next is up to the Paradox-spirits when they come to investigate this thing that has been marked as “not supposed to be here.” The ritemaster touches the target and makes a Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*). For a human or mage target, full skin-on-skin contact must be made (such as a handshake). The touch leaves a spiritual mark that tags the person, spirit or item as “wrong” to a Paradox-spirit, which then will inflict whatever punishment is necessary. Mages suffer Paradox normally according to the amount they have accrued. Spirits are generally thrown back into the Umbra. Mundane targets are simply less likely to enjoy very good (or very bad) luck. This rite does not summon the Paradox-spirits; they must be contacted by other means.

Intermediate Diskr Rites

Rite of Weaving: Using this rite the Viskr can rewrite reality in minor ways by manipulating the warp and weft of the Tapestry itself. This is true magic as mages perform it and carries the same consequences as mages do for using magic. It costs three Gnosis and requires a Static Mental Challenge against a difficulty of nine Traits (retest with *Occult*). If the test is lost, the Viskr immediately attracts the attentions of Paradox-spirits, who seek to act like Weaver’s antibodies attacking the infection of the person who tampered with Weaver’s Great Web.

Weaver doesn’t like this rite and never gave permission for it. If the test is tied, only then can a Willpower can be spent for a retest. The Storyteller is the final arbiter of what can be achieved with this rite. It is recommended that this rite can mimic the effects of any Gift up to Intermediate. It can also be used to heal wounds, prevent financial disaster and make someone more resilient to injuries if the rite is done in time, but it cannot allow someone to fall off a cliff and simply walk away like a cartoon character without Paradox slapping the Viskyr clear into next week for being so presumptuous. No matter what, it cannot change the past. It can only affect the present and enable things to occur that affect the future.

Invasion of the Body Snatchers.

Occasionally, someone wakes up and is convinced that the person who shared their bed with them is a completely different person. It’s not just a hangover from beer goggles or a rough week for PMS; sometimes he or she really is a different person. Sometimes he or she is even a different species. He or she has been killed and replaced by an Ananasi.

This is not a rite, but neither is it a simple ability for the Ananasi. It’s something else altogether. Ananasi can invade a body, eat the brain and



become that person. Ananasa helps them along but she doesn't take well to those who do it often. It's the radical, last-ditch effort to survive that causes a body invasion. When *Replenishment of the Flesh* isn't enough to survive and rebuild, this is how it's done.

A Crawlerling Ananasi Leader must spend a permanent Gnosis and bore into the victim's brain using Gifts such as Burrow. Sleeping victims are the easiest prey and commonly dined upon. Those sleeping near the victim only notice the victim is having a bit of an uncomfortable night or one heck of a wild dream from the occasional twitching. They must liquefy the gray matter since spiders cannot eat solids. However, Ananasa blesses this and does not allow the body to die; she keeps it alive and the leader continues to eat while a drone consciousness keeps the body alive.

Once the brain is gone and replaced by the Leader brain, the Leader must then go out and eat the rest of the human victim, making the flesh into drone. This goes on for about four hours. In that time, the Ananasi has taken over, with the perk or curse of having her new body's memories, although they are not nearly as vivid as the Ananasi's own memories.

The host's memories can be called upon as a very limited sort of *Past Lives* Background to learn more about whom they ate, and as a result, what they are now. The Ananasi also has the new body's characteristics, race and gender. Her Ananasi genetic material has been changed as a result of this meal and she is now, for all intents and purposes, her host. Just as eating spiders changes the Crawlerling form, eating a person changes the human form of an Ananasi.

This form of cannibalism allows an Ananasi limited immortality. A new body is the reward for loyal service only, not a benefit of being Ananasi. If Ananasa does not feel you are worthy, then the rite fails and you're in the squishy brain of a recently dead person. It is up to the Storyteller as to whether or not Ananasa will allow the infestation and possession to take place. It is nearly always granted in the case of only a few Crawlerlings surviving, but for a plain change of identity, it's up to the Storyteller.

Ananasi cannot eat and become other denizens of the World of Darkness. While they could theoretically eat any corporeal creature, they can't be anything other than an Ananasi. While they could eat a Garou's body, the invading Ananasi would look like a Garou but not be able to shift into Lupus or use the nifty Garou Gifts his victim had. He'd just have the external trappings of the Garou host. If the Ananasi ate a vampire, he'd cause Final Death for the Kindred when he destroyed the soul and the spider would wind up with a mouthful of ashes or rotting flesh. If a ghoul was the victim of a possession, the Ananasi would have a human body afterward. Plus, Ananasi cannot stand vampiric blood, so they'd waste time, Gnosis, and get sick even trying to do this. If eating a mage or changeling, they lose their powers and the Ananasi simply becomes the inhabitant of a mundane body. When the mage or changeling's soul is gone, so is their power. It doesn't work like that, and Ananasa wants it that way.



Fylfot

Fylfots are similar to Garou fetishes. However, the Ananasi prefer manmade objects that have been imbued with a spirit. Such objects of spiritual power are easier to carry around and ubiquitous in the world of men where Ananasi are more likely to need them. Since the Ananasi are negotiators, trappers, collectors and manipulators, the spirits in their Fylfots are rarely there by choice. If an Ananasi creates a version of a Garou fetish, the Gnosis rating will generally be one higher than the original fetish's Gnosis rating.

Ananasi refuse to use spirit-imbued weapons such as klaives. They have no equivalent and nor do any spiders want such a weapon. Even the Myrmidon refuse to use a spirit-imbued weapon due to the belief that the use of such shows that one has forgotten to rely on one's own intellect. A reliance on fetish weapons is an insult to Ananasi wit and resourcefulness.

Fylfots are nearly always unique and one-of-a-kind items. It is considered insulting to copy another's Fylfot. The Ananasi strive to create and obtain unique magical items. To the utmost, they enjoy obtaining and using a Fylfot item and love to create one that they can attach their name to for future use and generations. Fylfots are a source of pride for Ananasi. It is assumed that all of the Ananasi toys have an affinity for Ananasa and whichever appropriate spirit (Non-Garou Totems) of the Triat this Fylfot mimics the original task of and is contained within the item. No Ananasi Fylfot can handle an Incarna itself, so don't even think about it! Most fetishes contain gafflings, jagglings or other minor spirits.

Most Fylfots are created using the same creation Rite as a fetish. Others are just magical toys stumbled upon by the Ananasi. Any creature capable of using a fetish can use these items, whatever their origin, but many will be unwilling to touch an Ananasi item, especially if they know the Ananasi is still alive.

Because of the unique nature of Ananasi Fylfots, here are examples of some. Players and Storyteller's should encourage themselves to create new and innovative Fylfots that are as individual and unique as the character that uses them.

The Armoire of Abiele

Fetish Trait Cost: 3 **Gnosis:** 2 **Spiritual Affinity:** Weaver Spirits

Abiele Dumont, a 19th-century fashion designer would never go out over- or underdressed. She created this classic French armoire to ensure she was always appropriately dressed in the latest fashion and had everything she would ever need to wear. Whispering a simple request into the keyhole of the armoire activates the Fylfot and then the owner may open the armoire doors to find the perfect outfit.

The clothing is always made of finely woven silk (lending credence to the theory that spider-spirits weave each outfit and fill the entire armoire), fits perfectly and is appropriate for male or female attire. It is exactly like having one's own private Hollywood dresser.



The armoire itself is a massive piece of ornate furniture standing nearly seven feet tall, four feet wide and two and a half feet deep. It appears to be constructed of the richest, deepest mahogany and is cumbersome and quite heavy.

Arnoch's Bait

Fetish Trait Cost: 3 **Gnosis:** 3 **Spiritual Affinity:** Hunting, Entrancement

Arnoch the spider was always hungry and was too impatient to make the effort to hunt. Some of those who knew him claimed he was lazy. He wanted his food to come to him, so he created the right bait to lure his food to him. *Arnoch's Bait* is actually an enchanted tin, and looks like an antique snuff tin. The tin allows the user to withdraw a small piece of bait that looks identical to a lemon-drop. The bait attracts any food in the area that the Ananasi can see. The bait is quite edible and tastes exactly like whatever the target enjoys, from the lemon-drop the bait resembles to excrement, depending on the target's personal taste. To activate the Fylfot, the Ananasi places the item on a solid surface in front of himself and asks for anything that he can see (and eat) to come and pick it up. For that brief moment, the target loses all control of their actions and must come pick up the bait. What occurs after the bait is grabbed up and eaten is up to the Ananasi.

The Ananasi must activate the fetish by spending the required Gnosis. The target must do a Static Test against Willpower to resist. A tie allows the user to retest using an appropriate retest and the target may expend a Willpower to cancel it. Failure of the test means the bait lures them in and they pick it up. Only one piece of bait can be drawn from the tin a day; it takes a full 24 hours for the box to create a new piece of bait.

Caen's Lace Kerchief

Fetish Trait Cost: 2 **Gnosis:** 4 **Spiritual Affinity:** Healing, Camouflage

This is what happens when a vain Ananasi feeds for pleasure more than for need. A Welsh dandy bound a spirit into an openwork lace handkerchief to hide his actions. Ananasi cannot heal the wounds inflicted on humans by feeding on them, so Caen had to create something to preserve the Laws of Ananasa. Necessity is the mother of invention, even for Ananasi.

When placed over the skin of a victim, if an Ananasi bites through the lace, it will not leave a mark and will apparently heal the puncture wound almost instantly. The owner need not do anything special to activate this Fylfot, but he must place the handkerchief over the skin before biting and must bite through the holes in the fabric. If the fetish is placed on an already opened wound, all that will happen is that the handkerchief will become bloodstained.

The character must attack through the lace; if he accidentally breaks the lace or tears the fabric then the Fylfot loses its enchantment until repaired. The holes in the lace are only small enough for small puncturing objects such as fangs, screwdrivers and awls. To use this item correctly, a simple test must be done to see if the Ananasi bites through the open spaces in the lace. If the Ananasi fails the test, the Fylfot does not work and the lace is damaged. In event



of a tie, one pediapalp hit the lace and the damage incurred by the wound is halved. Any attack made through the lace heals when the kerchief is removed, however, any health levels of damage from the attack remain, even if there is no "wound" that can be seen. The surface of the bitten skin looks normal and is healed; however, looks are deceiving and fangs still cause aggravated damage.

The Ruby Eye of Tomas

Fetish Trait Cost: 3 **Gnosis:** 4 **Spiritual Affinity:** Wisdom, Knowledge, Vision

The creator of this Fylfot bragged, "The eyes of Tomas are everywhere." It is quite possible he lied, as only known Ruby Eye is proven to have ever existed. However, there have been many attempts to recreate this Fylfot (all have failed). There are several fakes about to be eagerly snatched up by anything that collects enchanted items. This gem grants limited clairvoyant vision, permitting an Ananasi to see things from a distance. The gem itself appears to be a smooth-cut ruby about a half an inch in diameter. It has been set into rings, necklaces, brooches, scepters, and reportedly even a laser, but regardless of its setting, the Eye of Tomas has always worked flawlessly.

The owner of the Eye is capable of seeing through the gem as if they were looking through a glass bubble in a 360-degree arc. It is exactly like viewing the world from inside a red crystal ball. Since the Eye is a ruby, the vision is tinted red. No sound is carried through the gem. The owner must stare into a mirror and activate the fetish; this allows him to link with the gem and look around any given area within a mile as if he were in the room himself.

The Music Box of Chien-Tu

Fetish Trait Cost: 3 **Gnosis:** 5 **Spiritual Affinity:** Calm, Peace, Beauty

Chien-Tu Phillips grew up in a home filled with the constant arguing of his parents. There was never any escape from their incessant bickering. However, Chien-Tu liked nothing more than peace and quiet. Once he went out on his own and found a quiet place, his true heritage was revealed to him, so he began the creation of this Fylfot. This Fylfot was his way of ensuring his sanity.

This small magical music box creates a calm, soothing song that fascinates anyone who hears it. This musical trinket produces music that calms even the most raging beast. When the music box is opened, all characters within a 15-foot radius must make a Static Willpower test or fall into a state of calm and relaxation. Characters affected by the music cannot act out of anger and cease all hostilities while under its spell.

The music is powerful enough to quell the Rage of the other Ovid or even a crazed Garou. In the event that the targeted creatures have Rage, the Ananasi must perform a simple Social Challenge. With a success, the target loses a temporary Rage Trait and must do a simple Willpower test to see if he falls under the effects of the soothing music. Failure means that the creature remains unaffected by the softly tinkling sounds of the music box. In event of a tie, the Ananasi may spend an additional Gnosis Trait for a retest.



Piccola's Picture Frame

Fetish Trait Cost: 4 **Gnosis:** 6
Wisdom, Love

Spiritual Affinity: Mistrust,

By Ananasi standards, this Fylfot was developed for trivial reasons, but this item is quite powerful, nonetheless. An idealistic Ananasi named Rena Piccola was very much a romantic at heart, despite her nature, and was also insanely jealous. She created this item to keep track of her lover at all times, lest he betray her.

This Fylfot is a large wall frame and when a well-crafted and accurate image of a person is placed in the frame, the owner of this Fylfot is able to learn the exact location of that person at all times. The image must be a painting, charcoal drawing, photograph or other likeness of the individual the owner is inquiring after. If there is more than one person in the image in the frame, this Fylfot simply does not work at all.

To use this item, the Ananasi places the image in the frame and then hangs the frame on a wall. He must then stare at it while concentrating on the person pictured. Then a Gnosis versus Willpower challenge between the Ananasi and the target must take place. The Ananasi player counts their total Gnosis Traits and uses them in a Simple Test and the defender uses his total Willpower Traits. If the Ananasi wins the Simple Test, the target is observed. If the target wins, the Ananasi fails and knows it. In the event of a tie, the Traits of the two parties are compared and the party with the higher Traits succeeds in either locating the target or not being watched by the Ananasi.

If successful, the werespider gets a mental image of where the pictured character is and what they are doing. The werespider doesn't receive directions and a map to where they are exactly. At most, all they will get is information about the location from the mental image and possibly a name (not all locations have names; Bubba's Bar does have a name, Nancy's kitchen doesn't have a name, and while a SleepTime Inn does have a name, the bed in Room 138 of the No-Tell Motel does not). The frame cannot relay dialogue; the image is without sound, though the character may get a vague impression of what the conversation is about if the target is very engrossed in a conversation. Body language is a reliable clue. Overall, the information is moderately vague but includes enough details to make things interesting.

Skeleton Closet Key

Fetish Trait Cost: 4 **Gnosis:** 6
Secrets, Hatred

Spiritual Affinity: Wisdom,

This horrible Fylfot is the key to discovering the skeletons hidden in everybody's closet. This key, when held by someone, unlocks the dark closet and reveals the deepest secret within to the Key's owner, whether the target is willing or not. No one knows who created the Skeleton Closet Key and many feel this item is too dangerous and frightening to own, let alone go near. Others spend their entire lives tracking down rumors about the enigmatic owner of this Fylfot and trying to understand its puzzles.



The Key looks like an ordinary old-fashioned key about five inches long and made of cured bone. No one can say what type of bone it is or who or what it is belonged to, but it has allegedly been around since the dawn of man. Once an Ananasi has bonded with the key after two weeks of handling it, anyone who subsequently holds the key will reveal one secret to its owner. If the Key's owner doesn't ask directly, it will automatically reveal the one thing the target holds most closely and secret.

When anyone other than the key's owner holds the key, her or she is compelled to tell a secret. A series of three simple tests (difficulty equal to the Ananasi owner's Gnosis) are then performed to see how well the key-holder resists the lure of the key's magic. If the key-holder loses all three tests, he falls victim to the key and bares his deepest, darkest, most feared secret. This sort of secret reveals Chantry locations, Garou battle plans, caern weaknesses, and Pentex plans and locations, things that are best kept to oneself on penalty of death. If the target loses only two tests, he will tell a secret to the owner, but not the deepest secret they know. This is a minor intrigue on par with which Garou broke the litany and the like. It is damaging stuff but not earth-shaking in its impact. With one loss of the three, the key-holder only reveals minor juicy gossip that could very easily be learned or may already be known. If the key-holder wins all the challenges, he resists the key's magical effect and shares nothing, except maybe a comment such as, "interesting key, what's it open?" and keeps his secrets to themselves.

Many Ananasi know of the existence of this Fylfot and avoid touching it at any cost. Willpower Traits may be spent to fight the Fylfot's effect and the expenditure (with a maximum of two per game) permits one retest per Willpower Trait spent.

The Watch of Second Sight

Fetish Trait Cost: 5 Gnosis: 8 Spiritual Affinity: Paradox, Vision

This Fylfot resembles an old pocketwatch with an elaborate inlay crafted in brass. By activating the watch's inner workings, the owner can view recent events in the area. Rumor claims that the creator of the watch trapped a Paradox-spirit inside, which allows for the walls of reality to break down. Only the watch's owner can activate the Fylfot, which grants five minutes of vision. Obviously, this can be a mystery-buster of the first water, and Storytellers are hereby cautioned about how this thing enters their chronicles. Oh, and the watch also keeps perfect time.





Ratkin

Welcome to the First Day of the Rest of your Life

Psst! Hey, kid! Over here....

Hi, there. The Rat Mother tells me you're new around the colony, more than a little wet behind the ears, and that I could do you a lot of good by taking you under my wing for a while. I'll bet you're feeling pretty confused and probably more than a little scared, too. You've had to do a lot of adjusting, going from being sicker than you've ever been in your life to changing and becoming one of us, and you've got even more of that adjusting to do in the next few months to come. Don't worry, kid, I've been there before, so you can just stick with me. I'll give you the real run-down of what's going on, both around here and in the world at large.

And trust me... I'm gonna end up making you feel even worse from the telling.

See, you've had a raw deal, kid. You may have survived the Plague, but as hard as that is to do, believe it or not that's the easy part. You've got a lot of tough times ahead of you, and hundreds of new enemies wanting you dead just for joining the club. It's a dog-eat-rat world out there, and unfortunately, you're one of the rats.

So, listen up, and listen close. You've been chosen by the Rat Goddess because you've got what it takes to survive as one of us, at least in theory, and I just plain hate it when someone disappoints She Who Unleashed the Birthing Plague on the World. Especially a young'un like yourself. I guess I'm



just a Mama's boy like that. Your survival from here on out depends entirely on how fast and how well you learn from all the things I'm gonna be telling you.

School's in, kid.

The Rise and Fall of Practically Everybody

First off, I guess you should know who you're talking to. The name's Benjamin, but you can call me Ben. Most of my friends do, not that I've got any; my enemies refer to me by what could be called less polite terms, though most ain't got the balls to do it to my face. I ain't actually a member of this here colony, I just kinda pass through every now and then, and when I do I like to try and help out where I can. This time, that means giving you the skinny on what's going down. But like I said, I'm just passing through, so pay attention, because I ain't gonna be around for a refresher.

Now, believe it or not, we care about you. No, really — it just ain't our way to throw our young into the world without the proper training. That ain't the way we work. So, unlike a lot of the other shifters out there, we're gonna tell you how it *really* is. We're gonna tell you the ugly, violent, dangerous truth. Starting at the very beginning.

Long, long time ago, things were pretty sweet for most everybody. Gaia, the Earth Mother, created everything — all the creepers, all the crawlers, the fliers, the swimmers, the things with big, gnashy teeth and the things that go bump in the night. She made them all, kid, and each of them had their proper place in Her grand scheme. They contributed to the whole, and helped create this delicate balance where everybody was happy and all that crap. Real fairy-tale stuff, and I guess everyone figured that they'd be happy ever after or something like that. 'Course, back then, you could almost believe in those endings.

Now, of all Her creations, one kinda stood out from the rest, because it was the smartest and the boldest. It was also the biggest threat to the balance Gaia created, when you got down to it. It walked on two legs, learned how to make and use tools and rather than let the world shape it, it wanted to shape the world. It called itself "human."

The best of these humans Gaia made into the Changers. They were created to be the protectors and enforcers of Her creation — of all reality, for that matter. They weren't really men and they weren't really beasts but somewhere in between, given the secrets of transformation, what some of the more bookish Seers refer to as "the changing ways." Sounds real important, don't it? Well, Gaia showed them how to deal with the spirits to learn their secrets, in order to better perform the duties She'd soon give them. They were chosen from the best and were made even better with Her teachings.

Now, the rub here is that each type of these blessed ones had their own role to play. The bears, called Gurahl, they were Her healers. Those damned uppity cats, the Bastet, were given domain over secrets and mystery, becoming



Her eyes — they were never any good at it then, either. The wolves, to soon become known as the Traitorous Garou, were Her defenders and warriors, hunters without equal in their own minds. But I'm getting ahead of myself.

I just said you got a raw deal, and you did. The rats were the least and the lowliest of all Gaia's Children. But we worked with our strengths, our cunning, our stealth and our overwhelming love for our creator, and so She blessed us with powers of hiding and finding food. She helped us be safe.

Back in the day, that was enough. Things were good, and the world was in balance. Then, something went wrong. Call me a cynic, but I figure it was bound to happen sooner or later.

The Big Three

One thing all us "blessed ones" have in common is our belief in the big boys (and girls) upstairs, the three greatest spirits that exist, called the Triat. No, more than spirits — more like the three primal forces of existence, each given an embodiment and a personality. Gotta love anthropomorphism.

The first of the Big Three, and our personal favorite, is the Wyld. The Wyld is best described as pure creation — raw, untapped potential and chaotic energy. The Wyld is life, and madness, and insight, and creativity, and strength, all at the same time. The Wyld refuses to be neatly defined, because definition simply ain't part of the Wyld's nature. For things like easy definition and static reality, you need to look elsewhere.

To be specific, you've gotta look to the Weaver. This jealous little bitch gives structure and definition to reality, shapes and makes permanent what the Wyld creates. She's the creator — if you can create things like this — of stasis and conformity. She traps all reality in her webs, or at least tries her damned best to.

Finally, there's the Wurm. He's a tough one to talk about, because there's sorta two different Wurms that bear mentioning — essentially reality's first Gemini. The first Wurm — the one we ain't seen in a long, long time — was the force of balance between the Wyld and the Weaver. When something outlived its time, the Wurm would step in and destroy it, make room for more of the Wyld's creation. The second Wurm... well, that takes a bit of explaining.

The Weaver's always loved humans, and they've always loved her. She taught them to use fire, to build tools and homes, to band together. To create all those stupid laws, and invent the travesty that is civilization. Nowadays, humans just can't envision existence without order, without their precious little Weaver.

I dunno if they caused it, or if they were just victims of it, but a long time ago, the balance got thrown when the Weaver went a little crazy, and since then the humans've just made things worse. The humans got bigger and took over more of the Earth, and the Weaver went even more nuts and decided to try and bind up everything she could find. Eventually, she even got the Wurm



caught in her webs, making him insane and he started destroying things through corruption and sickness, not because he was clearing stuff out. The Wyrn desperately wants to be free, and he's willing to destroy all of reality as we know it in order to escape. And as if that ain't enough, the Weaver's threatening to wrap all of reality as we know it up in her webs. The Wyld's stuck in the middle, slowly being whittled away by the other two.

That's where we come in. Or at least, where we were supposed to come in, back in the day.

When Humans Became a Problem

So there are these folks with "the changing way," remember them? That's us — the Bete, or the Fera, as they say it now. Each of us had a job to do, and we did it well. Hell, we even cooperated sometimes, at least when we had to or when we were hired to. But like I said, this was a long time ago, and a lot's changed since then.

The Garou, the wolf-changers, they were put in charge of protecting the humans from all the nasties that hunted them. The Gurahl, the bear folks, tended all of Gaia's most sacred places. The Corax — they're the werebirdies — they were Gaia's messengers, and flew across the skies blabbing to anybody they could find. The Mokolé, the lizards, from what I can tell pretty much just sat around and remembered all day, eating the occasional cow and getting lots of tanning done. I guess remembering's kinda important, too, and there are some things I wish we could remember ourselves. But it was still a pretty sweet job, I think, compared to some of the other ones. Hell, they could even do it at home, didn't need to come into the office, and each Mokolé was pretty much his own boss.

As for us Ratkin, the smallest of Gaia's Children, we were given the hardest job of all. The job that nobody else really wanted, us included, but She knew we were the only ones cunning enough to pull it off, and we loved Her more than any of Her other children, so we agreed to do our part the best we could. We trusted Her.

We were given the job of keeping balance between humankind and the world around them.

Trust me, this was a really crappy job, and it wasn't easy no matter how you spin it. We had to keep constant watch over humanity, making sure they didn't become too big for their britches, or anyone else's for that matter. If we ever caught them with a bit of knowledge or a tool they weren't supposed to have, we'd go in and take it from them (I hear we got some of the niftiest stuff that way). If they were growing too large in number, we'd go in and steal their food. If they got too proud, we'd steal one of their kids as a warning. We had to make sure the humans knew their place.

I know this is starting to make us look like the bad guys, especially to someone like you who was born human. I was born human, too, kid, and it wasn't so long ago that I thought the same way. But it wasn't like that at all,



and like I said, nobody really wanted the job. It was important work, though, so we took it seriously.

In order to pull off our job right, we were given sacred knowledge of one very dangerous secret that none of the other Fera understood. We knew the secret of disease, and when we had to, we'd use it to cull the humans. It was subtle, killing the weakest and most wretched of the herd, sparing the strong and the wise so that the race could still survive. Don't look at me that way, kid — it was better than the alternative, which I'll mention in a moment, and like any dangerous weapon, we were very careful with it, only using it when absolutely necessary. Believe it or not, we saw it as a mercy, all in all.

Now, since the Garou were the protectors of humankind, they started to get kinda uppity. They started to see themselves as rulers of humanity. Big mistake. A lot of the world's problems can be traced back to this one big error in perception, because they started to try to do our job for us.

We call this time the Impergium. This was the alternative I mentioned.

You won't find any records of the Impergium in any history books, although you'll probably find traces of it in some really old spooky campfire stories. Humans collectively blocked out any memories of this dark age, an age when the werewolves took Mankind as their slaves and breeding stock, to slake their lusts for mating and for blood. Not much more than walking sheep, really. Used, or killed, however the Garou liked. We Ratkin had our limits, and we didn't want to enslave anyone — we just wanted to make sure the world remained the way it was meant to be. The Garou, though, didn't give a damn about any consequences. Never really have, come to think of it.

I guess Gaia tried to help out here, and wiped the memory of this horrible time from the humans. This effect lasts to this day, and we call it the Delirium. Now, if a human sees a Garou in Crinos — that's the big beastie-half-wolf body they used to "tend the herd" — she gets hit with temporary insanity and partial amnesia. That's her mind telling her, "Forget what you saw — run away and stay sane." She'll probably try to invent some story about what she saw, mostly to convince herself that all she saw was just a great big dog or a guy in a Halloween mask. No one wants to remember the shit ancestral memory can tell them, and this is why.

Gaia created the Delirium thousands of years ago. It's still in effect today, and it's even spilled over so that it's triggered by *any* Fera wearing their big beastie bodies nowadays. Just imagine the kind of horrors the humans must've suffered at the hands of the Garou for the Delirium to last this long....

Anyway, all the Fera have roots among humans, at least partly, but the Garou didn't want us "interfering" with "their" property. So, we'd find what breeding stock we could, after the Garou took the strongest and boldest for themselves, by force of course. Gurahl, they liked mystics and healers, while the Bastet lured out the curious. We had to make do with the leftovers, the ones that the Garou didn't care about, that the other breeds overlooked as being worthless. Is it any surprise we ain't too close to humanity anymore?



Homids like you and me, kid, are getting more and more rare as the years run by, and even when we do get some human breeding stock, it's usually an outcast of sorts — just like it was then.

We got pretty desperate before too long. But we were built to be survivors, and this is where we really started learning how to survive. We'd make deals with anybody who could help us out with clothes or food or other favors, offering work of practically any kind we could manage. We got to be pretty good assassins and thieves, since we were willing to get our hands dirtier than most. Whoring wasn't above us, either. We'd beg, steal, kill, maim — whatever it took. We found that having too much pride was a really good way to starve to death.

With Friends Like These

When it rains, it pours. Since all the Fera came from humans, and the Garou were the self-proclaimed rulers of the humans, the Garou figured themselves as all that and a bag of chips, the greatest of the Fera. We were supposed to be equal, but I guess the wolves thought that some pigs were more equal than others.

We've each got our own tales of how the War of Rage began, and of all the horrible things the Garou did in their war against the other Fera. The way I see it, it don't really matter much which version is true. Any way you cut it, the bottom line is this: *the Garou screwed up royally*. Somehow they let the Wyrms into their hearts, and in their false pride tried to conquer their brethren. The Garou became the world's greatest enemy, even as they claimed to be its champion. Even today the Garou still suffer from the Wyrms' corruption, although they refuse to admit it, and they'll get violently defensive when you try to point it out.

Like I said, the stories about the beginning of the War vary, but most versions got something in common, saying it began simply enough: the wuffies told us all to bow down before them, give up all our secrets and admit they were the true masters of all the changers. As if. When we refused, the big babies had a tantrum and made war on us.

Problem is, the Garou were built as Gaia's warriors. They laid claim, and rightfully so, to being the deadliest predators on the face of the earth. They also had the cunning to invent what humans today call genocide. That's right, the humans learned it from their wolf masters long, long ago. Just imagine what history might've been like if the monkeys didn't see enough to do.

Once upon a time, we Ratkin had an aspect we called the Bards, the ones who acted as our ambassadors, our messengers to the other Fera, and our lore-keepers. They dealt with the seriously important shit. They were also the easiest for those bastards Garou to hunt down, because our enemies already knew them and how to find them. Ratkin were hunted down, herded, and slain without mercy. Those wolf morons called us diseased, said that killing



us all was for the good of the world they protected. The Garou were always really easily convinced of their own righteousness.

I admit, I'm a pretty cold-hearted sonuvabitch, but I always get a little choked up when I think about what happened next. There's a lot of pieces of our history and heritage which we'll never recover because our Bards, whose job was to remember such things in the stories and songs, were among the first to die. I guess the saddest thing is, our Bards tried to reason with the Garou on behalf of all our race, and even on behalf of our Fera brethren. When all these desperate attempts were met with slaughter, when their numbers were cut down to just a handful, the last Bards gathered at the Field of Nettles. There they composed their final song, an epic tale of the betrayal of the Garou against those they were supposed to call ally and family. They wove curses into this song, of the deadly plagues that our kind would unleash upon the world, of our revenge. They finished the tale just as the last of them died at the hands of the Garou. The Field of Nettles has since become a symbol for the injustice we Ratkin've had to suffer, and of the promise of our revenge at the end of the Age of the Apocalypse.

Soon enough it was pretty clear the Garou weren't gonna stop the killing until we were all gone, so it was decided that we had to flee and hide. We found places in the spirit world, the Umbra — don't worry, I'll tell you about that soon — that were so well-hidden the Garou could never find us, no matter how hard they looked. We needed them to think they'd killed us all. We hid, the Garou thought the job was done, and we survived. Happy days, right?

This hiding didn't come without a price. Just like Gaia built us to be not quite man and not quite beast, but somewhere in between, we were built neither flesh nor spirit but somewhere in between. Staying in the world of flesh too long is one of the things that's wrong with the Garou today — they've lost their spiritual roots. For our part, staying in the Umbra away from humanity for so long caused us to breed out a lot of our human instincts. It took some adjusting, mind you, but we've gotten used to it by now, and I think we're probably better off for it in the long run.

The Humans Bite Back

Of course, there was another, more serious consequence related to our running for the spirit world — we weren't around to do our job anymore, and sure enough, humanity began to get too big for everyone's britches. For that matter, a lot of the Bete were completely wiped out before the end of the War of Rage, and that left a lot of slack to be picked up, so a lot of Gaia's sacred jobs were suddenly open and needing to be filled. The damn Garou just couldn't manage it all, especially our job, and eventually humanity began to fight back against their werewolf slavers.

Now, the Garou had a mixed reaction to this. Pretty much all of them were shocked, but some of their tribes, like the Red Talons and the Get of Fenris, were outraged. How dare the humans get all uppity on them? They



wanted another war, this time against humanity. Others, like the hippie peacenik Children of Gaia and the mystics called Stargazers, were tired of the killing and sued for peace. In the end, the peaceniks won over the war-hawks, and the Garou pledged to avoid hindering the growth of the human machine.

They gave the world to the Weaver. Might as well have tied it up in a pretty pink bow with a card that said "Wish You Well." The bastards.

And what could we do about it? Dick, that's what, since we were so busy licking our wounds in our hiding places. Even if we wanted to fix the problem, to put the humans back in their rightful place and maintain the balance of the world, we'd suffered too much to manage it no matter how hard we tried; there were too few of us left. We had to remain hidden, rebuild our strength and our numbers.

Where was Gaia during all this, you might ask?

That's the worst part, an even deeper betrayal than what we suffered at the hands of our Garou cousins. Our Mother abandoned us. She allowed, maybe even supported, the Garou in their quest for superiority. We didn't find any succor with Her, no matter how much we begged for it. We loved Her the most, trusted Her the most, and She betrayed that trust. Just in case I haven't emphasized it enough, just in case your skull's so thick it ain't sunk in yet, I'll say it again — you got a raw deal being one of us, kid.

The thing is, Gaia still needs us. We've got the best damn chance, maybe the only chance, of cleaning up this old crap-covered rock and the multiverse around it.

The World Today

Five thousand years. Five thousand whole *freaking* years! That's how long humanity, and the Garou, have had to screw things up. And they sure did a bang-up job at it, didn't they? If you don't believe me, just take a look around at the state of things. Where should I start?

The City

Right now, the Weaver's got a chokehold on reality. That's right, she rules the day. Look outside, and you're gonna find stuff that'll just make you sick. Greasy, artificial fast foods. Pavement as far as the eye can see. Concrete buildings that spike the sky and block out the sun. Industrial pollution. Starvation. Crime. Poverty. It's practically a slap in the face, looking at the Human Machine in its entirety.

Humans toil away at meaningless tasks their entire lives, following stupid laws and stupid rules in their stupid little jobs in an effort to build up a stupid little, pointless life until they finally just wind down and die. Then another human will take the dead one's place in the stupid scheme, and the whole pointless process of stupidity starts all over again. Every last aspect of their lives is controlled, contained, regimented. They're trapped, working very



hard at making their prison walls stronger, without even realizing what they're doing.

And what makes things even worse is the overpopulation. I guess a good way of putting it is, the biggest problem is that the problem is so damn big. Humans just keep wanting to expand the machine they call civilization, as if expansion somehow makes it better. Frankly, it's the only purpose they can think of. Their cities get bigger, taller, wider, and the corruption they ignorantly harbor becomes more entrenched in reality.

The Country

Yeah, right. This place ain't much better. You think there's actual, honest-to-goodness wilderness out there? Just show it to me. The humans have helped the Weaver spread her webs out so far, that the places her webs don't touch, even if only slightly, are very few and very far between. Any place you can get a radio signal, or make a cell phone call, or drive your ATV or whatever, it ain't really wilderness anymore. Sure, you could probably find someplace where civilization will leave you alone for a while, but it won't last.

Just a couple weeks ago I was hiking to a neighboring city where I had a contract to whack this Silver Fang, and I came across a reforestation project. It made me literally sick, seeing all those new trees planted there, in neat little rows all evenly spaced from each other. A whole field of the things. That's not how the Wyld's wild is supposed to be! That's the wild of the Weaver, and humanity's responsible for it. They're evil, and they only make it worse when they try to be good.

Unless we keep fighting, doing our best to stymie humanity, even the few places of the wilderness that remain will be gone. The Weaver's nothing if not greedy, and as I've said many a time before, humans take after her.

The Reason

So, this all's the fault of the Wyrn, and as soon as somebody figures out a way to defeat it, then all will be made right in the world and we'll go back to that fairy-tale time of happiness, dewdrops and frolicking in the frickin' spring meadows. And if you believe that, kid, I've got a bridge in Brooklyn I'd like to sell you.

The wuffies, they'll try and feed you that bullshit line. Don't buy into that, not even for a second. The Wyrn didn't do all this — he's a victim just as much as anyone else. It was the humans that caused this. And it was the wolves that let them, encouraged them and even helped them in some cases.

The Garou still think of themselves as the lords of the earth. What color is the sky in their world?! I've gotta admit that they were, once, when they kicked the rest of us around the planet, but they stopped calling the shots a long time ago. The humans outnumber the Garou a good ten thousand to one, at least, and the only one they answer to is their machine. Now, human



civilization is so overpowering, the Garou buy into the lie almost as bad as the humans do. Everything's ruled by the humans, and their master is the Weaver.

I'm not sure if I blame the Weaver, to be honest. Have you ever noticed how none of the tales come out and say exactly what it was that made the Weaver go mad in the first place? Well, there are a lot of us who think that it was when the humans started getting out of control that the Weaver went mad. Understand? The humans threw the world out of balance in the first place. Everything else has just been a chain reaction.

The funny thing is, not even the humans are happy with this situation. In fact, they're downright miserable. They're now trying to keep everything all nice and shiny-looking. Why? Because it keeps them from thinking about just how bad things really are. They don't like thinking about the lie they're living in. To them, happiness involves hoarding more money and stuff than those around them. Humans were meant to be hunter/gatherer types, but instead they've turned themselves into clerks, paper-shufflers and junk collectors. They've lost their way, and become racially shallow. Most of them have killed what little potential for spirituality is left in the race.

What We Can Do About It

Gaia may have forsaken us, but we've found a few others to help us out, primarily the Rat Goddess, and the Wyld. It's the Wyld's cause we serve, as Mama Rat wants us to. We're the Wyld's army, battling for chaos, training ourselves to fight in the War for the Apocalypse. Yeah, I suppose that makes us the Wyld's militia.

As agents of chaos, it's our duty to sow chaos whenever and wherever we can, even if we can only do it in small ways. Destroy a piece of corporate art. Blow up some computers. Mess up some traffic lights. Start a fight outside a bar. If you're really bitter about the world and all its bullshit, you could even make a few humans go "missing," or blow up some buildings, important or not. Whatever gets your rocks off, and adds a little mayhem to everyone's lives.

Maybe that don't seem like much to you, and you're right, it ain't. You're only one Ratkin. But you ain't alone. We live anywhere and everywhere that humans and Garou can't find us; that makes a lot of Ratkin in any given city, and in many of the places between. If a thousand Ratkin and their Kinfolk started chipping in to help out your little mayhem project, could you imagine what would happen? If we took away the humans' conveniences, their gadgets and all the pains-in-the-asses they seem to think is necessary — if we scare them enough — then maybe, just maybe, they'll start to see the Big Lie they've built their civilization on a little bit more clearly. And maybe the Wyld would get a little stronger. We've always worked to undermine human civilization, and that's still true today — we just do it a bit differently now than we did in the Dawn of Time.

Many of us say *all* the humans should be wiped out. Me, being born human myself — while I ain't got too many qualms about killing humans — I'd prefer



to avoid outright genocide; that's the way of Garou, not us. I think that maybe they can be redeemed, at least some of them. Maybe the humans who've been lost to the Machine can be shown a new path; maybe those derelicts and misfits and outcasts, or even just the ones that are looking to let go and find something more, can be recruited. A lot of maybes, but we need all the help we can get, and like the movie says, only when you've lost everything are you free to do anything. That's something we Ratkin understand better than most.

Basically, the moral of the story is that a little mayhem, when applied just right, can go a long way.

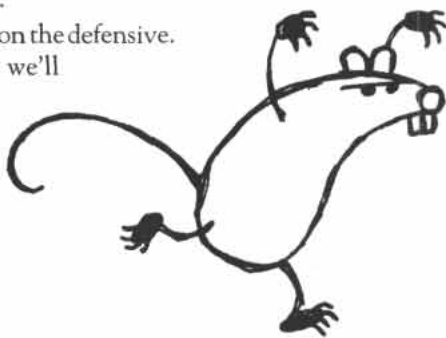
A Glimmer of Hope

Of course, the present state of things ain't *entirely* bad. There's the spirit world, for example. You'll like this place — it's more honest, more pure. The Weaver and the Wyrn don't try so hard to hide, and the Wyld don't seem quite so weak; everything becomes just a bit clearer when we go there. Honestly, it's almost addictive.

When we retreated during the War of Rage, we went to the spirit world, the Umbra, to make our hiding places. It was from there that we watched the world go to hell as we rebuilt our army. This time spent in the spirit world is how we get close to the Wyld. It's also the reason we know the place as well as we do. We've got tunnels winding all through the place, from the deepest parts of the Deep Umbra to the most mundane parts of the Penumbra. We've got hidey-holes and safe havens all over. Some of us call these tunnels the Sewers, because they're beneath the rest of the spirit world... well, not really, but sorta. It's hard to explain.

That army that I said we'd been breeding for five thousand years? Most of it is still there. There are entire legions of Ratkin and Kinfolk there, all waiting for the Apocalypse to begin. Now, the Apocalypse ain't the foregone conclusion that the Garou say it is. We believe that the Apocalypse is the test to determine who'll be the next masters of the Earth — the end of Garou dominance and human civilization, maybe, but the planet's still gonna live on. And when the Apocalypse comes to pass, when the Garou have failed, we'll come rolling out of the Umbra and destroy everything that stands between us and victory. Then we'll take our true place as the rulers in the world to come.

All this time, the Wyld's been on the defensive. But the time will come when we'll mobilize and go on the offensive. We're gonna win, kid. So if you want a piece of it, you'd better make yourself ready to kick some serious ass.





The Life and Times of a Ratkin

Ratkin Culture

Okay, now you know at least the basics of how you got here, and what's going on. It's a good start, but there's still a lot you haven't heard.

For example, you've gotta learn how to survive living with other Ratkin, and that ain't always as easy as you might think. Unfortunately for you, you ain't no country mouse. Those guys are chickens, living out in rural areas where they think they're safe, and they're half right. No, you're destined to fight the battle for chaos right on the frontlines, in the city. This is where you're gonna see Ratkin civilization at its most complicated. And its most deadly.

But I'm getting ahead of myself again. Let's start at the beginning.

The Infection

Infection is where every Ratkin begins, no matter what his breed or Aspect. Other Changers, they got it easy — they either change or they don't, usually at adolescence. It's all in the genes.

Ratkin have to work a bit differently. For us, there's still the genes, but our genes lay dormant until awakened. If they ain't awakened, the would-be Ratkin will never change. He'd probably live out his entire life as a dumb little furball or a pathetic human who can never fit in, depending. I guess it's kinda sad when that happens, but luckily we're able to catch most of those who have even a slim hope of changing.

There's only one thing that will awaken the changing gene in a Ratkin, and that's infection. This ain't pretty by anyone's book, except maybe a Plague Lord's. Infection kills most of the people, Kinfolk or not, who suffer from it. But for Kinfolk, although most of them die before the Plague's run its course, they're really only truly alive when they're infected.

You probably remember all those freaky voices talking to you during your own infection, bouncing around in your brain. They scared you, didn't they? Don't deny it — they scared the piss outta me, too, at least at first. I thought I was going completely nuts. Well, I wasn't, and neither were you. Those voices were messages from your brothers and sisters, messages from the Rat God; it was the blood memory at work. They were trying to help you, to tell you things you needed to know and to understand in order to complete the transformation into a full-blooded Ratkin. Most of us even receive potent visions alongside the voices during our infection — disturbing and enlightening at the same time. Really, until the infection, none of us are truly sane, truly able to see reality as it really is. The infection helps us become truly alive, breaks the chains of conformity and ignorance that hold us down. Our eyes are opened.



Unfortunately, for most of us, the voices stop when we Change. At least, most of the time. You'll start hearing them again whenever you experience the Rapture. Some folk will try to tell you that the Rapture's a bad thing, that it's the madness in our blood at work. It can be damned inconvenient, sure, but it's not madness — it's insight. Truthfully, it's when we're "suffering" from the Rapture that we're at our most sane, that things become clear and it becomes so easy to see beyond the Lie that we're able to do it without even trying. Raptures are scary when you're still getting used to them, I know, but sooner or later you're gonna actually start enjoying them.

Some rare Ratkin never stop hearing the voices. Mostly the Twitchers. Ever heard the term "Too much of a good thing"? Well, that's the Twitchers. As far as instability goes, on a scale of one to 10, with one being your average Zen master and 10 being a postal worker who's climbed the tower, Twitchers are a borderline 11. I'll get to them later.

It's interesting to note that that one of the visions every Ratkin receives when going through their Infection is a vision of a strange place somewhere on Earth. The Shadow Seers say this place you see is representative of what you're truly seeking in life — your own personal paradise on Earth. Some Ratkin are obsessed with finding this place; we get most of our Tunnel Runners this way.

The Apprenticeship

One other thing we've got that the other Fera don't is our Aspects. We get to choose which Aspect we want to join, rather than have it chosen for us by something as stupid as the phase of the moon we just happened to be born under. In fact, we can't go through our First Change until we make up our minds about which career path we wanna take. Now, obviously we don't have job seminars or Career Day or any crap like that. We make our decision based on two factors, the first being discussions with other more experienced Ratkin — like this here talk you and me are having now — and the second being the voices. See, until you decide, the voices you hear and the visions you see will be nudging you in this direction or that one, giving you advice about which Aspect would suit you best. Most take this advice to heart, because it's from your brothers and sisters, both alive and lost, whispering to you inside your brain. They're trying to help you out.

When you finally do change, it's a relief — cathartic, even. The overwhelming sickness will finally be at an end. Same with the overwhelming madness, or insight, depending on how you look at it. Rats probably liked you before, but they'll like you even more afterward; same with Rat-spirits. All part of the same extended family, you know? You learn to harness the Blood Memory, that racial memory that all we Ratkin share and the source of the voices during the infection. You'd be surprised the kind of things you can get from it — mental maps of tunnels and mazes all over the world, visions of the past, locations of Ratkin Colonies you've never been to, and especially the



name, Aspect and history of a Ratkin you've never actually met before. The stronger your spirit, the better you become at utilizing the Blood Memory.

Now, after you've decided your Aspect, it comes time for your Rite of Passage. Your Rat Mother has already probably done a lot of work in this regard, making sure you know not to stick your proverbial fingers in any theoretical electrical sockets. Some Pups — that's what we call those Ratkin without any Rank — simply train themselves, relying on instinct, observation, hard work, and trial and error to develop new skills and learn how to utilize their new forms. Others enter an apprenticeship for a while with another, more experienced Ratkin of the same Aspect, like I did. Typically, this apprenticeship lasts for a year and a day. Lemme tell you, you never forget your mentor; the bond that's formed there lasts for life, and then some. My own mentor was Jules Easy-Win, and he was one hell of a Knife Skulker. In the end, he even gave his life to save mine; I don't think he meant to, but he still did, which is pretty rare for any Ratkin. We're in this for our own survival first and foremost, so if you end up deciding to be a Knife Skulker and apprenticing with me, don't expect the same thing from me, all right, kid?

The Exam

A Ratkin's Rite of Passage is the big test, when Ratkin society determines whether or not you're actually worthy of membership. It's a big deal, but it's not too difficult, unless you've pissed off all the wrong people prior to going into it; then you might be given a bit more than you should be expected to be able to chew, because the powers-that-be are secretly hoping that you won't come back. Your best bet: be respectful and keep your big noise-trap shut when around your betters, at least until you're good enough to hold your own against the more ruthless colony elders out there.

Generally, these are solitary things. Sometimes a young pack of Ratkin Pups will be sent on a Rite of Passage together, but that's pretty rare; most of the time, a Ratkin does his Rite of Passage alone. They usually take the form of a simple contract to prove the Ratkin's worth; kill this human, steal that item, deliver this message, that sort of thing. If the Ratkin succeeds, then he returns to the ritemaster and he's rewarded by official entry into the ranks of the Rakka. Look out, world — he's become a full-blooded, card-carrying member of Ratkin society.

Graduation

Your name bears some mention. Right now, you've got a human name. Well, that's fine, I kinda like my human name myself and I use it more often than not. But once you finish your Rite of Passage, you'll get your true, Ratkin name, what a Garou might call a spirit name.

Garou names are usually these crappy three-word poetic pieces of garbage. Sometimes, you'll get that for a Ratkin too, but just as often it'll be something simpler and more to the point. Something like Leadbiter, or



Trashy Mac, or even a combination of your human name with something along these lines. Plague Lords, they often get diseases as part of their spirit names.

Twitchers have this thing called the *Rite of Naming*, and honestly I'm kinda jealous. They find a trashcan or garbage bin and toss out a bag of garbage on the ground. Then they grab a piece of garbage at random with words on it, like a wrapper or a can or something. Whatever that trash says, that becomes part of their spirit name. Neat, huh?

Some Ratkin say that once upon a time, we didn't really have names. As agents of the Wyld, we hated any sort of definition or conformity; labels were just plain against our very nature, too human. We'd just rely on our Blood Memory to figure out who was who. It seems feasible enough, but thankfully even if this was true, it was just a passing phase.

Aspects

Well, if you've got at least half a brain, you should be thinking about what Aspect you're gonna be taking up when it comes time to decide. At least, I hope you are, because it's an important decision that shouldn't be taken lightly. What Aspect you choose to follow is gonna help shape your entire existence from here on out.

And just because I'm such an incredible guy, I'll tell you a bit about each of the Aspects you're looking at choosing from. Forewarned is forearmed, and all that crap.

Tunnel Runners

The Tunnelers are a good bunch who usually know what they're doing. If you ever find a Ratkin who's journeying alone, often as not it's gonna turn out to be a Tunnel Runner. They've got the skinny on how to get from here to there without the wrong folks taking notice.

Often, the Tunnel Runners act as our first line of defense, too. See, they're the ones the rest of us rely on for important info, so when something shows up that we gotta know about, it's the Tunnelers who come by and tell us about it. If you ever see a Tunneler panicking, it means something serious is going down.

Shadow Seers

I guess you could think of the Seers as our religious leaders, because if Mama Rat chooses to speak to any of us directly, it's probably gonna be to one of them. That's just the first of the reasons we tend to give our Seers a lot of respect. They also take care of our precious nests, making sure they're always up to snuff, and if not for them we'd probably have a lot fewer allies in the spirit world. Some of them act as counselors of sorts, helping the rest of us keep from freaking out too bad when things get really wacked.

Ironically, a lot of them have trouble with freak-outs themselves. I once saw a Shadow Seer have an entire conversation with himself in the middle of a fast food joint. I know, that ain't rare, but the thing was this guy was getting



upset that the imaginary person with him wasn't talking back. Eventually he started throwing his food around, then left looking pretty satisfied that he won the "food fight." Like I said, weird.

Knife Skulkers

I'm a Knife Skulker myself, so you'd think I'd be kinda partial to this Aspect. Well, I ain't. Sure, maybe there're a lot of perks that come with being the traditional leaders of our race, but there's a lot of bullshit we gotta put up with, too. We're the keepers of the Litany of Survival. You know how frustrating it gets trying to enforce laws on a bunch of anarchists and terrorists? Anarchist lawmakers — I guess that's what you could think of us as.

Still, it's us Skulkers that tend to call the shots for that very reason. The other Ratkin don't always like it, but they ain't gotta like it, they just gotta avoid stepping on my toes or else they might find themselves missing a foot. Skulkers tend to act like the glue that keeps everyone all together, keeping other Aspects in line and trying to throw a little organization into the chaos of Ratkin society. We're usually really concerned with justice, and we are the assassins of our kind. Is it any wonder why we tend to be kinda pissy all the time?

Warriors are scary because you know that if you piss them off they're gonna come gunning for you. Skulkers are scary because you don't know.

Warriors

The Warriors keep your skinny tail safe. Just keep that in mind whenever you meet one. They're the ones on the front lines fighting and killing for Mama Rat's cause. If the Skulkers are the glue of Ratkin society, the Warriors are the foundation.

The second thing to keep in mind is that they love what they do. It's why they took up the day job in the first place, y'know? They'll jump at the chance to throw down with the best of them, to test their Pain-Daggers, or to just prove who's the better brawler. It's stupid and it's a waste, yeah, but you've gotta do what you can to keep morale up. If it makes the troops happy, might as well allow some gratuitous violence, right? Just as long as there ain't any naughty words. Heh.

Engineers

The Lab Rats are still pretty new — I think they first appeared sometime during the last century. They've probably got their roots in some ancient Aspect of Ratkin that disappeared during the War, but no way of knowing that for sure since the Bards disappeared. Know how I said that the Weaver's a problem and stuff? Well, the Engineers don't really see it that way. They love the Weaver, but they don't much appreciate who's got their grubby little hands on Weaver stuff.

They're great at building fancy little gadgets and making all sorts of Weaver-tech stuff. Generally, they ain't too trusted because they're so close to the Weaver, which most of us find just downright weird. Hard to know what



to make of them, y'know? Still, as long as they do their part in the war effort, we'll accept them. A Ratkin's still a Ratkin, no matter how eccentric they are.

Plague Lords

Every Ratkin suffers from the Birthing Plague, so we're all familiar with disease and how effective it is as a weapon. But the Lords, they practically revel in disease. They eat disease, breathe disease, and probably have wet dreams about disease when they sleep at night. They're creepy sons-of, but you've gotta hand it to them, they sure know a lot about specialization.

They also know lots of stuff about the Wyrn, studying it and making deals with its servants. Lucky for them they tend to come out on top of those deals. I don't trust them; they may have roots in the Knife Skulkers, but the two don't have much left in common anymore. They're Ratkin, sure, but just barely.

Munchmausen

You've gotta love the Munchmausen. I mean, yeah, they can be annoying and stuff with all the lying, and a lot of them've got all the subtlety of a tactical nuclear strike, but the truth is they're great guys to party with. And if nothing else, the time you spend hanging around with a Moon Mouse is gonna be memorable. They think of themselves as swashbuckling heroes *par excellence*, and they play it to the hilt.

These freaks also claim to be from these weird places in the Umbra — Rat Kingdoms, they call them. The detail they put into describing these places, it's easy to think these places are real. And y'know, maybe they are. But any way you cut it, the Munchmausen are nuts. They're probably the most recent additions to our happy little Ratkin family.

Twitchers

Take the most chaotic, violent, anarchistic Warrior. Add in a little extra hatred, take away accountability, and piss in his corn flakes. Congratulations, it's a Twitcher. These freaks are totally psycho. To them, the Veil is a polite suggestion. They're all about making havok and, more often than not, watching blood run free. I mean, shit, you think the rest of us are off-kilter? Just try hanging around a Twitcher for a while. If they don't freak you out with their wild conspiracy theories, chances are you'll find yourself on the wrong end of an explosive gym bag before too long.

Still, they perform an important function in Ratkin society. They're the expendables. No, seriously. Speaking from a Skulker's point of view, they're kinda like a grenade that's already had its pin pulled. You never know when it's gonna go off, so you just do your best to make sure it's somewhere it'll do some good when it does. Just remember; handle with care. Twitchers're probably the most dangerous Ratkin you'll ever meet.

Rat Packs

Now Ratkin society, at its most basic, can be seen in the Rat Pack. Both rats and humans are social creatures, so it's no big surprise that we're social



creatures too; beyond the practical need to hang out with others we can at least partly trust, we also just need to have social contact of one sort or another. We live a life apart from our parent races. Often, the only folks who truly understand us are other Ratkin.

This isn't to say that there aren't Ratkin loners out there. I traveled alone for quite a while, which is fairly common for Knife Skulkers, and many Tunnel Runners prefer to work alone when doing certain jobs, but they're by and large the minority. Most of us claim membership in a Rat Pack.

Rat Packs are always temporary, though not always short-lived; a typical Ratkin may go through seven or eight Rat Packs in a given year, but some go through the same number over their entire life. The members of a pack agree on a list of goals, mostly short-term, and then one of them performs the *Rite of Dedication*. As soon as it's completed, *voila*, you've got a Rat Pack, for a while, at least. Soon as the goals are completed, or the Ratkin that make up the pack get bored and decide it's time to leave the fold, the Rat Pack folds and maybe a new one forms. Or maybe not. Hard to say with creatures of chaos.

Just like a Garou pack, a Rat Pack has a Totem affiliation. Of course, we're Mama Rat's children, so we owe our loyalty to her first, but there are plenty of Totems out there who love to have Ratkin working for them, even on a temporary basis. The most common Totem spirits you'll find a Rat Pack affiliated with are Rat, City Father or Mother, and Grandfather Thunder. The reasons should be pretty obvious.

A typical Rat Pack consists of five different Aspects: one Tunnel Runner, one Shadow Seer, one Knife Skulker, one Warrior and one Freak. At least, this is the tradition; this gives a pack a good range of skills to make them work together effectively. Still, I know of one pack consisting of two Warriors and three Twitchers that passed through here a while back. Ratkin are experts at breaking the mold, even if the mold happens to be our own.

Another thing that Rat Packs need to function properly is the Runt or Straggler. You know the joke about the two guys being chased by the bear, and one of them stops to tie his shoe? The other one asks him what the hell he's doing, saying he'll never outrun the bear if he wastes time, and the guy says, "I don't gotta outrun the bear, I just gotta outrun you." Well, that's why Rat Packs need a Straggler — Ratkin may not mind not finishing first, but we hate finishing last with a passion, so every pack needs a whipping boy to blame stuff on.

Of course, not all runts remain runts forever. Actually, the runt tends to change pretty often. It's the runt's job to continually test the other Ratkin of the pack, until he exploits another pack member's weaknesses or failures and beats him at something important. Then the runt's victim becomes the new runt, and the cycle goes on. It helps keep us on our toes and stay in top fighting form. The position of Runt is so important that some Rat Packs don't even bother establishing a leader. These packs just make do with everyone else being equally superior to the runt.



Packs can be divided into two big stereotypes, called high packs and low packs, also called Retinues and Gangs, respectively. See, the packs that like to hang out around Infestations are pretty different than the packs that claim a rural Crash Space and a patch of grass. The Ratkin who make up Gangs are called Ramblers, and the Ratkin who form Retinues are given the pretentious title of Courtiers. Just makes sense that they'd do things and see things differently, too, right?

Why the difference, besides the choice of turf? One is in the way they tend to look at the Veil. Ramblers, for their part, don't really give more than, say, half a damn about the Veil. They just love creating chaos, and as far as consequences go, they couldn't really care less. Courtiers, on the other hand, have a nest full of relatives to look out for. Investigations are bad for business, so they're pretty fanatic about maintaining the Veil.

Also, traditionally only certain Aspects are allowed to perform certain rites. Unsurprisingly, Ramblers don't care much about tradition, and yet tradition is the bread and butter of Courtiers. Also, Ramblers attend chaotic Twitcher revels, while Courtiers prefer the moots you can find occasionally at infestations.

I guess when you get down to it, most of their differences stem from their perceptions of themselves. Ramblers define themselves as the bastions of true chaos and mayhem, while Courtiers are more concerned with sacred breeding grounds and protection of our kind's young. Of course, most packs fall somewhere in between. Courtiers who like to sow chaos and Ramblers who help out with the protection of Nests ain't all that uncommon, but pretty much all packs have a strong leaning one way or the other. We're not really a "happy medium" kind of race.

The Rat God

Before going on, I should point out one such lack of a happy medium, and that's how we envision the Rat Incarna. The vast majority of us call her Rat, Mama Rat or the Rat Goddess. She's the mother of our race, and she helped us survive when even Gaia abandoned us. Naturally, we revere her above all other spirits; you may not understand her all the time, since she can be a little nuts now and then, but know that she's got your best interests in mind.

There are some Ratkin in the world who have a, shall we say, heretical view of She Who Unleashed the Birthing Plague on the World, most of whom are among the Twitchers of North American Plague, called the Rat Race. They've got very strange ideas about what Mama Rat wants to do with the world, and about how to help the Wyld. And worst of all, they just can't accept the idea that we serve a Goddess; they call her the Rat God, and insist that she's actually male. Arguments about this can get pretty heated, so watch yourself when you're around one of these losers, and don't buy into the crap they'll try to feed you.



Consorts

Sometimes, a Ratkin decides to travel with a pack of non-Ratkin for a time. It's a lot more common than a lot of our crusty old Elders would be willing to admit. Some hang out with Nosferatu vampires. Others form alliances with other Fera and even Garou on occasion. Even alliances with ghosts and fairies ain't unheard of, though I can't imagine why any self-respecting Ratkin would want to team up with a freaking pixie. I've done most of the above at one point or another during my career. This happens for all sorts of reasons, most commonly by the reasons of contract or convenience. Ratkin who travel with non-Ratkin are called consorts.

Even in these groups, we Ratkin need to find a Straggler. You may think it's silly, but it's instinct. You'll do it yourself, if you ever find yourself becoming a consort. Mind you, other creatures don't often understand this, or even try to, and sometimes get angry when you start treating them like crap. Some folk just ain't got any respect for other cultures.

Here's a good spot to have a word or three about our Oriental cousins, the Nezumi. They deal with a very different kind of Garou in the Far East, at least according to a Nezumi cousin I met a few years ago. Because of this different breed of wolf changer, the Nezumi don't hold much grudge against the wuffies, at least not like we do here. Nezumi tend to be a lot more willing to ally themselves with other supernaturals than most western Ratkin are.

No matter the reasons, just like with our own packs, alliances with other supernaturals are always temporary. It's possible to become friends with another non-Ratkin supernatural — extremely difficult, but still possible. Sooner or later, though, cohorts part ways with their allies, sometimes even on good terms. We've got the Wyld in our blood, kid, and it keeps us from tying ourselves down to any one place or any one group for too long, so don't expect any long-lasting interracial love affairs. We're more of a wham-bam-thank'ee-ma'am type.

Nests

Okay, by now you're probably starting to get the picture that we're all at least a little bit off-kilter, even the most stable ones. Well, yeah, we are; it comes with the territory, being so close to the Wyld and the insight that closeness provides. But can you really blame us with the state of the world today?

See, rats in the wild don't handle stress too great. A normal rat's pretty peaceful and shy, maybe even sweet. A stressed-out rat'll freak out, become violent, or possibly even turn on his own if it's bad enough, and a typical Ratkin's life is more stressful than any furball's. We've got so much work to do and so many enemies out for our heads. It gets hard to keep your wits about you sometimes.

Thank Mama Rat we've got our Nests. A Nest is a spiritual place, the only place where the madness that we have to suffer from can be contained, and



where the meaning of the voices we'll sometimes hear can be truly understood. Who needs drugs, when a Rapture in a nice nest is more potent and enlightening than any hallucinogen could ever be?

Nests come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and each has its own function. A really big city might have up to a couple hundred or, in the biggest cities, a thousand nests in it, with Tunnel Runners providing communication, so that they can keep from stepping on each others' toes. They also offer us rest and healing. Honestly, we wouldn't be able to fight the good fight without them, even without the mystic importance crap that most Shadow Seers will go on about. Every soldier needs a place to retreat to, a place to regroup at and feel at least a little safe in. For us, those are Nests. Obviously, we're serious about our space and about defending it.

But maybe the most important function of Nests ain't really the mystic crap, and it ain't the military applications. It's more related to the Wild Thang. Nests are first and foremost breeding grounds. And breeding — which I'll tell you about later, so settle down, cowboy — is really important to us.

Rat, and therefore Ratkin, territory occasionally touches or even overlaps with human territory. It happens occasionally that the humans lay claim to a piece of property that we really want for whatever reason. When this happens, the leaders of the colony have tried-and-true methods of driving the humans out, using both Ratkin subordinates and our little furry cousins. Some Ratkin make games of it, seeing who can come up with the most creative way to scare or frustrate the humans into leaving and never coming back. Prizes for such contests vary, but it's almost always worth a bit of Obligation or Cunning Renown.

The Crash Space

Crash Space is what we call the smallest Nests, the ones with only one or two packs. Another term for them is "midden," but usually only the high muckety-mucks of our kind call them that, and generally they don't hang around in such places. The smallest nests have maybe one or two packs, and it's up to the pack leaders to say what's what for the Nest. This is the only type of Nest you're gonna find away from the city, but then maybe that's for the best. When you're traveling, you don't wanna have to deal with all the politics of the larger city nests. Homids like you and me are a lot more common at these places than in the larger ones.

The Infestation

We call the larger Nests barrows or, when they get really, really big, infestations. This place we're in, for example, is an infestation.

At Crash Space, politics might be really minor or even nonexistent. But the bigger the nest, the more politics you have to deal with, and lemme tell you, kid, Ratkin politics can get really cutthroat. Democracy is for wimps.



We've been forced into cunning ruthlessness in order to survive and do our job, so we look for the same Traits in our leaders.

Generally, rodents run Infestations, even the ones that keep an eye out for the human Kinfolk who live nearby. The Ratkin living in places like these don't really trust anything that's touched humanity too much, whether it be a rodens who just happens to like living on the streets, a metis who likes to help out the homeless, or a Ratkin who was born as a homid. It doesn't matter what the reason is — they're just plain paranoid, so it's pretty rare for homids like us to get much power in a large Nest. Hell, even entering most colonies in Homid form is considered a major insult.

Elders

We got our leaders, just like the other Changers do. In each colony, a Ratkin can become an "elder" of his particular aspect, like a Knife Skulker "elder," for example. Anyone who's at least Rank 3 can try to get this position, and any one of these elders is eligible to become the ruler of a colony. They just step up and say, "Hey, I'm the boss, so you've all gotta listen to me." If any of the other elders disagree, they say so, and they have to go test to see who's got the bigger dick and who's in charge. There's a catch, though — anybody who declares himself chief gets the title for a day and no more. The very next day, your claim to rulership is over, and anyone can claim leadership once again.

It's chaotic at times, sure, but so are we.

In larger colonies, some other "elder" positions may pop up occasionally, besides the Aspect positions. These are:

Rat Mother: We take breeding very seriously, like I said, so we take the raising of our young just as seriously. The Rat Mother's in charge of the training and safety of our children, and generally, we give her the most respect of all the elders and pretty often the most say as well. You don't disrespect your momma, understand, kid? Usually there are several Ratkin who help out in raising the kids, but it's most often the momma rat who's had the most kids herself who holds this position. Needless to say, that usually means female rodens — homids just can't get the numbers that rodens can.

Scout: This guy, usually a Tunnel Runner, commands the Rat Packs that patrol the outskirts of a Nest. Should ever danger rear its ugly head, it's up to the bold Scout to discover it, turn tail, and run back to the colony to let us know before it gets too close for comfort. Sometimes a scout will organize a raid into the human world and steal stuff that a Nest needs, food or equipment or something along those lines. As long as he's keeping busy.

Warlord: We're the Army of the Apocalypse, soldiers for the Wyld, and protectors of Rat's cause, right? Well, every army needs its commanders. Naturally, it's a Warrior (though rarely another Aspect) filling this position who takes up the role of general for a colony. She organizes the military



defense of the Nest, and if we choose not to turn our tail to a threat, it's up to the Warlord to drop the hammer and wipe it out.

Mystic: The Mystic is a pretty funky type, generally the weirdest Shadow Seer around, but not always. Mystics are in charge of maintaining the sacred sites and energies of a colony, making sure it's in good shape, all the spirits are happy and all that crap. Most nests don't need one of their own, they just borrow their neighbor's Mystic when they needs some spiritual maintenance. Think of them as the plumbers of your spiritual pipework, always making sure that there's never any bad spiritual mojo that's gonna start overflowing when somebody decides to flush.

So, what do you do when you want a position of elder but somebody else has the only one you're eligible for? Or if you *do* hold one of these positions and you want to become Ruler for a day, but somebody disagrees with your intention? Well, then you've gotta go through a (drum roll, please) Test of Dominance.

Sounds important, don't it?

Well, I guess it is, if you're into political power and stuff. Most Ratkin can get through their entire lives just doing their own thing adding to the war effort, but I guess some need more than that. Which Test of Dominance you're gonna go through depends on which position you're looking for.

Rat Mothers and Knife Skulkers use the infamous staredown as their test. Pretty simple, really — you give each other a dirty look until one looks away. Whoever looks away first loses. The loser also loses a bit of Obligation Renown for failing the attempt.

Scouts and Tunnel Runners use the Test of Wits. The rest of the Tunnel Runners or Scouts need to agree on the nature of the Test for it to be considered official, but always involves quick thinking. A loss of Cunning Renown is the penalty for the loser.

Warriors and the Warlord are challenged via a Test of Single Combat. This is always non-lethal combat, since it just doesn't make any sense to kill off a valuable warrior without a really good reason. Think of your favorite punch-em-up video game and that's basically what you see when one of these happens. Your Infamy suffers for losing one of these Tests.

It's a Test of Wisdom to best the Mystic or the Shadow Seer. This involves tests of secret lore, gamecraft and other such contests. Once again, Cunning Renown is lost by the loser of this Test.

The Rat Kings

This all probably sounds pretty chaotic and disorganized, right? Right. That's because it is chaotic and disorganized; most of the time, that's how we prefer it. Most of the time, we manage best in those kinds of situations. Most of the time.



Eventually, though, a colony gets too big to manage with that kind of political bullshit going on all the time, with leaders changing every single freaking day. Eventually, the Ratkin demand another type of political bullshit, the type that you get from a stable leader. When a colony gets this big, it organizes itself and becomes a Tribe, and the ruler of such a colony is called a Rat King.

Of course, it takes more than just the regular challenge for dominance that we use to decide the daily leader. Rat Kings are a bit more important than that. They still have to claim that dominance, sure, but what's more is that every last one of the living Elder positions filled within the colony have to stand behind the Rat King and give him their support. This is sometimes pretty hard to manage.

Notice how I said *living* Elders? It's not that unheard of for a Rat who would be King to kill off the Elders who disagree with his right to rule. If he's strong enough to pull it off, sooner or later even the elders who don't want to see him in such a position will support him, if only to keep their own hides intact.

It's a big hullabaloo when a Rat King ascends. He gets a Shadow Seer to perform this rite, and then there's this vision about the Rat King's greatness. The new King will set the borders of his little kingdom, sending out Tunnel Runners to mark its edges with sigils. A Rat King holds the title for life; the only way to depose a Rat King is for him to die, whether naturally or with a little help from his "friends."


Needless to say, almost all Rat Kings are rodents. Metis and homid Rat Kings are rare to the extreme.

Life in a Tribe

The Tribe of a Rat King is... different, to say the least. Most are ruthless and very protective of their positions. I wouldn't call them all tyrannical dictators, but that's only because I'm afraid one might be listening. Still, the whole set-up seems to work, for the most part.

If I had to chose a single word to describe a Tribe, that'd have to be huge. Massive colonies teeming with Ratkin and Kinfolk, sometimes practically to the point of overflowing. Every social species has its limit, a point where it reaches critical mass and threatens to collapse in on itself to restore a more liveable balance. Tribes teeter awfully close to this edge, but somehow the Rat Kings manage to keep them from going over. Sometimes the only way to do this is for the Rat King to send a couple packs away to establish a new Nest somewhere else, and in this way Ratkin society grows.

Tribes tend to be territorial; they'll keep a very close watch on anything that passes near or especially through their territory, and if they don't like the trespasser, it ain't too pretty what happens. The sewer tunnels that they claim as their own act as superhighways for our Kinfolk and Ratkin in rodents form, making communication between Nests easy.



Country mice never come close to Tribal Nests. Just not their cup of tea, I guess, and I can't say I really blame them. They're still chicken, though.

Sign of the Times

Not so long ago, kid, we were a rare breed of changer. A typical Ratkin could go through most of his life without knowing more than, say, a handful of other Ratkin in the world. As you can probably tell, things ain't like that anymore. The Bards' curse is being fulfilled as the Nine Great Plagues of our kind continue to grow and ravage the world; not the type of Plagues anyone was really expecting, mind you, but we're not gonna complain. We'll go with whatever works.

Of course, even we didn't start realizing just how many of us there are out there until recently. As the humans make travel and communication easier, we follow suit. The Seers say that this population boom of ours, along with the fact that we're re-establishing age-old ties with each other across countries and even continents, is a sign of the Final Days. I dunno if this is exactly true, but regardless this is the reason we've been stepping all our plans into high gear. When the Apocalypse finally does arrive, we wanna be ready for it. Other changers, especially the Garou, speak of the Apocalypse in fearful, hushed tones. They're afraid of what the Apocalypse means to all life, both on the World and the realms beyond.

Wimps. I say, bring it on.

Ratkin Moots and Revels

Every type of Fera that I've ever come across has some special way of gathering together for socialization and the exchange of information, from the moots of the Garou to the parliaments of the Corax to the degenerate orgies of the Bastet. We're really no different; we've got our moots and our revels. Both serve pretty much the same function for us, at their most basic levels. They just serve them in different ways.

Most of us, especially those Ratkin Courtiers who belong to a Retinue, prefer our Grand Moots to any Revel. A Grand Moot is a gathering of all the Nests in an entire city, and often has at least a few visitors from out of town. Of course, we all realize that gathering together in big numbers ain't such a good idea, since that's part of the reason we were nearly wiped out during the War of Rage. Because of this, nowadays we've learned to divide ourselves into smaller groups, spaced out from one another, called cells. The Tunnel Runners in attendance are in charge of carrying messages back and forth between cells, so that every cell still has a pretty good idea of what's going on even when they're pretty far away from the main action. It's a good thing that the mavericks are good at what they do, too, otherwise the messages might get garbled up in transit, y'know what I mean?



The Plagues

Just in case you ever run into a card-carrying member of one of the Plagues, or Rat forbid, actually wanna join for some reason, I figure I should probably give you a rundown of each of the nine and what you can expect from them.

First, there's the bozos who call themselves the **Rat Race** who tend to hang around North America. They're a bunch of sacrilegious Ratkin, mostly Twitchers, who see Mama Rat as Papa Rat. Now, I ain't exactly the most politically correct fellow you're gonna meet, but even I say credit where it's due — just because you don't like the idea that you work for a woman don't mean it ain't so. Anyhow, they're pretty violent and are all into the end of the world, making bomb shelters in their backyards and stockpiling weapons and that sorta thing. They're anarchists to the core, but about the best they can manage is to blow up your occasional fast food joint.

The **Nezumi** of Japan, on the other hand, they're more like my kinda rat. They're a bunch of mystic ninja assassins or something like that, and they go around killing for the highest bidder. They also didn't suffer from any War of Rage, so they still work to keep humans in check, but I guess they ain't as good at that as they are at assassinations. I mean, have you looked at Japan lately? Talk about a stranglehold of the Weaver....

But at least the **Nezumi** got more style than the **Thuggees** of Eastern Asia, though they'd beg to differ. They're just as vicious and mean-tempered as the Twitchers of the Rat Race, but they got the organization of the **Nezumi**. Rumors say that nowadays they're led by a mysterious Knife Skulker mastermind who coordinates all their actions, but only a few of his underlings are allowed to have any contact with him; anyone else who's ever met him died before they could tell the tale. 'Course, other rumors say he don't actually exist; the Thuggees simply pretend he does to throw off outsiders. Who knows? As long as they keep outta my way, they can organize themselves any way they want.

If you're into politics, you might wanna consider joining up with the **Gamine**, who reside in and around Europe. They're all about intrigue and espionage, and you never know when a supposed ally is gonna turn out to stab you in the back for a little political consideration. Their base of operations lies underneath Paris, and they can be pretty ruthless taunters from what I hear.

The **Horde**, though, they sometimes put the Gamine to shame. They're pretty cutthroat, and like their politics before breakfast. In



fact, for some reason they wanna gain political control over Russia, maybe even all of Eurasia. I guess I can kinda see some use to that if they can pull it off, but if they get too ambitious it's only a matter of time before they clash with the Gamine. That, I think, would be bad.

If you're into tall tales, swordfighting and temperatures no living creature was meant to survive in, try seeking out the Antarctic Ratkin, the Munchmausen who call themselves **De La Poer's Disciples**. Of course, you probably won't be too welcome there unless you're also a Munchmausen, but if you can find a way to get past that, I hear they hold great parties. Beyond that, I can't see much use for that many Munchmausen in the same place, and especially in that place. Maybe they know something the rest of us don't.

The **Borrhachon Wererats** hang around South America, and work with the homeless and the poor to carve out a vast empire of destitutes. Sounds silly, but it's more effective than you'd think. I tend to get along with Ratkin from this Plague, since both of us wanna overthrow humanity instead of wipe it out. I don't get along with them enough to make me wanna join up, though.

The **Ratkin Ronin** are only technically a Plague; many probably don't see themselves as members of any group, but the rest of us group these outcasts together for convenience's sake. They live on the high seas as pillaging pirates, only without all the "yo-ho-hos."

Finally comes the **Rattus Typhus**. A bunch of Plague Lords got together one day and figured that while they were scary bastards alone, if they banded together they'd be downright terrifying. And know what? They were right. They hang around greater Africa, where there's always lots of disease for them to play with.

A moot's a great place to be. I mean, I'm not too big on the whole colony life thing, but I try to make a point of attending if the local colony is having a moot. Besides being our most common way of earning Renown, it's also just plain fun. With all the Ratkin in attendance, it looks kinda like a rodent freaker's ball. The air smells like it's practically electrified, and you get the feeling like something really big's gonna happen at any moment; that's the Wyld energies getting stronger from such a number of Wyld creatures being in close proximity of one another. Mind you, we don't really hold our moots for spiritual energy or anything, like the Garou do; we hold ours more for information exchange, plotting and planning than anything else.

If you live in a larger city, you might have the occasional opportunity to attend an Aspect moot, too. These events are even more useful than Grand



Moots, but they're also less exciting. Basically, an Aspect moot is just what it sounds like — a moot where all the members of a certain Aspect in a given city get together to share information, abilities, even Gifts if you know who and how to ask. Of course, each Aspect tailors their moots to suit their own tastes. Shadow Seer moots are usually held the in Penumbra, often in the darkest, most secluded spot they can find, while Engineer moots lean more toward out of the way junkyards or in laboratories after-hours.

Revels are a whole different kettle of fish entirely. I tend to stay away from these things, most of the time. They're popular among the more violent and anarchistic Ratkin rambler and gangs. The Ratkin hosting the Revel starts by blowing something up or burning something down, just as a way to get the chaotic energies to start flowing, and then everyone gets together and starts bragging and beating on each other. Of course, the combat is always non-lethal, and usually held in a ritualistic manner. Twitchers love these things, and get most of their Renown this way.

Twitchers hold their own Revels sometimes, which makes an ordinary Revel seem as tame as a tea party. By tradition, a Twitcher Revel just ain't a full-fledged, bona fide Revel unless there's at least 13 attendees, and Twitchers tend to send out the invites starting with the most dangerous Ratkin in the area they can think of, and then working their way down the list. Everyone in attendance tries to create as much chaotic energy as possible by any means, while those who seek Renown go around getting into bragging contests about what mayhem they've committed lately; the bigger the boom, the more the Renown. The structure is basically the same thing as a regular Revel, only even more out of hand. I always gnash my teeth in anxiety when I know a Twitcher Revel's going on; even though Twitchers tend to hold their Revels in out of the way places for our benefit; they still ain't got much regard for the Veil, so it's not uncommon for the Veil to be torn up a bit during one of these things. I hate cleaning up the mess that's left over, and I hate dispensing justice against the guilty parties even more — even Twitchers are still Ratkin.

One of the most unconventional things about a Twitcher Revel is the types of creatures that show up. Twitchers will sometimes invite the rebels and rabble-rousers of other supernaturals to attend, so it's not unheard of to find a Brujah vampire, or a Renegade ghost possessing somebody partying alongside the Ratkin. Basically, anybody who can help keep the chaos flowing is likely to find an invitation pinned to his door.

The Birds and the Bees

Now, let me take a few moments to talk about one of the more agreeable aspects to being a Ratkin. See, we take the propagation of our species very, very seriously. In fact, we treat it as more than just a practical necessity that also happens to be an enjoyable pastime. To us, mating is a sacred duty, and all of us who've proven ourselves are required to do our duty.



If you prove yourself as one of the true survivors of the race, you gain Renown and Rank while you do the Rat Goddess' work, and you're expected to pass on your genes to the next generation of Ratkin. Females are able to turn away anyone they please, so the best available mates tend to choose the most Renowned males available. This duty to mate ain't something that can be easily avoided, especially after you reach the rank of Tava. As you climb the ranks, you'll receive more and more pressure to breed, until you reach the point where the elders finally just order you to choose a mate and do the nasty. That's what happened with me; I've had eight kids so far; seven little rats, one human, and no metis... yet.

The more kids you've had, the more respect you get, which is doubly true for our females. We revere our mothers as givers of life and the protectors of our youth. And if any of your kids manage to survive the Birthing Plague, that's even more respect sent your way. Needless to say, since rats are a lot more prolific than humans are, it's a lot easier to earn respect by having rodent kids than by going the two-legged route. Unlike other Fera, there ain't really any shame held against the parents of a metis. As long as you've got the Renown and your partner consents, you're welcome to breed with whoever you damn well please. Metis just have less of a chance of surviving the Plague, is all.

Of course, being baby machines just ain't enough for some of our females. The breeding instinct is strong in all of us, but our women are strong, too; sometimes a young Ratkin female decides that she wants more out of life, so she'll join a pack and leave the nest, or even journey alone in search of adventure and infamy. Usually, a Ratkin who chooses this path ritually scars or tattoos herself; this lets would-be suitors know that she ain't available, so they shouldn't go wasting their time with the flowers and candy. These Ratkin also get the cold shoulder from our Rat Mothers — they feel that these youngsters are neglecting their duty to the Rat Goddess by denying the instinct to propagate.

A Ratkin lives a dangerous life; most of us do our best to keep each other alive when possible, but we ain't gonna go around coddling anyone, so the mortality rate for less experienced, younger Ratkin is pretty high. Besides all the other things, supernatural and not, who want us dead, it happens that we'll kill each other off occasionally. Two Ratkin may end up hating each other without an Elder or a Knife Skulker around to do any mediation. Worse, it may be the elders or the Knife Skulkers who hate each other enough to want their own blood dead; just go ahead and try to mediate that, see how far you get. Our Rat Kings can only be deposed through death, and frequently kill in order to get into their position, or to keep it safe; the internal wars of succession a Nest will sometimes go through can be downright bloody. And, of course, it's nothing for us Knife Skulkers to think about killing a Traitor to our kind, as long as we're sanctioned for enforcing high justice. Some of us even get off on that sort of thing.



Obviously it's a good thing that we're so prolific; we can repopulate a Nest after a disaster really quickly if we want to. The population of any Nest is always rising and falling due to all sorts of factors.

Don't let all this mislead you, though. Just because it's our sacred duty to breed doesn't mean that we don't enjoy it, too. In fact, I'm a bit of a ladies' rat, believe it or not. One of my favorite pick-up lines has always been pointing out how male rats have disproportionately large genitalia and how male Ratkin take after them in that regard.

Hey, it could work, eventually. You never know.

The Litany of Survival

You've probably gotten the idea that we're a pretty wild, chaotic bunch, right? (And if you haven't, what the hell have you been listening to all this time?!) Well, we are, and we like it that way. But that don't mean that just anything goes. Every Fera has their own set of rules and guidelines that they use to decide what's right and wrong, and each set of rules is different, depending on both what that Breed's purpose was in the beginning and how badly they've screwed it up since then. Now, we Ratkin let a lot of stuff go most of the time, simply because it's in our nature to get all freaky every once in a while. But we've still got lines drawn, and when you cross those lines, our justice is harsh. Screw up bad enough, and you won't be given a second chance.

So if you're looking to survive for more than a few weeks or, Mama forbid, you wanna become a Knife Skulker like me, you're gonna have to learn the rules. Just keep in mind, they're there because they work.

The Creed of Obligation

I shall preserve the Veil, which ensures our survival.

The first rule of Fight Club is: you don't talk about Fight Club. Sounds easy enough, right? Well, it should be. Most of the other parts of our Litany of Survival are just guidelines, ways of behaving that will help you rise in ranks faster and keep you out of trouble from the elders. This one's not like that; most of us enforce this as law. Don't depend on the Delirium to cover your tracks — a lot of our enemies, like Garou, vampires and the like, pay close attention to how the humans act. This means that while you might fool the sheep, that don't mean the sheepdog ain't on to you. Rat gave you all sorts of gifts, the best of which is your brain-box. So use it, be smart, and don't get caught with your proverbial pants down.

I will build, steal and suborn to strengthen my breeding grounds.

Some of our Nests are pretty destitute, and even the ones that ain't can always use at least a little improvement here and there. We're preparing for the real War to end all Wars, so we can't go around worrying about vague concepts like ownership or property boundaries. If you can create or steal



anything to strengthen a Nest, from a powerful Garou fetish to a bit of food from the local supermarket, do it. It's your duty.

I shall nurture, instruct and aid the young.

You know that cliché humans like to repeat about the children being their future? Well, we actually believe that here. In the War of the Apocalypse, every single soldier counts, and it's up to Ratkin like me and, sooner or later, you to make sure our youth are ready for that conflict. We're in this to win, so that means no dicking around when it comes to the kids.

I will trust my own kind before I trust outsiders.

We got lots of enemies out there, kid, some of whom are pretty good at making themselves look like friends when it suits them. But regardless of how outsiders may deal with you, your own kind will be there for you. We're family, and while we've got more than our share of familial spats, some of which are even deadly, blood's still thicker than water. Sometimes, a Ratkin will betray another Ratkin — it's sad, but it happens. When it does, though, it's out of necessity — if you've gotta betray somebody, make it a human or some non-Ratkin supernatural. If you can't do that, make sure you've got a damn good reason.

When someone is responsible for injustice, I will make sure someone pays.

Justice isn't silly laws or loopholes. Justice is all about proper retribution. We Ratkin really got screwed over back in the day — hell, sometimes we still do when we don't keep our guard up. It's been five thousand years, and we're still pretty bitter about the whole thing. Whenever we see an injustice committed, it brings back a lot of old memories, especially for Knife Skulkers. It's strongly suggested that when you see something like this take place, become an instrument of justice. If nothing else, it's a constructive way to vent your anger.

The Creed of Infamy

I will defend our breeding grounds against all threats, physical and spiritual.

We take pains to keep our Nests safe. We need them more than the other shapeshifters need their own sacred places. So when something threatens one of our Nests, we fight for keeps. Every time we lose a Nest, the Wyld loses more ground, and our job in the Final Days gets just a little bit harder. It's hard enough as it is, so don't screw up on this one.

I shall seek revenge against those who prey upon my kind.

We get lots of freedom, at least if we want it; you can get away with all sorts of crap if you just stay away from the bigger colonies. But you're Ratkin first, and anything else second. Just in case it ain't sunk in yet, kid, I'll try this again: *we've got enemies!* Lots of them. In fact, some of them even think that they can get away with cheating or killing us. It's up to every Ratkin to prove the ones that think this wrong, or else they might give others ideas.



I must shred the tentacles of the Wyrn whenever they constrict us.

We don't fight the Wyrn like the Garou do. A lot of folks think that means we don't fight the Wyrn at all, but that just ain't so. We do fight it, but we fight defensively, fighting to stay alive when it threatens us instead of seeking it out to try and kill it. After all, the Wyrn is gonna bring the Apocalypse, and we want that, so it just don't make any sort of sense to go and kill it off before it's served its purpose. The Wyrn will never be our ally, because it's still a threat to our long-term survival, but it also ain't our number one enemy. Just use your discretion when you encounter the Wyrn, and make doubly sure that you don't let it corrupt you.

I must sever the Weaver's webs wherever they calcify chaos.

The Weaver is our true enemy. We're agents of the Wyld, so we've got to be constantly fighting the Weaver back, trying to win back ground and take the fight to the Weaver's home in the cities. It's a tough fight, and alone we can't do much, but you've got a lot of brothers and sisters in this extended Ratkin family. When the time is right, we'll bring the whole of human society, this mockery that the Weaver's built, crashing down. Until then, do your part.

Creed of Cunning

I will survive so that I may breed.

So, about this breeding thing... like I said, we take it seriously. One of the most valuable roles any Ratkin can have is as a parent, working to keep our forces strong and numerous. If you go and get yourself killed, that means you obviously ain't gonna have any more kids, and that doesn't do us as a race any good. Survive, propagate, and grow strong enough to make a difference in the Final Conflict.

I must respect strength and exploit weakness.

This may sound a bit too Darwin for your tastes, but it's a fact that the weak die so that the strong may live. The sooner you accept that, the easier a time you'll have with being one of us. We need soldiers, but only if they're strong enough to do their part — a weak soldier is nothing but a liability to his fellows. That's why we're so concerned with choosing a Straggler for our packs. If somebody has to die, it's gonna be the weak one, the one who can't pull his own weight. Anything else is just too much of a waste.

I shall grow stronger through conflict.

Conflict breeds strength. You'll never really improve yourself without a little adversity — a hot fire under the tail is one of the great motivators of the history of any race. Besides that, without conflict, how will we know whether you're strong or weak? You need to prove yourself before you get the breeding privileges that our esteemed get.

I will learn from the mysteries of the spirit world.

We spent thousands of years in the spirit world, and it's there that we found the source of much of our maddening wisdom. The Umbra is a vast place with all sorts of little secrets and useful tools hidden away in the strangest of locations. Every Ratkin I know enjoys spending time there, which is good,



because essentially it's our duty to at least try to learn from the Umbra. Knowledge is just another form of strength, after all.

I will revel in the visions the spirits grant me.

Many of us are scared of the Rapture, but in truth it's the Rapture that shows us how things are and what we have to do most clearly. Don't take it for granted, and don't ignore it. Listen to it carefully. Generally, the spirits tend to know what they're talking about.

The Rogue's Gallery

We ain't alone in this world. There's a whole host of races out there that hid from you back when you were just another human. Now that you're Ratkin, though, you've gotta learn a bit about the kinds of folk you're gonna be running into as you go about doing the Rat Goddess' work. Forewarned is forearmed, and all that jazz.

Ananasi

The werespiders are weird. I can't figure them out. It's not that we never run into them; in fact, some of them deal with us regularly. It's just that they can't seem to choose which side they're on. You'd think they'd follow the Weaver, and many of them do. But a lot of them follow the Wymr instead, and the majority of them seem to follow the Wyld. I guess I just wish they'd make up their minds. I just can't function socially without a nice, comfortable stereotype to guide my way.

Bastet

I hate these guys. The wercats, they're almost worse than the wolves. Most of them are nothing more than stuck-up snobs, and territorial ones at that — they love laying personal claim to parts of the Umbra, whether or not anyone else claimed it first. And if they're anything more than these little personality foibles, it's bloodthirsty. When a Bastet looks at you, they'll always get this hungry look in their eyes....

I met one Bastet that wasn't quite as bad as the rest; at the very least, she and I were able to get along. But she was the exception that proves the rule. Don't trust them, and keep your distance.

Caged Folk

You just can't help but like these little furballs. The Caged Folk were once ordinary rodent Kinfolk, until some human scientists got their hands on them and started doing all these funky experiments on them. By the time the Caged Folk escaped, they were super-intelligent rats, easily as smart as any human and twice as cute. Now, they make some of our best allies, as well as our rarest.

I'm very protective of these little cousins, since I'm pretty sure that if the human race gets wiped out in the Apocalypse, these guys will end up being the replacement. They're convinced that the scientists that tortured them into full-blown sentience in the first place are still out there, looking for them.



Corax

The wereravens are nosy Traitors. Back during the War, they pretended to be the friends of all the persecuted Fera, when all the while they were really working for the Garou as scouts and spies. I think they realize that they made a mistake, but it's too little too late as far as I'm concerned.

Even today, they're still annoyingly nosy, always looking into things that should be left well enough alone, like Ratkin business. If one ever pisses you off, don't think twice about clipping his wings. And if you ever wanna piss off a Corax, call him a werecrow. They hate that.

Gurahl

I know I'm normally a cold-hearted, cynical son of a bitch, but I really feel for these guys. No, really. They got almost as raw a deal as we did. Maybe even worse, if you take into account the fact that we can repopulate our race a lot faster than they can. The werebears were healers, once upon a time, and I guess they were pretty peaceful despite their size and strength. Then the wolves got to them. Actually, I guess the wolves started killing them first, before any of us other Fera. That alone should tell you that they're all right folk.

Anyway, they might have been able to fix this world once, but of course the Garou screwed that up, so now it's too late for them to manage it. The few who are awake, though, they keep trying. Watching a Gurahl doing his work feels an awful lot like a study in futility, like someone trying to cure terminal cancer with a bit of gauze and some disinfectant. I'd help them out if I could, but unfortunately the few Gurahl I've met were all pretty naïve. When I tried to tell them about how much things suck, they got all offended and stuff — especially whenever I talked about Gaia abandoning us. I'm hoping that they'll come to their senses before the final battle arrives.

Kitsune

From what I understand, what the Nuwisha are to this part of the world, the Kitsune are to the Far East. They're, like, all fox-women or something. I once ran into this one Chinese gal in Los Angeles that I was told later was actually a Kitsune. All I knew at the time was that she had a hot tail. Heh. Talk to a Nezumi if you want the real scoop on them.

Mokolé

Big, pissed-off, shapechanging dinosaurs. Or dragons, depending on how you look at them. Either way, they're real dangerous mothers. We got no real quarrel with them, so the policy of the day should just be to keep our distance. Besides, these guys are big and mean, and I've got the feeling they might think of us in the general category of creatures that go "squeek" when they step on them, so it just makes a lot of sense to be kinda wary.



The tales say that they were once the “memory of Gaia.” If that’s true, they can probably remember all sorts of junk that’s out of reach for even our Blood Memory. Might be worth talking to one eventually, if you’re into that sort of thing. But again, just make sure you don’t get within stepping distance.

Nuwisha

I love these guys; they’re great at parties, even though they never bring any drinks. Coyote pranksters with a lovely sense of humor. There was this one Nuwisha I met and worked with for a while — he really understood the Wyld, almost as well as we do. We got along great, even blew up a Glass Walker Umbralnaught training facility thingie together. Be careful, though. They’re pranksters, and while no Nuwisha I’ve ever met has been dumb enough to try pranking me, I dunno how they’ll react to you if you ever meet one.

As a side note, I’ve got this theory that when a Nuwisha frenzies he runs around wantonly dropping anvils on people and stuff. I’ve never put it to the test, since I’ve never seen one frenzy, but maybe eventually I can find out. When I asked my Nuwisha friend about this, he just smiled at me all Buddhalike and said that he didn’t wanna give any trade secrets away. Wacky guys, those Nuwisha.

Rokea

The weresharks? They’re Greek to me. Look, the fact of the matter is I don’t understand them, and it’s rare for me to claim *not* to understand something. They prefer to swim in the sea, and we prefer to stay on, or beneath, the ground. Our paths just plain don’t cross very often. If you should ever meet one, though, you should be careful not to cut yourself. Considering their heritage, they might very well go into a feeding frenzy at the smell of blood or something. Best err on the side of the safety, right?

Black Furies

I heard once that they were all a bunch of pot-smoking lesbian feminists in army boots. That’s not quite right — some of them don’t smoke pot. Heh.

Seriously, I think the one thing that unites the Black Furies is that they’ve all got this huge chip on their shoulder, like they’ve got something to prove for all of womankind. They all take themselves way, way too seriously.

A few of them are motherly types, and those ones I can sort of respect, since they kinda remind me of our own Rat Mothers. But the rest, well, they’re great fun to tease. A “chick” remark here and there, a few blown kisses, a pat on the rump, and all of a sudden you’ve got a frenzying Garou grrl. Fun for the whole Rat Pack; just make sure you don’t bite off more than you can chew.

Bone Gnawers

Where we’re Rat’s children by blood, the Bone Gnawers are Rat’s children by adoption, and if there’s any single tribe of Garou that should



survive the Apocalypse and be spared from our vengeance, it's these guys. They've by far got the most redeeming features.

A lot of them don't really get it, though. Be warned, not all of them serve Rat. If you have to trust a Garou, trust a Bone Gnawer, but you should still be careful; a Garou is a Garou is a Garou, no matter how likeable they are. Turn your back on one, and he might just end up carrying your hide back to his Silver Fang alpha for a bit of quick Renown and a good meal.

Fianna

Drunken Irish fools. I'm convinced most of them were members of the junior IRA before their First Change, and most of them have these really thick accents, might as well be speaking a whole other language. They're prideful and violent, and I think the worst part is how difficult they are to poison. I dunno, I guess drinking all that foul swill they love so much ups their immune system or something.

Get of Fenris

Now, all Garou are bloodthirsty psycho bastards, but the Get of Fenris, they make most other Garou look like little huggable mascot pandas by way of comparison. Everything that's wrong in the Garou, that's a Get of Fenris. Honestly, I don't think they care what they're killing, as long as they're killing. Unfortunately, all that killing's made them pretty good at it. Never take on a Get of Fenris without backup — they know how to throw down, and they play for keeps.

Glass Walkers

At least some Garou have a few redeeming qualities that keep them from being *complete* wastes of flesh. Not so with the Glass Walkers. These Garou've sold their souls to the Weaver, and they get the most upset out of all of the tribes whenever we rip the Weaver's webs up. They're totally hopeless.

And as if that weren't bad enough, they try to spread the Weaver not just around here, but also in the Deep Umbra. That's right, a lot of them are Umbralnaughts, making these big Umbral starships to search, explore and calcify what they should leave alone. If you ever get a chance to take a Glass Walker down, take it — trust me, you'll be making the Rat Goddess pleased.

Red Talons

So very close, and yet, so far. The Red Talons *almost* get it. They *almost* understand what they have to do. They're *almost* worthy of existence. *Almost*.

Thing is, they miss a few key ingredients that would otherwise make them worthwhile beings. Sure, they love the Wyld and hate the Weaver and kill humans and all that jazz, but they still buy into all the lies the Garou Nation told them. They still follow their alphas and contribute to the problem. Oh, yeah, and they still hate us. So don't go thinking that just because they're close



to the truth you can reason with them. Like I said, that's what the Bone Gnawers are for. The Red Talons are some of the most vicious Garou you'll find.

Shadow Lords

I'm of a mixed mind on the Shadow wolves. On one hand, they're great for business, especially for Knife Skulkers. They're underhanded and sneaky, which I can respect, and you'd be surprised how many Shadow Lords have hired me to do a little spy work here, a little petty theft there, or even a bit of assassination — on other Garou. When they pay, they pay pretty good.

That's right, I said *when* they pay. Shadow Lords have this tendency to think of themselves as smarter than they really are, and because of this, a Shadow Lord who hires you might try and cheat you once you've done your part and he's got what he wants. When this happens, just take your knife and cut him a new smile, ear to ear. No sense in leaving a double-crossing Garou alive, after all, and I personally enjoy showing them just who the true masters of shadows are.

Silent Striders

I don't really understand these guys. They're just mysterious enough to make them interesting, and know enough to make it worthwhile to pick their brains. They're faster than they have a right to be, though, which makes it kinda hard to catch one to do said brain-picking. Sometimes our Tunnel Runners will travel with one for a while when they need to, since they've got a lot in common. Me, I'd never trust a Garou that could get out of dagger-range that fast.

One thing I really don't get about them is with the name Anubis. It seems to me like every other Strider out there is named Anubis. I'm thinking it must be a secret cult within the tribe that they don't tell outsiders about or something.

Silver Fangs

The Glass Walkers are the worst Garou. The Silver Fangs are the runners-up. They're stuck-up, prideful bastards and the self-proclaimed leaders of the Garou Nation. They hate being wrong, which makes them hate us with a passion. See, we're living proof of one of their biggest mistakes, so they'd just as soon have us all disappear in as bloody a way as possible than have us around to remind them of a past they'd like to forget. And what makes matters worse is that they're all inbred and insane. I've yet to hear of a Silver Fang that had all his bananas in one bunch. Not that I've looked too hard, mind you. Most of the time when I encounter a Silver Fang, I'm in the process of trying to kill him.

And for all that, the other Garou *still* follow the Silver Fangs. Any wonder that the Nation's so screwed up?



Stargazers

Far-East mystic kung-fu fighters. They're not as cool as the Bone Gnawers, but they're a cut above the rest all the same. At least they were smart enough to leave the Garou Nation one and all. You've gotta respect that. A little, anyway. I just gotta wonder why it took them so long to come to their senses.

Our Nezumi cousins get along pretty well with the Stargazers, I'm told. I can believe it — I met a Stargazer once and actually had a civil conversation with him. I even played a game of Go with the guy. If you ever get into trouble with a Stargazer, ask him some profound Zen question about the nature of whatever, and he'll usually leave you alone long enough to escape while he contemplates.

Uktena

These guys are Native American Garou mystics. They know lots of crap about the Wyrms, and they're real proud of it, too. Sometimes they remind me of the Plague Lords — knowing a bit too much for anyone's good, you know?

Beyond that, all I can really say is that they're Garou, and therefore they're our enemies. And that's all you should need to know about them.

Wendigo

Like the Uktena, these guys are also Native American Garou, only they're warriors instead of mystics. They're also a bunch of pansy-assed whiners. They got all pissed off at how their human Kinfolk were treated by the Europeans during the colonization of North America, and they've been pissed off ever since.

Well, boo-freaking-hoo. The Fera lost the entire freakin' world to the Garou, and many of us were wiped out entirely. I don't see them acting too sympathetic to our plight. Do you? Every time I run into a Wendigo, I do my best to try and give him something to really cry about.

Black Spiral Dancers

Dangerous. Very, very dangerous. The Bee-Ess-Dees were once known as the White Howlers, until they tried to beat up the Wyrms on his own ground. Dumb move. Instead, they got corrupted and turned into the Wyrms' servants.

You might think that they're our enemies, and you'd be right. Mostly. Sometimes, it's just practical to work with these guys for a very (and I stress very) short time, long as you're extremely careful about it. They kill the other Garou, and that's good. But don't take this to mean that you should go looking to be their allies. They're still Garou, and the Wyrms is not our friend, and never will be. If you're in any doubt, get away or kill them. We can't have Spiral-dancing Ratkin in our midst.



Dampires

Well, I'm of a mixed mind about these guys, too. On one side, they're great. They pay really well for our services, the muckety-mucks are really cute when they figure out what you are and get all in a tizzy over it, and we tend to get along pretty well with the clan they call Nosferatu, being fellow outcasts. And if you ever start feeling like you're going over the edge, talk to one of the Malkoviches or whatever they call themselves. Those guys are so crazy that compared to them, we're just a little eccentric.

The biggest downside is they're creatures of the Weaver. They help perpetuate the Lie. Many of them, especially the older ones, hate us. And if you're not careful, they might even try to turn you into one of them. They ain't our number-one enemy, but in general, despite their good points, they ain't our friends neither. Be careful when you're dealing with them, and if they try to cross you, don't think twice about separating their head from their body and leaving them out in yard for a tan. The dead may be able to "survive" a lot, but the old beheading-sunbath deal is a classic; it ain't failed me yet.

Mages

These guys have pretty funky perceptions of reality. See, each of them sees reality differently, and each of them is also right about their individual perception, at least, as far as their own personal world goes. It's like they can change what's real and what ain't real simply by believing it. Yeah, sounds weird, and I don't really understand it myself. Some of them think a lot like we do, and some of them are so into the Weaver they're worse than the Glass Walkers. They can get really powerful sometimes, but every last one of them is still fundamentally human — just as soft and squishy and easy to cut up if you can get close enough. Usually, though, it ain't worth the effort or the danger to get that close, so I'd suggest you just avoid them unless one's purposely getting in your way.

Fairies

Um... yeah. I guess there's fairies in the world. No, really. I met one, once, or at least, I'm told I did. Honestly, I can't really remember much about it. Munchmausen know a lot more about these guys than I do — go talk to one of them.

Ghosts

Sometimes it ain't just the wind; sometimes, it's one of us. But sometimes, when it ain't one of us, it's a real ghost. I hate these things. A typical Ratkin's career will leave a long trail of corpses, and that's a problem, because every once in a while a dead human or vampire turns into a real-life ghost. They're pretty rare, but the law of averages sometimes works against us. You never know what a ghost can do, or how angry it'll be at you. I can't really give you any advice beyond talk to a Plague Lord if you need help dealing with one — if any of us got a chance of getting rid of a ghost, it's a Plague Lord.



Ratkin Lexicon

Algernon: A common name for a rodens Ratkin whose intellect has been propelled to super-genius proportions by the Birthing Plague.

Army of the Apocalypse: What Ratkin often refer to their race as.

Brain: Another term for an *Algernon*.

Climbing the Bell Tower: A term to describe the phenomenon of a Ratkin flying off the handle and resorting to mania and violence, often as a result of going through their First Change without having been found by other Ratkin to explain to them what's going on.

Colony: The breeding grounds and homes of Ratkin Society.

Consort: A Ratkin who journeys with a coterie of non-Ratkin supernaturals.

Cleaning O'Tooley's: Another term for *Climbing the Bell Tower*.

Council: A group of privileged elders reflecting all Aspects present, who rule over Infestations.

Country Mouse: A derogatory term for those Ratkin who live outside of cities.

Courtier: A member of a Retinue.

Crash Space: What gangs of rambler refer to the smallest nests as.

Deceit: Used to refer to any group of Ratkin and/or their Kinfolk.

Family: The Plague to which a Ratkin belongs; only the members of a given plague will refer to it as this.

Field of Nettles: A sore point for all Ratkin. This is the legendary field where the last of the Ratkin Bards were wiped out by the Garou during the War of Rage.

Freak: One of the less-common Ratkin Aspects that have recently started to show in greater numbers — Engineers, Plague Lords, Munchmausen and Twitchers.

Gang: The most anarchistic type of rat pack.

Going Postal: Another term for *Climbing the Bell Tower*.

Going Through the Whole Gym Bag: Another term for *Climbing the Bell Tower*.

High Justice: Any punishments more severe than low justice, primarily sanctioned assassination.

Infection: The effect of the Birthing Plague; what Kinfolk suffer before their first change.

Infestation: The largest type of colony.

Low Justice: Some of the more minor punishments that can be meted out by Knife Skulkers, such as theft of property or crippling.

Middens: What retinues of courtiers refer to the smallest nests as.

Nest: The sacred site a Colony is built around.



Paradise: One of the many strange, ideal (for a rat) realms and pocket realms the Ratkin have discovered in the Umbra.

Plague: One of the great Ratkin clans that span the world.

Privileged Elder: One of a group that rules a larger Colony, always at least Rank 3.

Ramblers: The individual Ratkin who make up a gang.

Rapture: A state of heightened awareness, or insanity, depending on how you look at it.

Rat King: The absolute ruler of a Colony; only the largest of colonies have a Rat King.

Rat Kingdom: The (presumably imaginary) lost realms from which Munchmausen hail.

Rat Pack: A deceit of Ratkin who have allied themselves to one another for a time.

Retinue: A formal, traditional Rat Pack dedicated to defending nests.

Runt: The “whipping boy” of a Rat Pack; the one with the least social standing within the pack.

Straggler: Another name for a *Runt*.

Tribe: Ratkin who defend the larger colonies form these.

Voice: Messages from the Rat God and the Blood Memory that all Ratkin hear when infected. After a Ratkin’s first change, the messages usually stop except when in Rapture.

Wuffie, Wuffies: A derogatory term for Garou.



Character Creation

Character Creation Process

Step One: Character Concept — Who and what are you?

- Choose Nature and Demeanor
- Choose a Breed (homid, metis or rodens)
- Choose an Aspect (Engineer, Knife Skulker, Munchmauser, Plague Lord, Shadow Seer, Tunnel Runner, Twitcher or Warrior)

Step Two: Select Attributes — What are your basic capabilities?

- Prioritize Trait Attributes (seven primary, five secondary, and three tertiary)
- Choose Traits

Step Three: Select Advantages — What do you know and what can you do?

- Choose five Abilities (rodens Ratkin have the same ability restrictions as lupus Garou do during character creation)
- Choose three Basic Gifts (one each from Ratkin, Breed and Aspect)
- Choose five Backgrounds
- Note Renown (three Traits, in any combination)

Step Four: Finishing Touches — Fill in the details.

- Record Willpower (3)
- Record Gnosis (determined by breed)
- Record Rage (determined by Aspect)
- Chose Negative Traits (if any)
- Spend Five Free Traits and choose Merits (if any)

Step Five: Spark of Life — Narrative descriptions and other details.



Attributes

For complete Trait descriptions, see **Laws of the Wild Revised**.

Physical: *Athletic, Brawny, Brutal, Dexterous, Enduring, Energetic, Ferocious, Graceful, Lithe, Nimble, Quick, Resilient, Robust, Rugged, Stalwart, Steady, Tenacious, Tireless, Tough, Vigorous, Wiry*

Social: *Alluring, Beguiling, Charismatic, Charming, Commanding, Dignified, Diplomatic, Elegant, Eloquent, Empathetic, Expressive, Friendly, Genial, Gorgeous, Ingratiating, Intimidating, Magnetic, Persuasive, Seductive, Witty*

Mental: *Alert, Attentive, Clever, Creative, Cunning, Dedicated, Determined, Discerning, Disciplined, Insightful, Intuitive, Knowledgeable, Observant, Patient, Rational, Reflective, Shrewd, Vigilant, Wily, Wise*

Abilities

For complete Ability descriptions, see **Laws of the Wild**.

Academics, Animal Ken, Athletics, Awareness, Brawl, Computer, Crafts, Dodge, Drive, Empathy, Enigmas, Etiquette, Expression, Finance, Firearms, Hobby/Professional/ Expert Ability, Intimidation, Investigation, Law, Leadership, Linguistics, Medicine, Meditation, Melee, Occult, Performance, Politics, Primal-Urge, Repair, Rituals, Science, Scrounge, Security, Streetwise, Subterfuge, Survival.

Backgrounds

For complete Background descriptions, see **Laws of the Wild**.

Colony, Contacts, Fetish, Freak Factor, Influence, Mentor, Plague, Resources (not past 2), Rites.

Negative Traits

For complete descriptions of these Traits, see **Laws of the Wild**.

Negative Physical Traits: *Clumsy, Cowardly, Decrepit, Delicate, Docile, Flabby, Lame, Lethargic, Puny, Sickly*

Negative Social Traits: *Bestial, Callous, Condescending, Dull, Feral, Naïve, Obnoxious, Repugnant, Shy, Tactless, Untrustworthy*

Negative Mental Traits: *Forgetful, Gullible, Ignorant, Impatient, Oblivious, Predictable, Submissive, Violent, Witless.*



Breeds

Homid: You began life as a human Kinfolk, before you were infected. It's all been downhill from there.

Initial Gnosis: One

Breed Gifts: (choose one) *Cooking, Eau de Rat, Persuasion*

Metis: You were born the child of two Ratkin and raised within the confines of a colony. You bear a deformity visible in all three forms, just like a Garou metis.

Initial Gnosis: Three

Breed Gifts: (choose one) *Cloak of Shadows, Rat Mother's Touch, Sense Wyrms*

Rodens: You were born as a rat, and lived as a rat Kinfolk prior to your infection. Rodens Ratkin have the same Ability restrictions as lupus Garou.

Initial Gnosis: Five

Breed Gifts: (choose one) *Absolute Balance, Leap of the Kangaroo Rat, Survival*

Aspects

Tunnel Runners: The messengers, scouts and spies for Ratkin society, they know a lot about how to get around safely and without notice.

Initial Rage: One

Bonus Rite: *Rite of the Bolthole*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Danger Sense, Scent of the True Form, Silent Running*

Shadow Seers: Strange mystics with secret knowledge and special insight into the mysteries of the spirit world, but who have trouble remaining rooted in the physical world.

Initial Rage: Two

Bonus Rite: *Dedication Rite*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Rat Mother's Touch, Sense Weaver, Sense Wyrms*

Knife Skulkers: Enforcers and assassins, the keepers of their own brand of justice, one which is not beholden to law. They are the judges, juries and often executioners of Ratkin society.

Initial Rage: Three

Bonus Rite: *Contract Rite*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Death Mark, Sticky Paws, Truth of Gaia*

Warriors: The Blade Slaves — hardy, cunning soldiers in the Ratkin's army of the Wyld. They are the frontline warriors of the Ratkin in the War of the Apocalypse.

Initial Rage: Four



Bonus Rite: *Rite of the Pain Dagger*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Resist Pain*, *Slicing Teeth*, *Sticky Paws*

Engineers: Ratkin with an affinity for science and the Weaver, they are eccentric masters of technology who seek to use the Weaver's weapons against humanity.

Initial Rage: Two

Bonus Rite: *Rite of the Shopping Cart*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Control Simple Machine*, *Open Seal*, *Scrounge*

Plague Lords: Tormented metis masters of disease and plague. They study the Wurm in order to better combat it.

Initial Rage: Three

Bonus Rite: *Rite of the Birthing Plague*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Poison Food*, *Sniffle*, *Virulent Curse of Hatred*

Munchausen: Deranged Moon Mice, legendary tale-tellers and swash-bucklers who claim to be from strange Umbral realms.

Initial Rage: Four

Bonus Rite: *Rite of Artifice Dedication*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Persuasion*, *Spirit Speech*, *Tale Spinning*

Twitchers: Anarchists and psychopaths with a penchant for chaos and destruction. The most rabid of the Ratkin, they revel in violence.

Initial Rage: Five

Bonus Rite: *Rite of the Cardboard Palace*

Aspect Gifts: (choose one) *Firebug*, *Sense Angst*, *Sense Weaver*

Species Traits

All Ratkin have a few Traits in common, from those Ratkin who were raised as criminals and terrorists in the sewers beneath a North American city, to the exotic Nezumi brought up in the Far East as students of the art of Low War.

Mother Rat's Blessings

Maze Memory: All wererats have an absolute and unfoolable sense of direction, which they put to good use in their mazelike homes beneath the cities of Man. Nothing short of death can prevent a Ratkin from finding the most direct route to his destination.

Acute Senses: While wearing the form of a rat, many of a Ratkin's senses become enhanced. This grants the Ratkin a two-Trait bonus in perception challenges dealing with their ears, noses or whiskers. The Ratkin keeps this bonus while using his whiskers only in Crinos.

Night Vision: By spending a Gnosis, a Ratkin can negate the penalties of normal darkness for one scene, drawing on the twilight of the Penumbra. For those Ratkin with the Gift: *Darksight*, it lasts for up to eight hours after the end



of the scene. Many Ratkin find this ability essential, considering the types of places they like to frequent.

Immunity to Disease: A Ratkin can carry and even transmit diseases, but they will never affect her no matter how deadly the disease happens to be. Every Ratkin, after all, is already “suffering” from the Birthing Plague, against which other diseases pale in comparison. Should the Ratkin ever become cured of the Birthing Plague, they would revert to a normal human or rat (or die, in the case of a metis).

Regeneration: Ratkin benefit from the same powers of regeneration that Garou do, but likewise, aggravated damage is just as problematic. Ratkin are far less likely to suffer battle scars.

Teeth and Claws: In Crinos form, the claws and teeth of a Ratkin deal aggravated damage. While in Rodens form, a Ratkin’s bite still inflicts aggravated damage, but her claws merely inflict lethal.

Stepping Sideways: Just as a Garou, a Ratkin can step into the Umbra through reflective surfaces. However, unlike Garou, a Ratkin requires privacy — the attempt automatically fails if anyone other than a Ratkin or other shapechanger is present.

Keening: Ratkin are capable of secretly warning one another of danger by emitting an unnatural sound that humans can’t hear. This works as long as the other Ratkin are within hearing range; they refer to this ability as keening. A Ratkin can only employ this ability when she is actually threatened by something, or at least believes herself to be threatened; keening is almost instinctual, and simply doesn’t work right without the proper amount of stress or excitement. Other Ratkin, hearing keening, feel their adrenaline surge and generally get ready for a fight. Other shapechangers with sense-sharpening Gifts active can possibly hear the keening, but can neither interpret nor duplicate the sound.

Speaks in Squeeks: All Ratkin share a racial rodent language which only they can speak. It takes a bit of effort for Ratkin in Crinos form to use it, but otherwise they are capable of using this in any form, even Homid (but it sounds decidedly strange for a human to start chittering and squeaking).

Frenzy: Ratkin can frenzy just like a Garou can, and the mechanics for doing so remain the same as those set out in **Laws of the Wild**. However, because of their close ties to the Wyld, a Ratkin can never enter the Thrall of the Wym like Garou do.

Blessings of the Rat Incarna: All Ratkin, unless part of a dedicated Pack, receive the benefits (and ban) of following the Rat Totem. However, the Rat Totem works slightly differently for Ratkin than it does for Garou; see the section on Ratkin Totems for more information.

Blood Memory: This impressive power, inherent to all Ratkin, allows them to share racial memories and insight. With this talent, a Ratkin can “remember” the name of another Ratkin he’s never met, a place he’s never been, or a deed performed by a member of his Aspect generations ago. This



is especially valuable when traveling through one of the myriad mazes of tunnels, either in the physical world or the Umbra. This is done with a Static Gnosis Challenge against a variable Trait difficulty. "Remembering" a Ratkin's name is a six-Trait difficulty. Finding your way in a place you've never been is eight Traits (or six for Tunnel Runners). Recalling visions of the past is nine Traits, and can only be attempted once per game session. The results are memories and only, not suddenly channeling one's long-ago rat ancestors. On rare occasions, a Ratkin may glimpse memories of the War of Rage or Impergium, but such occasions are very rare, and the Ratkin may need to consult a Mokolé to learn exactly what she saw.

Poisonous Blood: The Birthing Plague turns a Ratkin's blood toxic. Each time a vampire or other supernatural creature drinks the blood of a wererat, he receives one level of aggravated damage, and becomes overwhelmed by terrifying visions for the duration of one hour or one scene. These visions are similar to the visions a Ratkin goes through when first infected, save that these visions provide no special insight.

Fetish Thieves: Ratkin may not make many fetishes themselves, but they're quite adept at stealing the fetishes of other Changing Breeds. A Ratkin is able to use any non-Ratkin fetish, regardless of its source, by spending either an extra Gnosis Trait or making a standard activation challenge with an extra three Traits tacked on to the difficulty. Attuning a stolen fetish works as normal for a Ratkin.

The Rest of the Deal

Reduced Delirium: Wererats induce the Delirium, but much weaker than Garou do. When a human sees a wererat in Crinos form, check the same table that Garou use. The human's reaction is still based on his Willpower, but add two Traits for the table's purposes.

Silver Vulnerability: Silver deals aggravated damage to Ratkin, just like it does to Garou. All of the other effects that silver has against Garou, such as reducing Gnosis, also apply to Ratkin.

Rapture: Being much closer to the Wyld than most of the Changing Breeds, Ratkin can suffer from the Rapture, a state of being in which the Ratkin loses her grasp on reality. Whenever a Ratkin gains a temporary Gnosis Trait, she must make two Simple Tests. If both are failed, then she must make a further Static Gnosis Test, with a difficulty according to Aspect. Difficulty is as follows:

- Tunnel Runner: 4
- Shadow Seer or Engineer: 5
- Knife Skulker or Plague Lord: 6
- Warrior or Munchmausen: 7
- Twitcher: 8

Success indicates the Ratkin must either spend a Willpower Trait or enter Rapture and suffer from an affliction chosen by a Narrator from the



following list; the effects last for one scene or one hour. Note that should the Ratkin encounter anything the Narrator would consider “incredibly freaky shit,” he can call for the Ratkin to make a Rapture test.

Prophecy: The wererat gets a symbolic glimpse of the future. This may be petty or epic, at the Narrator’s discretion, and the Narrator is encouraged to be creative in using this as a Storytelling device.

Delusions: The wererat perceives reality in a significantly different way than those around her, and what’s more, she has to immediately act upon this differing view. Example: Suffering from Rapture, Jenny Jenkin’s Get starts to believe that smiley faces all contain miniature cameras from which the Weaver spies on her, so she starts tearing up all the signs at her local Wal-Mart.

Hallucinations: The Ratkin sees strange things all around her; this often takes the form of a message from Mama Rat, but sometimes it’s just disturbing or weird.

Destructive Impulses: The Ratkin becomes convinced that she is surrounded by the Weaver’s webs, and therefore feel the sudden need to destroy something of the Weaver.

Fleeing in Terror: Something mundane and ordinary has just scared the wits out of the Ratkin, giving him a strong desire to run.

Disconnection: This is similar to the affliction sometimes suffered by Shadow Seers. The Ratkin starts seeing the spirit world and the physical realm overlaying one another, and has trouble distinguishing what’s real and what isn’t.

Paranoia: It’s not that the Rakin thinks everyone is out to get her — it’s that she *knows* everyone is out to get her. She feels the need to do something about it, and quickly. This could lead to some bad situations if it hits the Ratkin in a public place. Twitchers and Engineers frequently suffer from this when under the effects of the Rapture.

Forms

Every Ratkin has access to at least three different forms. The first of these, their Homid form, always has some telltale feature that gives away their rodent heritage, be it pinched facial features, bright wide eyes or sharp fingernails attached to slender fingers. They are not so obvious so as to impede upon a Ratkin’s ability to infiltrate human society, but just subtle enough for another wererat to easily notice them.

The Crinos form is a cross between that of rat and human. Adding a full foot of height, this form gives them a great deal of speed and endurance, with nasty-looking teeth and dangerous claws. Their eyes glow a dim red in the dark, and they are even gifted with a prehensile tail, with which they can flip switches, grab objects or even untie knots. Their Crinos form inflicts a weakened delirium on humans who witness it.



Finally, the Rodens form usually resembles a large but otherwise ordinary-looking wharf rat. A Ratkin's Rodens form often reflects their aspect — Plague Lords are marked with sores and buboes, Engineers usually have an albino coat, and Tunnel Runners are sleek and quick. In this form, a Ratkin can grasp and use tools with primitive thumbs. This is the favorite form for most Ratkin while sneaking or hiding.

Some Ratkin have developed gifts granting them the secret of accessing a fourth Ratkin form; which form this is depends upon their breed. For more information on these gifts, see the section on Breed Gifts below.

The difficulty to shift forms is always six Traits, and a wererat can't shift in any area where there isn't enough room for Crinos. However, many Ratkin become adept at leaping out of confined spaces and shifting to Crinos in mid-air. Just like Garou, a Ratkin can shift part of her body to take advantage of some of her rodentlike abilities while in Homid form. Ratkin enjoy shifting, and many like to explore the capabilities of those forms new to them; many a rodens Ratkin, after going through her First Change, will be fascinated at all the things she is now capable of doing with opposable thumbs.

Trait Adjustments from Shapeshifting

Homid: No Trait adjustments.

Crinos: Homid, Rodens: *Alert*, *Lithe* x 2, *Quick* x 2, *Tenacious* x 2, *Wry*.

Metis: *Alert*, *Ferocious*, *Lithe* x 2, *Quick* x 2, *Tenacious*, *Wry*. (Metis are bulky and powerful, but lack the long-term endurance of their brethren.)

Negative Traits: *Bestial*, *Repugnant*, *Tactless*.

Other: Tail is prehensile.

Rodens: *Alert* x 2, *Intuitive*, *Lithe*, *Quick*, *Tough*

Negative Traits: *Bestial*, *Puny*, *Repugnant*

Other: Hands are prehensile, and even have tiny thumbs. Ratkin in Rodens form receive one bonus Trait in challenges involving *Stealth*.

New Backgrounds

Colony

All metis are required to buy at least one level of *Colony* at character creation. Colonies come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, and this Trait describes the size of the nest where you were born, or where you have your closest ties. When in danger you can try to return to your home, and will usually be given aid and haven there. As well, the Colony's local Kinfolk and spirits can grant aid to you, at the Narrator's discretion.



One Trait — The smallest of Nests, one which barely qualifies as a colony and consists of one to four Ratkin. These Nests are known as “middens”. At the very least, it’s a place to meditate and have a bit of contact with other Ratkin.

Two Traits — This Colony is somewhat larger, with perhaps five to 10 Ratkin. This type of Nest is considered temporary, more a waypoint for travelers than anything else.

Three Traits — A good-sized Nest, the kind one would expect to find in a city, or perhaps a successful rural Nest. Eleven to 25 Ratkin call this colony home.

Four Traits — A highly successful Nest of 25 to 50 Ratkin.

Five Traits — A full-fledged Infestation, ruled over by either an influential Elder council or by a Rat King. This type of Colony has a population of over 50 Ratkin.

Those Colonies lower than three Traits are usually very informal and disorganized, most often ruled over by the elders. Once Nests get large enough, however, wererats tend to prefer one strong rat king to rule over them all.

Freak Factor

This Background describes how truly demented your Ratkin is, how far away from the general perception of reality she is. Freaks — the Aspects of Twitchers, Engineers, Plague Lords and Munchmausen — are required to take this Trait at various levels, depending on their Aspect: Twitchers must buy *Freak Factor* x 1 and 2, Engineers and Plague Lords must buy *Freak Factor* x 4, and Munchmausen must buy *Freak Factor* x 5. Note that this Background does not work like other Backgrounds; each level is separate from the others, and they are not cumulative — they can be bought at different levels several times. For example, buying *Freak Factor* x 3 does not give access to the benefits of *Freak Factor* x 1 or 2, just 3. It is therefore possible to buy *Freak Factor* x 2 and 5 for a total of seven Background Traits. It is also possible to spend 15 points to receive the benefits and drawbacks of all five levels of *Freak Factor*, though that would lead to a truly bizarre Ratkin that would probably be quite difficult to play.

One Trait — *Unhinged*. The Voices from your Birthing Plague never truly stopped, and you still occasionally hear messages from the Rat Goddess. At Narrator’s discretion, you can be blessed with insight or advice whenever you’re confused or uncertain about how to resolve your present situation. Although not a guarantee for aid, this can nevertheless be extremely useful to a Ratkin in need.

Two Traits — *Unstable*. Your Rage has a bit too strong of a hold over you, and tend to fly off the handle at a moment’s notice. Whenever you gain a temporary Rage Trait, you can engage the Narrator in a Simple Test — if you succeed, you gain another Rage Trait. This can never bring your Rage Traits



above your permanent maximum. However, you also suffer a two-Trait penalty on all challenges involving frenzy. All Twitchers are both *Unhinged* and *Unstable*.

Three Traits — *Unearthly*. You're constantly being followed by spirits who frequently send you messages and insight. Rat-spirits and other spirits in the service of the Rat Goddess find it easier to communicate with you than normal, and frequently enjoy doing so. Additionally, whenever an *Unearthly* Ratkin gains Gnosis, she makes a Simple Test; success means that she gains an additional Gnosis, however she must then immediately test for Rapture.

Four Traits — *Unbalanced*. You understand one of the less popular members of the Triat almost intuitively; your fellow Ratkin often find this knowledge disturbing. Choose either the Weaver or the Wyrm. Plague Lords understand disease and corruption, and thus have an unnatural understanding of the Wyrm, while Engineers' affinity for technology gives them insight into the Weaver. *Unbalanced* characters receive the Gift: *Sense Weaver* or *Sense Wyrm*, depending on which side of the Triat they choose. Plague Lords and Engineers must buy this Background at character creation.

Five Traits — *Unnatural*. You're not used to the physical world or its laws; you're infinitely more familiar with the bizarre reality of the Deep Umbra, for whatever reason. Thus, many things about the physical world that others take for granted simply make no sense to you. Because of your affinity with the spiritual side of reality, the difficulty for you to step sideways is always reduced by two. At Narrator's option, you may also have a bonus at interacting with chimerae and Dream Realms. All Munchmausen are required to buy this Background at character creation.

Plague

Ratkin have established massive, extended networks whose influence can be felt all over the world, if one looks hard enough. The members refer to their own network as a "family"; outsiders refer to them by their more official name of *Plagues*. The Bards at the Field of Nettles cursed the world to suffer from the nine great Plagues of the Ratkin; it was these Plagues to which the Bards were referring. Each Plague is distinctive in both style and attitudes from the rest, and follows its own brand of chaos. Not every Ratkin belongs to a Plague, but those that do can boast having dangerous allies.

In game terms, this Background can be called upon just like the *Kinfolk* Background from *Laws of the Wild*.

The Rat Race (North American Ratkin) — One of the more violent Plagues, and a favorite of Twitchers. They hold to heretical beliefs such as believing the Rat God to actually be male, and are fascinated by the legends of the Apocalypse.

Gamine (European Ratkin) — Led by a powerful Ratkin calling herself Madame LeFarge, these Ratkin pride themselves on being masters of intrigue



and espionage. Their largest colony lies in the extensive sewer network beneath Paris, where their elaborate plans are hatched.

Borrachon Wererats (South American Ratkin) — These Ratkin see themselves as Beggar Kings, acting as both saviors and masters of the poor in the most impoverished areas of South American cities. They typically profess to the overthrowing, rather than the obliteration, of human civilization.

Rattus Typhus (African Ratkin) — The empire of the Plague Lords, these ruthless and sadistic Ratkin attempt to evolve a new race of wererats from the suffering they cause.

Nezumi (Japanese Ratkin) — These masters of the art of Low War are much more willing to work with other supernaturals, especially other Changing Breeds, than their Western counterparts. They still serve in a very similar manner to the function the Ratkin race had at the Dawn of Time, correcting the mistakes of their brethren.

Thuggees (East Asian Ratkin) — These vicious Ratkin, serving a mysterious criminal mastermind, are descended from the ancient thuggee cults of historical India. They consider strangulation almost an art form.

The Horde (Eurasian Ratkin) — Self-serving Ratkin with a facility for the politics of both Ratkin and humankind. They seek to gain true control over Russia.

De La Poer's Disciples (Antarctic Ratkin) — The Munchausen have created this Plague, based in the nigh inhospitable penumbral lands of the Antarctic. Even other Ratkin are tolerated within their borders at best, unless of course they have tales of adventure to offer.

Ratkin Ronin (the High Seas) — Literally "wave rats," these former Nezumi have chosen to live as outcasts and pirates, terrorizing the high seas.

Rage and Gnosis

Being so close to the Wyld, Ratkin are creatures of extremes; many would consider them to be quite unstable. The two major factors that influence a Ratkin's outlook are Rage and Gnosis; as these Traits rise and fall, a Ratkin's outlook and attitude will slowly shift from one extreme to the other and back again.

As a Ratkin's temporary Rage Traits rise above her temporary Gnosis, she becomes more disturbed. Tension almost radiates from her, causing those around her to grow somewhat anxious; this, of course, has a habit of creating a snowball effect when several Ratkin with high levels of Rage come near one another, as they feed the anxiety of one another.

A Ratkin whose Rage is higher than her Gnosis seems ready to lash out at those around her at almost any moment. Her feral instincts are quite strong, sometimes practically overpowering her reason. She is constantly looking for a fight or something equally violent to vent some of her overflowing Rage. Ratkin with high Rage become easier to anger, and harder to get along with. In game terms, whenever a Ratkin's temporary Rage is at least two Traits



higher than her temporary Gnosis, the Narrator may enforce a one-Trait penalty on all Social Challenges. For every full hour that the Ratkin's Rage is four Traits higher than her Gnosis, the Narrator may make the Ratkin test for frenzy.

Likewise, a Ratkin with a lot of temporary Gnosis is far more calm and rational. Spiritual insights come easily to a Ratkin in such a state, and she will tend to favor non-violent solutions to problems. Some might even consider such a Ratkin approachable or friendly.

A Ratkin whose Gnosis is higher than her Rage tends to seek to employ the ways of wisdom over violence. She also becomes more receptive to the ways of the spirit world; her Wyld instincts allows her to deal with spirits with greater ease. When a Ratkin's Gnosis is at least two Traits higher than her Rage, at the Narrator's discretion the Ratkin may receive whispered messages from the spirits in the area; sometimes these messages are useful, other times they are meaningless. Enlightenment has its price, however. When the Ratkin's Gnosis is a full four Traits higher, she must test for Rapture every hour.

Gnosis and Meditation: Ratkin can meditate to regain Gnosis, just like Garou do, but with more limitations. Unlike Garou, a Ratkin can't just meditate anywhere; she needs to find a sufficiently quiet, spiritual or energized location. Caerns, mage Nodes, a wraith's Haunt, or even a changeling freehold will suffice, though it might be tricky to stay in such a location long enough to gain Gnosis through meditation. Luckily, the spiritual centers of Ratkin Nests suffice as well. Once in such a place, a Ratkin can use the *Meditation Ability* to regain Gnosis just like Garou.

Rage Challenges: For Garou, the difficulty of a Rage challenge depends on the phase of the moon. With Ratkin, the moon isn't a factor in any way; it all depends on one's Aspect. The difficulty is the inverse of that Aspect's difficulty for Rapture tests. Otherwise, Ratkin use Rage exactly like Garou do. See **Laws of the Wild** for further details.

Tunnel Runner: 8

Shadow Seer or Engineer: 7

Knife Skulker or Plague Lord: 6

Warrior or Munchmausen: 5

Twitcher: 4

Breeds

For Ratkin, breeding is more than just something they do; it is a sacred duty to propagate their species. Of course, it isn't always easy to do for the Ratkin. Pretty much all Ratkin are able to breed with the dregs of humanity, however some of the less choosy Ratkin enjoy "slumming" among the rodent populations of the city in which they reside.

As with most of the Changing Breeds, the coupling of two Ratkin results in a metis. Ratkin, being ever practical, hold much less shame against a metis



than Garou do. After all, despite the disfigurement, it is at the very least yet another warrior in a war in which every soldier counts. But, since they hold breeding so sacred and metis Ratkin are sterile (just as with any metis), there is nevertheless some stigma that their metis have to overcome.

Just passing on the gene, however, isn't enough. In order to make the transition from Ratkin Kinfolk to full-blooded Ratkin, they need to be made victims of the Birthing Plague; otherwise, the gene will lie dormant and grow weaker and weaker with each passing generation. Most who are infected will meet painful ends as the Plague kills them. The few who survive become Ratkin, and the process continues.

Just like the other Changing Breeds, a Ratkin's breed depends on what form she was born as. Ratkin born as humans are homid, and those born as rats become rodens. Each of the three breeds — homid, rodens, metis — learn of their place in Mama Rat's plan differently.

Homid

Most homid Kinfolk are the outcasts, the forgotten, derelicts and criminals of society — basically, the ones who just never seem to “fit in.” Indeed, they usually lack the desire to fit in, finding normal life boring, mundane, worthless. They often balk at the restrictions placed upon them by society, becoming rebels seeking a cause.

Then they become infected, and they begin to better understand the world around them, or at least heighten their perspective a little. The visions, when they can be understood, give them a direction for their thoughts and outrage. Once infection has set in, there is no way to go back to the life they once led. Perhaps this is the reason why the Ratkin tend to choose their human mates as they do, since it is at least a small benevolence that most of those who become infected have little reason to want to go back.

Until their First Change, homids will receive messages from the Rat Incarna, visions that tell them of the history of their place and what role they're intended to play. They create a merciful insanity which helps cushion the human's shock at what he is to become later, after the First Change finally occurs (often weeks or even months after surviving the plague).

Once inducted into Ratkin society, homids have a decision to make. Sooner or later, most homids shift their alliance away from humankind and to the Ratkin instead. They see humans as a doomed race, to be exploited in furthering the Ratkin. A few, however, retain a more human conscience and experience pangs of guilt over what their brethren expect them to do. Such Ratkin are therefore placed in a very precarious position, having to conceal their actions from both the race they came from and the race they now claim to be a part of.

Rodens

Much more numerous, rodens Ratkin outnumber their homid brethren five to one, and thus have a much greater impact upon Ratkin society. Like



the rats they came from, they generally don't understand (and don't try to understand) human concepts such as laws, boundaries, ownership and privacy. They can be fairly territorial of their breeding grounds, and think nothing of encroaching upon human civilization should they wish to expand their territory.

Rodens tend to distrust their homid brethren, since they're accustomed to a much more honest, open state of mind than what a homid Ratkin would have become used to living life as a human. They don't see any point in hiding their nature, and look down on homids for the often well-deserved reputations for deception.

That isn't to say that rodens are any less intelligent. Rats are cunning as it is, and the Birthing Plague catapults that intelligence to bring their intellect on par with any human's. Sometimes even farther, into the realm of super-genius. Needless to say, a rodens Ratkin going through his First Change experiences a huge change in his perspective of the world.

Metis

Metis have it rough, even compared to the other two breeds. Despite the fact that they are physically larger and bulkier than their cousins, metis begin life weaker than other rats as they lack the genetic diversity that other wererats have. Because of this, they are subjected to the Birthing Plague as quickly after their birth as possible. Unfortunately, they're also the least likely of the three breeds to survive the Plague.

Lacking most of the social stigma that metis of other Breeds have to suffer, Ratkin metis quickly become very familiar with the workings of Ratkin society. They are usually on especially good terms with the female population of the Colony they grew up in, particularly those responsible for breeding and raising children.

Still, they are not completely free of all stigma. Like other metis, they suffer from a deformity which is visible in all three forms. Moreover, failure to openly display their deformity when visiting a Ratkin colony invites punishment from the present ranking Knife Skulker. Additionally, Ratkin elders expect to be treated like royalty by the metis, especially prior to leaving the nest.

Aspects

Tunnel Runners

Also known as Mavericks and Tunnelers, the Tunnel Runners know the secrets of travel, acting as the messengers and scouts of the Ratkin. They're constantly scouring the world for signs of the Apocalypse and other secrets, which they then report back to Ratkin society.

Most Tunnel Runners suffer from a wanderlust that causes them to take to the road early after their Rite of Passage with a group of temporary



companions or even alone, if they can't find one. They love traveling; it's in their blood. When a Rat Pack needs to get through unfamiliar territory safely, they look to a Tunnel Runner.

Because of their habit of blazing new trails all over the world, Tunnel Runners tend to develop a very keen Blood Memory; they often rely on it to get them out of dangerous scrapes and guide them through unfamiliar territory. This isn't a crutch, however; Tunnel Runners are renowned for their quick wits, stealth and subterfuge.

Of all Ratkin, Tunnel Runners have the best chance of encountering other supernaturals at some point during their careers. In fact, occasionally a Tunnel Runner will even form alliances with the outcasts and fellow travelers of other supernaturals, such as Bone Gnawers and Nosferatu. Such alliances rarely last, as they are based more on convenience and mutual safety than anything else. Indeed, most of a Tunnel Runner's relationships are similar. Tunnelers find it very difficult to tie themselves down to any particular place, due to their wanderlust. For reasons of safety, they also are continually reinventing themselves, creating new looks and identities every so often while on the road. Because of this, it's extremely difficult for them to maintain long-term ties of any sort, be it with supernaturals or even other Ratkin. Long-term relations do happen, though rarely. When they do, a Tunneler's loyalty is almost impossible to lose.

Tunnelers, with the need to blend in and reinvent themselves, are masters of cultural adaptability. A Tunnel Runner will invariably be able to fit in no matter what culture he is interacting with. Through a combination of instincts, Blood Memory and a healthy dose of common sense, they can pick up very quickly on local customs wherever they go.

Tunnel Runners are, essentially, the glue that holds Ratkin Society together. Often acting as emissaries, it's because of their efforts that Ratkin are starting to learn more and more about their fellows and just how thoroughly they've infested the world. Without Tunnelers, colonies would find it extremely difficult to manage even the simplest of coordinated efforts, and communication would be difficult in the extreme.

An elaborate system of graffiti and sigils makes up the Tunnel Runner "language," simple codes that warn other Ratkin, especially fellow Tunnelers, of dangers or safe passages. It's not entirely uncommon to see a Ratkin examine a seemingly innocuous bit of graffiti in some alley and then bolt out of the place like a rat out of hell; that Ratkin's just received a warning of danger from a Tunnel Runner.

The Bards of the Ratkin, also known as the Speakers, are gone forever, along with most of the knowledge they kept. The Tunnel Runners, as a group, have charged themselves with the duty of preserving what little Bardic secrets are left and perhaps finding ways to recover scraps that were lost when the Bards died. A daunting task that even the Tunnelers think they'll never be able to properly carry out, they are nevertheless dutiful in the attempt.



Even Tunnel Runner Kinfolk tend to have some of this wanderlust. Most of their human Kinfolk are impoverished and homeless, many living their lives as hobos. Those who aren't tend to hold only temporary jobs, moving from city to city about every year or so. Rat Kinfolk are often the type you find as stowaways on ships, trains and other vehicles. They pride themselves on being well-traveled, having experienced (in their own limited way) many different lands and cultures in their rather short lives. These Kin tend to be fascinated by humans, but have trouble understanding them, often coming up with the strangest theoretical motivations behind the deeds they witness humans performing.

Younger Tunnelers are easy to pick out from the older, more experienced ones. A young Tunnel Runner will look worse for the wear, laden with all sorts of excess baggage containing clothing and equipment and, when they can manage it, food. They'll frequently travel with the help of an old, beat-up truck or motorbike. Most have trouble keeping themselves clean while on the road. Older Tunnelers, on the other hand, are quite neat and tidy, cleaning themselves just as often as an ordinary rat would (up to six times a day). They've lost their need for excessive equipment, having discovered the value of traveling light; they have everything they need in their pockets. Beyond that, all an older Runner needs is a thumb and wits to make it in the world.

The physical realm is not the only place that can be traveled; the spirit world is also full of frontiers that practically beg Tunnelers to explore them. Many Tunnelers are the Umbral explorers of their race, and it's in no small part because of their efforts that many of the Freak Aspects and Paradise Realms were re-discovered.

The Scout of a colony is in charge of organizing and coordinating the efforts of the Tunnel Runners of the area. It's expected that when a Tunneler passes through an area presided over by a Scout, he pays for passage by trading useful information in the form of stories. These stories are often told to the young pups of a colony, who thoroughly enjoy hearing the adventures that Tunnelers go through; for this reason, the stories have to be told in a way that even a child could understand.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Culturally Gifted: Masters of hiding in plain view, Tunnel Runners have developed the ability to blend in with any crowd through the creation of detailed, but quiet, alternate identities. Tunnel Runners can blend in with almost any crowd. The Runner is two Traits up in all *Subterfuge* challenges involving this façade.

Wanderlust Visions: Tunnel Runners don't often get lost, but sometimes it happens. When it does, he may seek the help of his totem by spending a Gnosis Trait, and the totem may grant a vision of a way out or a destination that may help, at Storyteller discretion. The type of vision granted is usually colored by the totem that the Runner's pack serves at the time.

Traveling Light: Tunnel Runners below Rank 3 can never have a permanent home, and never have the *Resources* Background.



Free Rite: Tunnel Runners begin play with the *Rite of the Bolthole* for free.

Shadow Seers

The Shadow Seers are the shamans of Ratkin society, the spiritual guides and mystics in charge of leading the way in the realms of spirit, and they wouldn't have it any other way. A typical Shadow Seer puts more effort into maintaining close ties and communication with the local spirits than she does with even her own kind.

However, that isn't to say they remain aloof from their brethren. Shadow Seers spend a great deal of time caring for the spiritual well-being of their Pack or Nest. If the Ratkin begin to lose their way or start ignoring the advice of the spirits, it is up to the Shadow Seers to put the Pack or Nest back on the right track. When a Ratkin becomes too erratic and unhinged for even other Ratkin to tolerate, it's up to the Shadow Seers to at least try to provide the spiritual healing that the Ratkin needs in order to function with society once again.

Shadow Seers love hidden secrets and lore, and tend to find it in the strangest of places. They can be commonly found sifting through the garbage and refuse of a particular alley, searching through discarded things for the wisdom other creatures have rejected. Some of the more enlightening knick-knacks they find (which could really be anything from an empty soda can to a broken videocassette tape) they consider holy. They wear such objects proudly, as one might wear jewelry. Since most Shadow Seers wear rags, such accessories tend to fit right in.

Ratkin expect Shadow Seers to be enlightened and spiritual, and since they consider the Rapture to be their most potent tool for reaching enlightenment, it's no surprise that Shadow Seers become quite adept at entering and interpreting Raptures. Some Seers even attempt to purposefully enter the Rapture, though most of the time these efforts are fruitless; when you stop looking so hard for wisdom, many Shadow Seers say, is when it most often makes itself known to you.

One issue that all the shamans seem to be divided on is that of humanity. All agree that humans are a problem, but they simply can't seem to agree on what to do about it. Some Seers desire to help the homeless and the destitute, the outcasts and misfits of human civilization, partly due to compassion and partly due to the fact that they need all the allies they can get in their struggle. Other Seers join the majority of the other Ratkin Aspects in saying that all of humanity is a problem, and just because a human is outcast doesn't mean he's trustworthy or even a useful ally.

Shadow Seers are naturally drawn to places of strong Wyld energies, but each has their own preference as to what flavor of the Wyld they prefer. Rural Seers tend to lean toward quiet places, like peaceful glades and bog islands, the better to meditate and communicate with the local spirits. Such places provide solitude and peace, where a Shadow Seer can reflect upon her last Rapture or attempt to figure out a solution to her present problem. Urban



Seers, on the other hand, prefer the worst, most chaotic and violent neighborhoods in a city, the type of place in which violence is so commonplace that even police fear to tread there. There, potent Wyld energies of a different kind can be found; urban Seers revel in the chaos they find around them, soaking it up like a plant soaks up sunlight.

Every, so often, many Shadow Seers go through short periods in which they lose complete interest in the world of the physical. Such a Shadow Seer no longer concerns herself with matters of the flesh; many in this state will even forget to eat or bathe. Losing herself in the spirit world, the Shadow Seer becomes embroiled in some petty spirit conflict. Such a distraction usually lasts until the spirit matter is resolved, after which the Shadow Seer makes up for her lack of involvement with the physical world by concentrating on it for a time; often by taking care of human matters, be that feeding and clothing some homeless or finding some unworthy humans to torment and kill (depending on how the Shadow Seer in question views the whole humanity problem).

Shadow Seer Kinfolk are a strange lot indeed. The human Kin tend to be true eccentrics of their kind; sometimes insane, but always with a strange sort of insight. Artists, zealots and other such outcasts and revolutionary thinkers make up the majority of their number. Rodent Kin, much like the rodent Kin of the Tunnel Runners, tend to be fascinated by humans. They spend much of their time collecting trinkets humans leave around, and studying the humans that live near them. Whether human or rodent, however, all Shadow Seer Kin tend to prefer solitude and quiet.

All the Shadow Seers in a given region are beholden to the Mystic, should there be one, and Shadow Seers passing through the territory of a Mystic are expected to report any strange spiritual happenings they've witnessed nearby. Few Shadow Seers mind doing so, since the spiritual well-being of every Nest is quite important to them.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Spirit Sight: Much like the Uktena, Shadow Seers have been gifted with an affinity and insight into the spirit world. By spending a Gnosis, a Seer can see what is currently happening in the local Penumbra. Her eyes turn white when she does this, and once this sight is activated, she can no longer see what happens around her in the physical world for as long as it remains active. This phenomenon is referred to as "Disconnection."

Spirits Speak to Me: All Shadow Seers begin play with the Theurge Gift: *Spirit Speech*.

Disconnection: Rapture is something that every Ratkin has to worry about; but the raptures of Shadow Seers are especially dangerous, because they're usually tied in somehow with activity in the Umbra. At these times, it can become very easy for a Shadow Seer to confuse the laws that govern the realm of flesh with those which govern the world of spirit. Raptures for Shadow Seers are moments of epiphany and insight, but nevertheless they can be quite inconvenient.



Free Rite: Seers begin play with the *Dedication Rite* for free.

Knife Skulkers

The Knife Skulkers perform a function to the Ratkin which is similar to that which the Philodox perform for the Garou Nation; they are the keepers and interpreters of their sacred laws, the Litany of Survival. However, Knife Skulkers pride themselves on doing more than merely talking about their laws, like their wolfish cousins; rather, they are also the enforcers of the Litany of Survival, acting to punish its transgressors both within and without Ratkin society.

Many outsiders who do not understand Ratkin ways think of Knife Skulkers as little more than assassins, and they do certainly fulfill such a role at times. However, Knife Skulkers are more than that; they are judge, jury and executioners. By being able to act without the interference of any courts, lawyers, elder councils, or other such silliness, they can single-handedly determine a transgressor's guilt and punishment. Knife Skulkers are not often known for their mercy toward those they punish.

Despite being the keepers of the laws of their kind, Skulkers do not so much believe in laws as they do in the concepts of justice and retribution. Laws can be twisted; they have loopholes that the clever can exploit. True justice cannot be distorted or talked around. Things like motive and precedent matter little. True justice is far more pure than what can be read in any book of human law; you commit a deed a Skulker disapproves of, and he'll see to it that you pay.

Even other Ratkin would be terrified of the Knife Skulkers and their heightened sense of justice, save for one important stipulation under which they have to act: when dealing with other Ratkin, Skulkers can only perform acts of low justice. This means that any punishments meted out must remain minor; acquisition of property, harrassment, loss of Renown, some of the lesser punishment rites, and forcing the wrongdoer to perform some small task are some examples. With the permission of the local ruler, however, this stipulation can be lifted, allowing a Knife Skulker to perform acts of high justice against another Ratkin. This means that pretty much anything goes, up to and including the execution of the transgressor. Such a punishment is usually reserved for Traitors to Ratkin society; Knife Skulkers hate such individuals with a passion, and have a reputation for their dogged, single-minded pursuit of their quarry. When it comes to non-Ratkin, Skulkers are free to use whatever form of punishment they like, so long as they don't break the Litany of Survival in doing so.

Of all the parts of the Litany of Survival, the Ratkin who follow this Aspect tend to hold the preservation of the Veil as the most important. They realize that should they ever become discovered by the humans, winning the War of the Apocalypse would become suddenly much more complicated. Gangs of Ramblers tend to be a bit more careful about their actions when they know a Knife Skulker is about, even if that Knife Skulker has a reputation for



being more anarchistic and flexible than his Kin. Even with the low justice stipulation, most Ratkin are wary of the retribution of the Skulkers.

Before the Impergium, the Knife Skulkers would often be sought out by other supernaturals, especially the other Changing Breeds, to act as mediators in disputes for which no resolution could seemingly be found. Knife Skulkers would apply their own brand of justice in such matters, and did their best to resolve them no matter what means they had to resort to in order to do so. Calling upon a Skulker, for this reason, was often considered only as a last resort. Still, it earned them quite a reputation and the Skulkers were respected for their skills.

This heritage is still alive in the Skulkers today, albeit in a somewhat different form. In these times, many a Knife Skulker chooses to act as a mercenary and/or assassin, hiring his skills out to whomever can both meet his price (in favors, money, or both) and whose goal meets with the Skulker's approval. As forces of retribution, they tend to be rather choosy in which jobs they take, and refuse any job that the Rat Goddess warns them away from. Nevertheless, among those supernaturals that know of the existence of the Knife Skulkers, their skills are held in high demand.

Many Knife Skulkers find such mercenary work distasteful, and choose to work on the behalf of the Rat Incarna directly. Through the Rapture, minor Rat-spirits, and even sometimes direct communication from their Goddess, they are able to better contribute to the fruition of their Mother's goals. These Knife Skulkers tend to be somewhat more concerned with the Spirit World than that of the physical one, for obvious reasons.

Not so much soldiers of the Wyld as they are operatives, Knife Skulkers prefer to look at the big picture and leave the mass mayhem and destruction to the less refined Aspects like the Warriors, Plague Lords and Twitchers. They like to think of themselves as surgical tools for justice and chaos, making certain that their efforts are not wasted. In fact, when not working on a contract, most Knife Skulkers seem calm, patient, even peaceful. Most who meet a Skulker off duty would be shocked at how ruthless and deadly they become suddenly while on the job. Many of their Kin take after the Knife Skulkers in this regard, tending to be quiet and patient. This is true both for their human and rodent kin.

Like any good operatives, they try to keep hidey-holes and safehouses nestled away here and there, scattered around whatever area they tend to frequent. Knife Skulkers like having a place to retreat to and hide if things should get a bit too hot for them, but beyond this they don't really feel the need to lay claim to much territory.

Masters of the *Contract Rite*, Skulkers who work as mercenaries will often refuse to take any sort of job, often even with other Ratkin, without having a contract to back it up. They become awfully good at catching errors and loopholes in such contracts, and many of those who would hope to take advantage of a Skulker through their contract leave the signing quite disappointed.



Of all the Aspects of the Ratkin, the Knife Skulkers are the most used to the roles of leadership; the majority of Rat Kings belong to this Aspect. This is largely because they are the most used to drawing upon the aid of the other Aspects in performing their duties, seeking out the Shadow Seers for spiritual advice, or the Warriors when a large conflict looks imminent. Of all the other Aspects, though, it is the Tunnel Runners upon whom the Knife Skulkers depend the most; information is very valuable to a Knife Skulker, especially the kind of information the Tunnel Runners tend to dig up as the scouts and spies of the Ratkin. Before any important task, a Knife Skulker typically consults one of his Tunneler allies for intelligence to ensure the success of the mission.

Within colonies, Knife Skulkers are charged with making certain that disputes are resolved before they get out of hand. Since they like to concentrate on the bigger picture, they hate to see Ratkin wasting effort and blood on aggressions against other Ratkin. Such disputes are resolved *their way*, which doesn't necessarily mean that either side of the conflict is happy with the resolution.

Knife Skulkers tend to dress neatly and respectably. They never carry weapons openly unless they expect a fight to occur, preferring to rely on smaller, concealed weapons that they can surprise their opponents with, if any. When in Rodens form, the eyes of all Skulkers are red and glow dimly. Most Skulkers say this is because of their burning desire for vengeance against the enemies of their race.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Contracts and Contacts: Knife Skulkers tend to develop reputations among other supernatural creatures as enforcers and judges-for-hire, which allows Knife Skulkers to develop many useful contacts during their careers. Skulker characters start out with three Traits of *Contacts* in addition to their other starting Backgrounds.

Sense of Justice: Ratkin remember well the injustices they suffered during the War of Rage, and the Knife Skulkers make a point of remembering it even better than the rest of their brethren. A Skulker can regain a point of Rage when he witnesses an injustice (Storyteller has final say on what is "unjust").

Assassin's Code: When contracted to assassinate, a Skulker can never allow himself to be seen killing his enemy, confronting his target face-to-face, or striking while obscured by a cloak of shadows. Failing in any of these results in a loss of Cunning Renown, whether or not the contract is fulfilled.

Free Rite: Knife Skulkers begin play with the *Contract Rite* for free.

Warriors

The Warriors are the shock troops in the army of the Wyld. They do not complain about their position; on the contrary, Warriors revel in it. Every Warrior is constantly trying to prove himself, to better himself, in preparation for the final conflict of the Apocalypse.



Warriors come in all sorts of shapes and sizes, from kung-fu martial arts enthusiasts to gun-toting backwoods survivalists. But regardless of what flavor they happen to be, all Warriors have a few things in common, primarily their urge to fight. Warriors rarely need an excuse for a brawl, friendly or not; their Rage is quite strong within them, and a Warrior will fight another, Warrior or not, at the drop of a hat.

They are creatures that represent the violence and rage of the Wyld; they fight against the Weaver fanatically, always trying to find new ways to sever the Mad Weaver's webs for the betterment of their cause. The only ones even more fanatically dedicated to this end are the Twitchers, mostly because the Warriors still keep the overall War effort in mind and avoid going so overboard in the here and now that they end up harming that cause.

However, Warriors do not fight the Wyrms with the same fanaticism. Most try to avoid the Wyrms except when necessary. While they don't feel the Wyrms or its agents are potential allies, the Wyrms are ignored except when they threaten a Ratkin or a Ratkin's interest. The Weaver is a far greater threat, as far as they are concerned.

Warriors are nicknamed the Blade Slaves, for the PainDaggers they wield. A Warrior's Pain Dagger is held in the highest regard and wielded with the utmost of respect. Indeed, to the Warriors, they are holy weapons. A Warrior will never use his Pain Dagger for menial tasks, and many refuse to draw their weapons without taking a life before resheathing them. Ratkin of other Aspects learn quickly to never touch a Warrior's Pain Dagger without permission, since Warriors aren't known for their patience.

Warriors, however, are more than just mindless thugs. Many Warriors hope to someday become Warlords, the military leaders of Ratkin society. Because of this, Warriors train themselves not just in the ways of martial combat, but also in the ways of chaos and confusion, seeking to become masters of demoralizing the enemy. When fighting non-Ratkin foes, Warriors never fight fair — they'll use every trick in the book to mislead their opponent, anything that gives them an advantage.

The more experienced Blade Slaves who live in a colony tend to put a lot of time and effort into ensuring that the nest is properly defended. Warlords will frequently put the Warriors under their charge through drills and tests to ensure that they're in top fighting condition.

Much like the Knife Skulkers, the Warriors sometimes choose to hire themselves out as mercenaries. Blade Slaves who choose this road do this for many of the same reasons the Skulkers do: vengeance, retribution or even just favors and money. While fearsome, Warriors tend to lack the finesse that has earned the Knife Skulkers such reputations, and so they find themselves in slightly less demand.

Warriors are, by and large, a fairly insecure bunch. When two Blade Slaves come into contact with one another for the first time, they'll feel the need to prove which one is strongest. The method used to determine the better fighter is always non-lethal combat, though the form of combat can



vary. Blade Slaves prefer Knife Skulkers to preside as judges over such duels, and when this happens, some very interesting duels can take place depending on the creativity of the Knife Skulker in question; battles atop a tightrope, or blindfolded on a series of moving conveyer belts are some examples.

Likewise, each Warrior tends to have a favorite fighting style, and professes his own fighting style to be superior to all the others. The martial artists among this Aspect call their styles *fists*. Survivalists and brawlers usually refer to theirs as simply kicking ass. A Warrior tries to keep some sort of indication of his own particular style in his clothing, even if only subtly; perhaps a pair of homemade nunchaku for a martial artist, or a camo jacket for the Ratkin who prefers guns.

When spending time in the human world, Warriors tend to gravitate toward those places that they can study and enhance their fighting styles, whether it's dojo or an army surplus store. Many of the human Kin of the Warriors can be found in such locations, often running them; all human Kin are fascinated with martial life.

Rodent Kinfolk of the Blade Slaves tend to be nasty, violent little furballs. Always picking a fight with their own kind and others, they have a mean streak a mile wide and tend to be much braver than the average rat.

Warlords lead the Warrior Ratkin in a colony. Any Warriors passing through the territory are expected to report to the local Warlord. Unfortunately, this sometimes equates to temporary recruitment in the defense of the colony, so some Blade Slave ramblers will conveniently forget to report if their stay isn't going to be too long.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Blade Slaves: Warriors are able to access one of the charms used by the spirit of the Pain Dagger; this costs a number of *Fetish* Background points equal to the power level of the Charm, and requires the expenditure of a Gnosis each time the Charm is used. Other Ratkin can also wield Pain Daggers by declaring it as a three-Trait *Fetish*, but they cannot use the Charm bound inside a ceremonial blade. Only Warriors may perform the *Rite of the Pain Dagger*.

Buff and Tough: Due to a combination of careful breeding and strenuous training, all Ratkin Warriors get an extra Healthy health level to reflect their superior muscle mass.

Blood Lust: Warriors frenzy more easily than most Ratkin, and must spend two Willpower instead of one to avoid frenzy. As well, the difficulty in the challenge to avoid frenzy is always five Traits for a Ratkin Warrior, regardless of any other factors.

Free Rite: All Warriors start out with the *Rite of the Pain Dagger* for free.

Engineers

In the Dawn of Time, the rodent progenitors of the Engineers would sneak into the primitive human communities and steal away tools or inventions



that they deemed humanity not ready to possess. When stealing was impossible due to circumstances or the nature of the object in question, they would turn to sabotage, ensuring that whatever ingenious device the humans had come up with would fail to work. Many of the legends of gremlins have their foundation in the actions of the Ratkin who would eventually become the Engineers.

In the 20th century, the use of various strains of domestic rats in scientific experiments and studies became quite commonplace. Eventually, some Ratkin Kinfolk were introduced into these studies, and through a combination of breeding, tests, chemicals, shocks and proximity to the Weaver, these rats were changed forever. Many believe that this is how the Caged Folk came into being, but it is without a doubt the source of this strange Freak Aspect, often nicknamed the Lab Rats.

Born of highly intelligent rats, all Ratkin Engineers, regardless of their breed, have an intimate knowledge of the Weaver, due to their close proximity to humanity and its strange technologies. Ever since the Dawn of Time, they've studied humanity, but it is perhaps the greatest irony that they learned the most about their subjects when they themselves were being studied by humans. Today, Engineers frequently infiltrate corporate offices, laboratories and machine factories, in the hopes of discovering more Weaver secrets that they can exploit to their own ends.

The thing that fascinates Engineers most is technology. Some other Ratkin Aspects, especially the fanatical Twitchers, misunderstand and distrust the Engineers because of this. Lab Rats, however, profess that technology is not inherently evil; rather, it's inherently neutral, nothing more than a tool that happens to be in the wrong hands. Engineers spend much of their free time collecting widgets, doodads and thingamabobs with which to create their next innovation of technology. Because of their rare views on technology and their unique insights into human civilization, Engineers tend to espouse a more purposeful revolution than is preferred by the more violent and Rage-filled of their brethren.

All Engineers are fanatically protective of the Veil, often rivaling even the Knife Skulkers. They feel they have far too much to lose should the humans ever become aware of their strange activities. This is especially true of the rodents of their number, who live in fear of being caught and spirited away to an awful, legendary laboratory they call the Big Shiny Place. Any Engineer who goes to that place, so the legends go, is lost forever.

Lab Rats are excellent monkeywrenchers, frequently putting their attention and skills to use at sabotaging the workings of the most threatening of human projects they can find. Whether they sneak in as temp workers or vermin hiding in the walls, Engineers find it extremely easy to gain access to any place they might wish.

Members of this Freak Aspect are very egotistical about their creations. They tend to become obsessed with their latest invention or project, and no



matter how impractical or far-fetched it seems, they are convinced that the completed product will change the world forever and allow the Ratkin to gain dominance over the Earth. Of course, they quickly overcome their disappointment of the invention's failure to meet their expectations when they move on to their next project.

It's this egotism that led to the creation of the Tech Duel tradition. Most Engineers prefer to keep a large distance between each other, geographically speaking, because each is convinced of the superiority of his or her own technical genius. Being so highly competitive, when the egos of two Engineers clash, the Tech Duel is the result. Each Engineer is given a certain amount of time with which to collect the parts for, and build, a battle machine. Two machines enter the arena, but only one comes out, establishing the dominance of the winner.

Rodens and metis Lab Rats don't understand human terms for objects, coming up with their own names for things, in terms more readily understandable by a rat. For example, instead of calling it a car, a rodens Engineer would refer to it as a shiny, boxed people-mover. Homid Engineers are a bit better; they at least can understand human terms for things, though they have a devil of a time remembering which word means what. Homids aren't proud, either; they'll gladly make up their own word for things, if they have trouble grokking them.

Engineers who are associated with an infestation put their skills to use by building traps to help protect the Nest, and making things more convenient there. Those infestations blessed with the attention of an Engineer typically sport water-powered elevators, colored electrical lighting, or networks of tunnels designed for speedy, Engineer-created vehicles, for example.

The Kinfolk of the Engineers, both human and rodent, are invariably pack rats of the worst order, collecting all sorts of junk from junkyards and thrift stores whenever a chance presents itself. Full-blooded Engineers aren't any better, except in putting the junk they find to use. All Lab Rats bear visible signs that betray their true nature, suffering from one or more of the maladies one might expect to find in a domestic rat, such as poor eyesight, albinism or odd-colored pelts.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Jury-Rig: Engineers are great at slapping together the craziest of devices in a rush. Once per day, the Engineer can craft such a device out of whatever materials she happens to have at hand. When finished with her invention, she must spend at least one point of Gnosis (or more depending on the size of the creation) and succeed in a Mental Challenge (retest with *Repair*). The device can have almost any function the Engineer wishes it to, so long as it is within the realm of the possible with today's level of technology (no death-rays, no teleport chambers, no holodecks, no kidding). The device can function for at least a full scene, but eventually breaks down and cannot be fixed. Anything bigger than a large dog won't work. Bigger creations are the province of the Gift *Mousetrap*.



Idle Hands: Like any Ratkin, Engineers have opposable thumbs in Rodens form. Unlike other Ratkin, Engineers have grown even more adept at using them, receiving two bonus Traits in challenges involving fine manipulation while in this form.

They Call You Mad: There's a fine line between genius and insanity, and you cross that line on a regular basis. Every Engineer suffers from one of the following derangements. Other Ratkin can buy these Flaws, but Engineers receive one of them for free:

Curiosity: When presented with a technological phenomenon, make a Static Willpower Challenge against five Traits or you must investigate.

Absent-Mindedness: Make a Static Mental Challenge against nine Traits to remember crucial facts when you're in the middle of a technological investigation.

Delusions of Grandeur: You think you're all that and a bag of chips. You like to make loud, dramatic statements about how your latest invention will change the world forever.

Kleptomania: Make a Static Willpower Challenge against five Traits to avoid taking that little widget that would be just *perfect* for your next creation.

Free Rite: Engineers receive the *Rite of the Shopping Cart* free.

Plague Lords

Ratkin have always had reputations as masters of disease, and indeed all Ratkin Elders have the potential to learn to harness such a weapon. One has to wonder, though, whether they have this reputation thanks to the tormented creatures that call themselves the Plague Lords.

The Plague Lords are one of the Freak Aspects, driven away from the physical realm long ago during the War of Rage. There they waited and brooded in their hiding place, ever watchful for their opportunity for revenge. Once, hundreds of years ago during a particularly dark period of human history, they surfaced and put their skills to use on the world, creating the Black Plague. Many of the Changing Breeds were convinced that this Plague heralded the Apocalypse, but unfortunately for the Lords, they failed in their task, and returned to their hiding places in the spirit world. Now they have resurfaced once again, sensing the end of the Age of Man and wanting to do their part to help speed the transition along. There are many new viruses and diseases for them to study, master and use, and they enjoy seeking out dark powers for tutelage in such arts.

All members of this Aspect are invariably metis; if there were ever any rodents or homid Plague Lords, it was so long ago that these individuals have been forgotten. The Plague Lords themselves have theories on the reason behind this; some say that only the deformed metis could understand pain and suffering enough to truly master it.

The Plague Lords are related to the strain of black rat responsible for the Black Plague. Those rats were eventually driven out by the hardier, more



common brown rat that most other Ratkin are descended from. Perhaps it is due to this heritage that most Ratkin distrust and fear the Plague Lords. Regardless of the reasons, members of this Freak Aspect have the hardest time gaining acceptance within a Rat Pack. Despite having ingenious instincts, they rarely get along with other Ratkin. At best, it can be said that they are tolerated.

Though they lack the Gifts needed to make journeys into places like the Shadowlands, this doesn't keep them from consorting with the creatures who live there. Plague Lords are fascinated with disease, pain and death, and value the insight that wraiths and Spectres can grant them. Lords think nothing of helping such beings with whatever they want done in the world of flesh, willingly causing pain and death should such creatures wish it in return for their secrets.

Just as the Engineers have an affinity with the Weaver, so too do the Plague Lords have an affinity with the Wyrms. Plague Lords study the Wyrms very closely, feeling that such knowledge is necessary to finally defeat it if the Ratkin race is to have a chance of winning the War of the Apocalypse. Other Ratkin tend to worry that spending so much time in the proximity of dark creatures of the Wyrms tends to put Plague Lords at risk of corruption. In fact, many Plague Lords do fall to the Wyrms. It's not uncommon for a Plague Lord to even enter into a contract to serve the Wyrms for a time, doing his bidding for the contract's duration (always short-term). The Lords who follow this path always serve their temporary masters diligently, with one important exception; they never betray their own race, no matter how much they fall under the thrall of the Wyrms. Strangely enough, such corruption is always temporary. After one cycle of the moon, the Plague Lord will be purged of any taint of the Wyrms and any influence that may have come over them, able to return to Ratkin society to play their part in the war effort once again, only now they'll have valuable information on the Wyrms that only one of his servants could have ever managed. Plague Lords seem to be unique in this regard, as no other creature known is so resistant to Wyrms-taint.

Plague Lords tend to gravitate to the most decrepit, squalid and impoverished areas of a city, the places where disease has the best chance to run rampant should an outbreak occur. That is, of course, assuming one hasn't already occurred. Because every Plague Lord is gifted with great medical skill, hospital wards are also popular; many Plague Lords even hold jobs in hospitals as doctors or nurses. This gives them invaluable opportunities to study disease, pain, and the effects that both have on their most common victim, the human body. The more ruthless among them even use this knowledge to create an outbreak of disease in an area relatively near their hospital, providing them with an ample source of patients to study. When a Plague Lord tires of his job and decides to move on, the state he or she leaves the place in is rarely a very pretty sight.

Power lust is a common Trait among Plague Lords. Being highly cunning, they can sometimes even manage to become Rat Kings, despite being metis



and so distrusted by other Ratkin. These Plague Kingdoms are dark, foreboding places that even other Ratkin are hesitant to tread, and where disease and death run rampant among the human population in the areas surrounding the Nest.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Medical Genius: With their incredible understanding of disease and its effects on the human (and not quite human) body, all Plague Lords receive the Ability: *Medicine* x 3 free at character creation.

Personal Plague: During their first year of servitude, every Plague Lord is chosen by either a Pain-spirit or a specific Disease-spirit. These are resourceful spirits; they possess an expanding knowledge of the Wyrms and can travel into the Shadowlands with enough effort. This allows the Plague Lord to learn related *Lores* from the spirit more easily than other characters. Some Plague Lords incorporate the name of their chosen disease into their own.

Servitor of Corruption: Their spirit-companion comes with a price; the disease that chooses the Plague Lord expects favors in return for its patronage. Sometimes, the wererat may be asked to help spread its particular brand of ailment, and the spirit can be quite resentful if the Plague Lord fails or refuses. Because of the visible effects of their chosen disease, Plague Lords can never bid an Appearance-based Social Trait in a challenge, save against other creatures who care little for appearances (i.e., Nosferatu, Wyrms-spirits, other Plague Lords, etc.) They can still possess such Traits — they simply can't bid them except against those individuals who fall under that description.

Free Rite: All Plague Lords begin the game with *Rite of the Birthing Plague* free.

Munchmausen

Perhaps the most recently arrived of the Freak Aspects, the Munchmausen all claim to hail from distant, strange realms within the Umbra, kingdoms long since lost or perhaps never even existing in the first place. Some of them even claim to come from the fabled homelands of the fae; for this reason, they are often called Arcadian Ratkin, or Moon Mice. Regardless of where they are from, according to their stories they are either exiles from their homes, or lost travelers seeking to find a way back, but not before having a few adventures with which to make tales.

Meeting a Munchmausen is not an easily forgotten event. Munchmausen have an incredible force of personality and egos to match. Every last one of them considers him- or herself as the greatest adventurer of all time, and they have stories aplenty to back up the claim. Munchmausen are legendary storytellers and skillful liars. It's extremely difficult to *not* sit in rapt attention when a Moon Mouse is weaving one of his fanciful, adventurous tales. Most seem too outrageous to believe, and indeed they are, but nevertheless many Munchmausen are so skilled at the telling that the listeners find themselves convinced of the truth behind the tale, regardless of how ridiculous it actually is.



When a listener is skeptical enough to challenge the authenticity of such a tale, the Munchmausen's honor is offended; he will demand satisfaction. The duels that result are never lethal, but extremely flashy, regardless. When the egos of two Munchmausen collide, such a duel is frequently the result, but not until after they've had a chance to compare tales in hopes of proving who's had the greatest adventures. Such tale comparisons are, of course, futile, but nevertheless highly entertaining for anyone lucky enough to be present.

A Moon Mouse going through a factual adventure, rather than one concocted in his own mind, tends to collect trophies with which to remember his ordeals and obstacles. These trophies, often mundane-looking items, become prized possessions for the Ratkin in question. Unfortunately, when later recalling the events of an adventure a trophy represents, he sometimes seem to recall certain parts incorrectly, always in a way that makes the adventure seem more dramatic than it actually was.

Although habitual liars, one can never accuse a Munchmausen of being cowardly. If a Munchmausen smells an adventure, little will daunt his courage enough to prevent him from taking on a task. They have their limits, of course, but those limits tend to be far beyond where a normal Ratkin would draw the line. They consider themselves to be courageous. Other Ratkin consider them to be insane.

A Munchmausen's favorite type of adventure, however, is one involving the Umbra. Umbral adventures, especially when they involve a Moon Mouse, tend to be dramatic, elaborate affairs that can last for quite some time; such quests are the bread and butter on which members of this Freak Aspect survive. Of course, as any Umbral traveler will tell you, if a creature spends too much time in the Umbra, sooner or later he'll lose his physical form, becoming a creature of pure spirit. This is true for the Munchmausen as well, but their close affinity to the Wyld, combined with the fact that this Aspect dwelled solely in the Umbra for so many centuries, provides them with a resistance to such a dire fate. It always takes much longer for a Munchmausen to lose his physical form than it would another traveler in the Umbra.

The Moon Mice have three types of Kinfolk. The first are humans, the vast majority of whom have trouble dealing with reality. One can typically find such Kin in asylums or gibbering incoherently on the street. Those who aren't quite that far gone still have a great deal of trouble fitting in. Their rodent Kin like to make their homes in the strangest of places, such as the fairy-tale section in a library, or in the very center of a hedge maze outside a mansion. However, by far their most eccentric Kin are the Rat-spirits related to the Munchmausen. These creatures choose to dwell in strange places in the Deep Umbra, usually in the space to be found between realms.

Contrary to what one might expect, Munchmausen in *Homid* form dress quite plainly. Ever wary of their many enemies, both real and imagined, they consider it safer to blend in with a crowd. Their true natures, however, become apparent when they shift to *Crinos* or *Rodens* forms; by use of the *Rite*



of *Artifice Dedication*, their preferred regalia appears, most often the sort one would expect to see on a dashing swashbuckler. Regardless of what form they happen to be wearing at the time, all Munchmausen have a flair for the dramatic, in both word and deed.

Strengths and Weaknesses

The Beautiful Lie: Munchmausen elevate lying to an art. Once per day, a Munchmausen can tell a lie, even an elaborate or unbelievable one, and the listeners will believe it to be true. This requires a successful Social Challenge against the target, with the Munchmausen having four bonus Traits, and if successful, the target will believe the lie for the rest of the session. If used against a group, use the target with the most number of Social Traits. Any other lies that a Munchmausen tells in a day usually pale in comparison.

Poetic License: Munchmausen start the game with the Abilities *Expression* x 3. Liars or not, they're incredible storytellers.

Self-Deception: Every Munchmausen sees reality in a way much different than the norm; this error in perception can even sometimes result in seeing people and things that don't really exist. This outrageous delusion is believed wholeheartedly by the Munchmausen, and can never be dispelled by any means.

Free Rite: The Munchmausen's love of fine garments grants them the *Rite of Artifice Dedication* for free.

Twitchers

Of all the Ratkin, the Warriors tend to be the most skilled in combat and warfare. But the Twitchers also lay claim to the title of the most dangerous. The Twitchers consider themselves the only Aspect that has wholly dedicated itself to the Wyld, looking down upon their Ratkin brothers and sisters as being too restrained, too careful.

Of all the Aspects, the Twitchers hate the Weaver in all its forms the most and wage continual war against their perceived enemies. Unfortunately, all Twitchers suffer from some paranoid delusion involving the Weaver, which makes them perceive enemies in places where there are none. Even if someone could convince your typical Twitcher that his paranoia is misguided, it likely wouldn't matter, since Twitchers revel in violence, mayhem and chaos. They look for any excuse to cause it. It's not uncommon for a Twitcher to be heard commenting that he doesn't consider a day to be well spent unless he gets to blow something up. They love destruction, and even other Ratkin feel that Twitchers go overboard more often than not.

Twitchers hate rules and authority. While a typical Ratkin simply ignores human law, Twitchers purposefully flaunt it. To a typical Twitcher, even the Litany of Survival is merely a set of suggestions. Knife Skulkers are very wary when a Twitcher is in the area, since their disregard for the Veil is quite well known. It's rare for a group of Twitchers to bow to a Rat King, much less even approach a Tribe or Infestation. Not that Twitchers often travel in groups;



they're too dangerous for even their own kind. Most don't really believe in Aspects, and dislike the social divisions that they cause; a Ratkin is a Ratkin. Therefore, when two Twitchers meet, often the only things they have in common are their paranoia and their need for violence. Sadly, they sometimes turn these Traits on each other.

Other Ratkin like to put a bit of distance between themselves and Twitchers. They're Ratkin, and servants of the Wyld, true, but the Wyld sometimes has a habit of harming those who would help it. Essentially, other Ratkin look at Twitchers as powerful explosives; if carefully used and directed, they can be quite useful, but the potential to blow yourself up is always there.

Most Twitchers, before their Infection, were the desperate and the damned, the type of individuals that tended to fall between the cracks at the foundations of human civilization. Perhaps this is the source of their bitterness and rage toward the Weaver and the Lie that she has created.


Twitcher human Kinfolk are quite varied. Most are criminals, misfits and even psychopaths. However, a significant number are simply ordinary people leading mundane, monotonous lives, able to eke out an existence but little more. This creates a very cynical attitude, but little else. One never knows, though, whether such a seemingly ordinary Kinfolk will eventually snap. Many a disgruntled postal worker has a claim to a bit of Twitcher blood. A Twitcher's rodent Kin are vermin in every sense of the word; nasty, mean-spirited creatures who simply want to destroy, ruin and inflict pain.

Strengths and Weaknesses

Anonymity: Twitchers benefit from a natural anonymity, making it difficult for other Ratkin to remember them, and practically impossible for most humans to do so. A wererat trying to remember a Twitcher's identity requires a successful Static Gnosis Challenge against a difficulty of eight Traits. Humans trying to remember a Twitcher's identity require a Static Willpower Challenge against a difficulty of eight Traits.

Impulse Control Problems: Twitchers frequently seem to live just on the edge of frenzy, with a constant build-up of Rage. Whenever a Twitcher gains a Rage Trait, he may make a Simple Test — win-only for Ranks 1 through 3, win or tie for Ranks 4 and 5. If he wins, he gains another Rage Trait, and may make another test. This continues until the Twitcher either fails or reaches his maximum Rage.

Paranoid Delusions: *The Government is Trying to Keep Us in the Dark. Big Brother is Watching. Aliens are Taking Control of Our Minds Through Our Breakfast Cereals.* Whatever the delusion, all Twitchers suffer from paranoia and supplement it with elaborate conspiracy theories, the most common having something to do with the Weaver. Twitchers tend to see agents of the Weaver wherever they go. When their comrades don't take their warnings seriously, Twitchers will sometimes go to great (read: violent) lengths to prove themselves. All Twitchers receive the Derangement *Paranoia*, but gain no freebies or bonuses for it.



Free Rite: Twitchers receive the *Rite of the Cardboard Palace*.

Gifts

Beginning Ratkin characters receive three Basic Gifts, one each from their Breed Gifts, Aspect Gifts and General Gifts. Available Gifts from breeds and Aspects are listed above in the short descriptions, and the General Gifts are listed below. See below for longer descriptions of these Gifts.

General Gifts

Basic

- **Cloak of Shadows:** The Ratkin can use his mastery of shadows to hide himself and anything or anyone she is touching in darkness. This requires the expenditure of one Gnosis and a variable number of Social Traits, depending on the area that the Ratkin wishes to cloak. For one Social Trait, the Ratkin can cloak herself. For three Traits, she could include an additional three other human-sized people, or an object as large as a small car. For five Traits, she could get a dozen people besides herself, or a tractor-trailer truck. If a witness is present when the Ratkin attempts to cloak, a Social Challenge (retest with *Stealth*) is required to hide successfully. This only works where shadows are already present, such as outdoors at night or under a cloth-covered table indoors. This Gift will not work in the middle of a brightly-lit ballroom or the like. If able, the Ratkin may move in the shadow at a slow walk and whisper without dispelling the effect. Talking out loud, attacking or otherwise interacting with the environment breaks the effect. The Gift lasts for one scene.

- **Crawling Chaos:** Rats are great climbers, and this Gift allows a Ratkin to take after his smaller relatives in this regard. With a successful Static Physical Challenge of varying difficulty (four Traits for wood, up to a full nine Traits for glass or ice, retest with *Athletics*), the Ratkin is able to climb across almost any substance, even catch onto them in mid-fall. It's even possible to go upside-down and defy gravity, though doing so raises the difficulty of the challenge by one Trait. This Gift lasts for one scene.

- **Darksight:** By spending a Gnosis Trait, the Ratkin can magnify her natural night-vision to the point where she can see in complete darkness for up to a scene or an hour. Additionally, it allows the Ratkin to potentially see through supernatural illusions, such as the Uktena Gift *Invisibility* and the vampire Disciplines of *Obtenebration*, *Obfuscate* or *Chimerstry*. In order to succeed at this, the Ratkin's Rank must be equal to or greater than the Rank of the supernatural creature creating such an effect. If the Ratkin's Rank is greater, she succeeds automatically. If they are equal, it requires a Mental Challenge (retest with *Occult*). Treat vampires as being Rank 2 in general, modified up or down according to generation and power, while mages have



a rank roughly equivalent to their Arete minus two, with a minimum of Rank One.

- **Deep Pockets:** Some Ratkin love collecting all sorts of odd things to carry around with them. This Gift is indispensable to such Ratkin, as it allows her to store far more in her clothing pockets than she should really be able to, making room to carry around all sorts of neat things. By spending a Gnosis, a Ratkin can hide an extra small item inside a pocket; such an item has to have the dimensions necessary to fit inside the pocket normally — things like bottle caps, spent shell casings, gum, not guns or LAW-rockets. For each additional Mental Trait spent, she can hide another item there. These items effectively take up no space within the pocket, and cannot be found should anyone deem to search her. However, losing her pocket (or her clothes) will cause the items within to be lost forever. Spending a Rage Trait allows the items to be recalled from her pockets instantly, if she should ever need to have fast access to an item hidden there; otherwise, retrieving an item costs nothing, but once removed this Gift has to be activated for the item to be replaced. Items hidden will remain indefinitely.

- **Resist Toxin:** As the Fianna Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Shadow Throw:** Ratkin are such masters of shadow that they can even turn it into a weapon. By calling upon this mastery and focusing her anger, the Ratkin with this Gift is able to form a shadowy field of power around any sharp object designed to be thrown. This shadowy field propels the weapon even great distances, and causes it to cut deeper than the item normally would. Using this Gift requires the expenditure of a Rage Trait, after which the weapon must be immediately thrown; if successful, the weapon inflicts two levels of aggravated damage. The target must be within line of sight, and the weapon requires a Mental Challenge to strike (retest with *Athletics*).

- **Smell Poison:** Ratkin enjoy using poison as a weapon against their enemies, which only makes them even more aware of how dangerous a weapon it can be when used against them. By spending a Gnosis Trait, the Ratkin detects the location of any poisonous or toxic material nearby her (in this case, nearby means within 20 feet). Detection is automatic, but a Mental Challenge (retest with *Medicine*) is required to learn what type of poison and knowledge as to how it's used. Some Ratkin like to use this Gift to help them procure poisons for their own personal use.

- **Snitch:** Ratkin love secrets. This Gift enables a Ratkin to acquire such secrets more easily, granting her the ability to read the lips of any person whose face she can see. As well, she can hear the whispers of anyone within line-of-sight. Use of this Gift requires a successful Mental Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*). Should the challenge fail, a Gnosis Trait can be spent to have a Rat-spirit snatch up some fragment of the conversation (which may or may not be helpful).

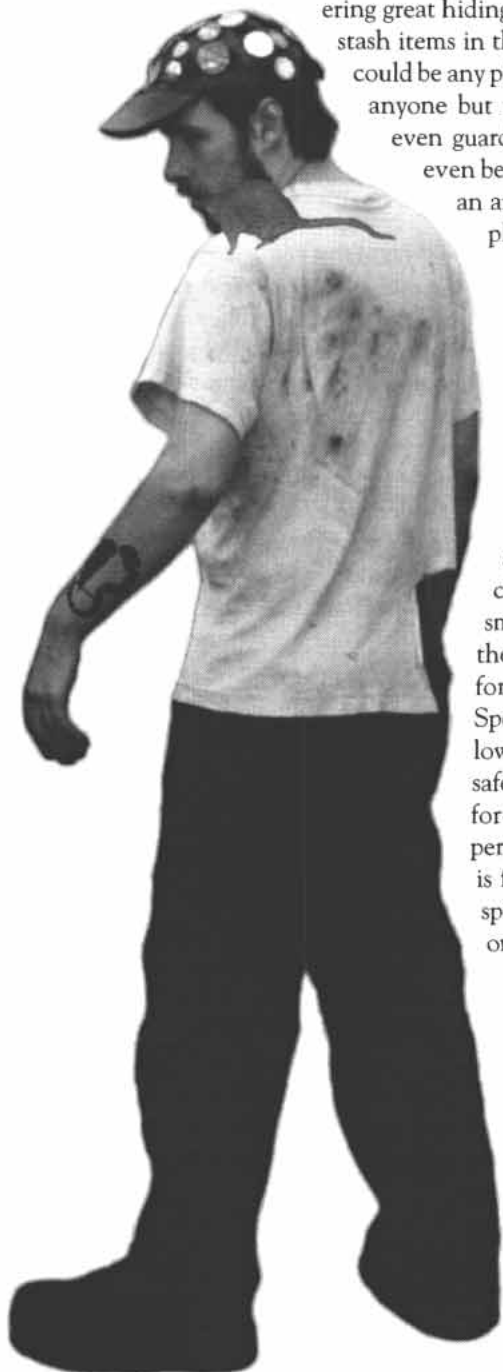
- **Stash Cache:** Many Ratkin prefer to keep everything they own with them at all times, but unfortunately sometimes they have to stash something



in a safe place for one reason or another. This Gift draws upon a Ratkin's innate knack for discovering great hiding places to find ways to safely stash items in the Umbra. The hiding place could be any place that's extremely hard for anyone but the Ratkin to find, possibly even guarded over by a Rat-spirit. It's even been known for a Ratkin to use an area within the Gauntlet as a

place to stash things. Unfortunately, Rat-spirits sometimes skim a bit off the top of the things stashed in this way, by way of payment for teaching the Gift in the first place.

To use the gift, the Ratkin makes a standard Gnosis Challenge against the local Gauntlet rating. If she succeeds, she's found a clever place to stash an object smaller than a backpack, and the object will remain safe there for a minimum of one day. Spending additional Gnosis allows the hiding place to remain safe for additional days on a one-for-one basis. Once the safe period is over, though, the cache is fair game for any wandering spirit. A Ratkin can always find one of her own caches.





Intermediate

- **Attunement:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Backbite:** Many supernaturals quickly learn to never turn their backs on a Ratkin. Unfortunately, thanks to this Gift, that's sometimes not enough. By spending one Rage and one Gnosis, the Ratkin can utilize the Umbra to instantly "teleport" behind an opponent, gaining an automatic surprise attack. This surprise attack is very hard to avoid; the only way to negate it is if the victim has *Danger Sense*, *Evasion*, the *Paranoia* Derangement or a similar supernatural ability, and had some way to suspect the attack was coming. This is a favorite of both the Knife Skulker and the Warrior Aspects.

- **Bolt!:** Many Ratkin pride themselves on being smart enough to know when it's prudent to run away. Unfortunately, sometimes a Ratkin will find herself in a bad situation where running away is difficult or even impossible. This Gift is the answer to such dangerous situations, practically ensuring the Ratkin's escape even when completely surrounded. By spending one Gnosis, the Ratkin can instantly teleport (via the Umbra) up to 50 feet away, as long as her destination is within her line of sight, and then gain the bit of extra speed needed for her to immediately declare Fair Escape. *Halt the Coward's Flight* will not prevent the Ratkin from leaping through the Umbra, but it will prevent the Fair Escape (at least temporarily), giving the Garou time to catch up with his Ratkin foe. A Ratkin who Bolts from a battle, then returns after Bolting will lose two temporary Traits of Cunning Renown.

- **Gnaw:** As the Lupus Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Mind of the Tunnels:** By spending a Willpower Trait and making a Mental Challenge (retest with *Empathy*), the Ratkin may communicate with any other Ratkin she knows, regardless of the distance between the two of them. Total communication of things emotional, mental and spiritual is possible between them. With additional Mental Challenges, additional Ratkin can be added. The Ratkin must have personally met each additional Ratkin once; Blood Memory is not enough.

During the communication, the user of the Gift remains in control of the network and can direct what each Ratkin receives from the others. This way, she can exclude one member of the network from a message that reaches the rest, without the individual knowing about it. Moreover, it's possible to share each other's senses, even at great distances. It's not possible to take information from other Ratkin by force through use of this gift; they have to be willing.

- **Squeeze:** Just like ordinary rats, Ratkin are capable of fitting through the smallest of openings when necessary. By spending a Willpower and succeeding in a Static Physical Challenge (retest with *Enigmas*), the Ratkin may pass through a wall, door or other obstacle by squeezing through the Umbra. The challenge is normally at a difficulty of six Traits, though "squeezing" through solid objects is a difficulty of eight Traits. At a difficulty of 10 Traits, the Ratkin can even bring another person with him.



Advanced

- **Perfect Poison:** By spending a Gnosis Trait, the Ratkin's spittle becomes a deadly and subtle poison. This poison, which is both odorless and colorless, causes one aggravated wound per turn once in the bloodstream. The poison runs its course and causes damage for 10 turns; if the victim can survive that long, the poison exudes through his sweat glands.

Shapechangers who possess Rage may spend a Rage Trait each turn to automatically win that turn's Simple Test and thereby avoid damage, but as a result will be forced to test for frenzy. *Resist Toxin* can negate this poison, but *Mother's Touch* will not. Ratkin sometimes lick a blade to coat it with this poison; the poison, when used in this way, continues to be effective for up to three hours or until finally used.

- **Plague Bite:** The Plague Lords aren't the only Ratkin with powers over disease. By spending a Gnosis and succeeding in a bite attack, the Ratkin can transmit a virulent disease into a victim. This disease ravages the victim's body, causing one level of aggravated damage per hour, and putting the victim three Traits down in all challenges. *Resist Toxin* and similar Gifts can cure this, but otherwise *Plague Bite* continues to inflict damage until the victim reaches the Incapacitated health level. At this, the victim is permitted a final Static Physical Challenge against eight Traits (the three-Trait penalty does not affect this). Success means that the victim remains sick for another day or so, but lives. Failure means death. Shapechangers cannot die from this disease, though they can suffer all its other effects. The symptoms of this disease aren't pretty, and frequently include drooling, incessant shaking and even a pustulant oozing from the mucous membranes of the victim. Other Ratkin can also eat the flesh of a *Plague Bite* victim and become carriers for one day. Vampires cannot die from *Plague Bite*, but they will slip into torpor on reaching Incapacitated, and will pass on the disease when they feed. Ratkin and their Kin are immune to this Gift, and are very careful about invoking it, as it sends up a flare signaling their presence to the local Garou.

- **Riot:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Survivor:** Similar to the Bone Gnawer Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**, but with the following change. The Ratkin spends one Gnosis Trait, and the effects last for a day. She also gains Tenacious x 3, may ignore all wound penalties and gains a Willpower Trait if she is about to die.

Homid Gifts

Basic

- **Cooking:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

- **Eau de Rat:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift *Odious Aroma*, except it works on humans and Weaver Gafflings and Jagglings only. Gafflings under the effects of this Gift are likely to flee in fear; others are merely repulsed, as per the Gift's description.



• **Instinct:** Even the homids among the Ratkin have very strong instincts, and with the knowledge gained from constantly fighting to suppress these instincts, homid Ratkin have learned to force their victims to act on their inner impulses by intensifying their victim's instincts and emotions. The Ratkin must perform some act which the target finds highly annoying, then spend a Rage Trait and defeat the target in a Social Challenge. If successful, the Ratkin can make her victim become overwhelmed by instinct, causing him to follow his own basest impulse for a brief moment (the effects last for just one turn, though this is frequently enough to create a nasty situation to the Ratkin's satisfaction). At Narrator's discretion, the player should name the first thing that comes to mind; should this be insufficient, the Narrator is free to come up with something suitably nasty. Reactions can be petty or brutal, depending on the target's frame of mind. The effects last for one turn.

• **Persuasion:** Similar to the basic Garou Homid Gift (see *Laws of the Wild*) but with the following modifications. The Ratkin spends a Gnosis Trait and makes a Social Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*). The effects last for one scene.

• **Sticky Fingers:** Thievery is often a favorite pastime of Ratkin, and with this Gift a Ratkin can make even the most skilled pickpocket seem like an amateur. Bumping into the target, a handshake, a tap on the shoulder; even the most casual of contact with suffice, allowing the Ratkin to lift whatever she needs without the victim even being aware. This requires a successful Static Physical Challenge (retest with *Subterfuge*), with a difficulty depending on the object's accessibility.

Note that even if the Ratkin fails, it doesn't mean she was caught; it just means she has to try harder next time. Only through repeated failures in using this Gift will a subject notice anything untoward.

Difficulty Object's Accessibility

- 6 Sitting in plain sight
- 7 Clutched in someone's hand
- 8 In a pocket or on a wrist
- 9 Around someone's neck or prominently worn
- 10 Encased in something else (like a briefcase or a wallet)

Intermediate

• **Attunement:** As the Bone Gnawer Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Body Wrack;** As the Black Fury Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Of Rat and Man:** Most Ratkin have only three forms. However, with practice, homid Ratkin of at least the third Rank can develop a fourth form. This extra form combines some of the features of both their Homid and Crinos forms, not unlike what one might imagine a Ratkin Glabro form would look like. Looking mostly human, the Ratkin will take on exaggerated "rattish" features, such as beady eyes, gnarled hands or larger, feral-looking ears. Ratkin enjoy using this form when trying to be sneaky, both in word and deed, as they



find it makes attempts at such tasks much easier. Taking this form requires the expenditure of one Rage Trait and one turn spent shifting. The Ratkin receives the bonus Physical Traits: *Quick* and *Lithe*, and the bonus mental Traits: *Alert* x2. Additionally while in this form she receives two bonus Traits in all challenges related to *Subterfuge* and *Stealth*.

- **Reshape Object:** As the Homid Garou Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.

Advanced

- **Ugly Truth:** As the Homid Gift *Part the Veil*, except that it must be activated through a bite or claw attack against the human victim. The Ratkin must also make a Social Challenge against the victim (retest with *Empathy*) and spend a Gnosis Trait. The victim will also suffer from periodic visions similar in nature to those granted by the Birthing Plague for the duration of the Gift's effects. At the end of the Gift's effects, at the Ratkin's option, the victim will suffer an aggravated wound by way of punishment, or he may die of the disease now pouring through his system. This Gift is often used to show certain humans the error of their ways. See **Laws of the Wild** for further details.

Metis Gifts

Basic

- **Cloak of Shadows:** As the General Gift.
- **Rat Mother's Touch:** Many metis are used to patching up their more rambunctious rat-siblings. Spend a Gnosis Trait to heal one level of bashing, lethal or aggravated damage to a Ratkin. To heal a non-Ratkin, make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Medicine*) in addition to spending Gnosis. The only limit is the Ratkin's Gnosis (each wound healed requires that a Gnosis Trait be spent).
- **Sense Wurm:** As the Garou Metis Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
- **Spirit of the Spiny Rat:** A trick Ratkin learned from spirits of the South American rat of the same name, this Gift is similar in nature to the Garou's *Gift of the Porcupine*. By spending one Rage Trait and being in either *Crinos* or *Rat Thing* form (see below), the Ratkin can sprout nasty-looking quills in place of fur. Anyone who grapples, body slams or immobilizes the metis (or is on the receiving end of these moves) automatically suffers a single aggravated wound. The spines last for one turn for every permanent Rage Trait that the Ratkin has.
- **Stink:** One of the less polite Gifts that metis possess, the Ratkin can emit a cloud of horrible stench large enough to cover a 10-by-10 foot area. Use of this Gift requires the expenditure of a Gnosis Trait, which will force everyone wanting to remain in the area make a Willpower challenge versus a difficulty equal to the Ratkin's number of permanent Gnosis Traits possessed. Some metis enjoy using this Gift after sneaking into a party being hosted by



an important or influential human, such as at a political fundraiser. Exactly how the Ratkin emits this odor is up to him (players, however, are not encouraged simulate this in game).

Intermediate

- **Ratkin Lullaby:** Ratkin metis are often charged with the responsibility of helping the Rat Mother of a Nest to keep the colony's rugrats under control. Unfortunately, Ratkin toddlers make some of the most frantic, hyperactive, foul children on the planet (and beyond), so keeping them under control is usually more easily said than done. This Gift, however, offers some help. Although the lyrics are generally as bizarre as one might expect from a Ratkin, this Gift nevertheless allows the Ratkin to perform a lullaby that can calm her opponents, making them drowsy or even lulling them into unconsciousness. By spending a Gnosis Trait, the Ratkin can make a Social Challenge against the victim. Success brings a shapechanger or vampire out of frenzy, or calms down a human who's reacting violently to the Delirium. The victim then makes a Simple Test — on a loss, the victim falls asleep. On a tie, the victim feels sleepy and is two Traits down in comparison of ties and overbids. Both these effects last for the remainder of the scene. The effects of this Gift are not cumulative; only the most potent effect applies.

- **Rat Thing:** Most Ratkin have only three forms. However, with practice, metis Ratkin of at least the third Rank can develop a fourth form. This form combines some of the features of both their Crinos and Rodens forms, not unlike what one might imagine a Ratkin Glabro form would look like. Appearing as an immense, quadruped, lumbering rat about the size of a big dog, this is the *Rat Thing* form. The Rat Thing receives the bonus physical Traits: Brawny x 2, Ferocious, Nimble, Robust and Tough, and can lumber along at twice normal running speed, but size and strength is traded off for intelligence. A wererat in *Rat Thing* form effectively has a single Mental Trait, and cannot initiate any Social Challenges except those involving intimidation. Although the sheer scope of the *Rat Thing's* stupidity makes it immune to all forms of supernatural mind control, it effectively has the attention span of a two-year-old human child.

- **Sliver Tooth:** This Gift aids in such guerilla warfare, helping to ensure that once an opponent is softened up, he'll remain softened up for a while. On a successful bite attack, the Ratkin can spend a Rage Trait and suffer one level of lethal damage, causing her incisors to snap off and lodge into her target. Until the splinters are removed (usually requiring time and the *Medicine* ability, as the splinters can be pretty small), the victim is unable to heal the damage done by that bite, which counts as aggravated damage. Unfortunately, the Ratkin's incisors are also gone until she heals her own lethal damage, which means she can't make bite attacks.

- **Whelp Body:** As the Ragabash Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.



Advanced

• **War of Vengeance:** Garou, when in dire need, call up the spirits of legendary beasts that once roamed primeval Earth, those beings that once called themselves allies of the Garou. Ratkin can perform a similar trick, but with one significant difference: they call not upon ancient allies, but upon ancient beasts slain long ago by werewolves and magi, now longing for revenge. By spending one Gnosis Trait and succeeding in a Social Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*) against a difficulty assigned by a Narrator, the Ratkin summons the desired spirit. The spirit can provide the Ratkin with long-forgotten secrets, and if a werewolf or mage is present, it will gladly attack them with gusto. Spending extra social Traits when performing the challenge will increase the spirit's anger towards its enemies (Garou and/or magi). The Storyteller can set the spirit's Traits to suit the situation, but they are generally quite powerful (though they possess no Charms).

Rodens Gifts

Basic

• **Absolute Balance:** Rats can be pretty amazing acrobats. By drawing upon this gift, Ratkin can do their smaller brethren one better. By succeeding in a Physical Challenge, the Ratkin attains a balance that makes it impossible for him to fall for the duration of the scene. Note that anything an ordinary rat can do involving balance can be performed by a Ratkin with this gift without even requiring a challenge. However, the Narrator can always rule a feat of balance is impossible, even with the benefits of this gift taken into account, such as remaining on the ledge of a building while a tremendous hurricane is blasting. The rat leaves no tracks while using this Gift.

• **Devour the Dead:** Ratkin don't like to leave evidence behind, and this Gift enables the Ratkin to call upon a swarm of Rat-spirit allies to dispose of all physical evidence in the area, even the bodies of their victims. This requires the expenditure of one Gnosis Trait. All items on a body when this Gift is used are carried away and hidden in the Umbra by the Rat-spirits. A body takes three turns for the Rat-spirits to consume; they do thorough work, and don't even leave bones behind. After their work is done, the Rat-spirits invoked by this Gift return to where they came from.

• **Leap of the Kangaroo Rat:** As the Lupus Gift: *Hare's Leap*, but with an additional application. By making a "long run" with a series of shorter jumps, she can achieve a speed of up to 10 miles an hour at the cost of a Rage Trait for each hour of travel. See **Laws of the Wild** for more information.

• **Scamper:** By spending a Rage Trait, the Ratkin gains a retest in any combat challenge when attempting to dodge. The only thing she can do during the scene is dodge — no attacking, no fiddling with a gadget, no other Gift use, just dodging. This Gift lasts for the scene, or until the Ratkin attacks back, whereupon it must be activated again for her to gain its benefits once



more. Spending Rage for extra actions is permissible, but all the actions must be used as dodges.

- **Survival:** Rats are pretty hardy creatures, and Ratkin are even harder. By spending a Mental Trait and making a Mental Challenge (retest with *Survival*), the Ratkin can survive without a source of food or water for a full day. This Gift doesn't necessarily mean that the Ratkin doesn't eat or drink during this time, but rather it enables the Ratkin to improvise, scavenge, and get along with what little edible or even semi-edible things she can find (even in a barren desert). Even in places where the *Survival* Ability is doomed to automatic failure, this Gift will succeed, no matter how impossible it seems.

Intermediate

- **Command Metis:** In most of the largest colonies, rodents Ratkin are pretty used to being in charge, and are especially used to the deference shown to them by metis. This gift helps them establish such dominance. By defeating the target in a Social Challenge, the Ratkin can force one metis Ratkin of equal or lesser Rank to obey her will and follow one command. The command must be either a single verb, or a single, complete sentence; no run-on sentences. This Gift will not work on a metis in frenzy, nor can it override the survival instincts of any Ratkin; there are some things even a metis won't do. At any rate, the effects of this Gift last until carried out, or for the duration of one scene.

- **Itchy:** Most Ratkin have only three forms. This is the fourth form of the rodents, which can be developed with enough practice and with sufficient rank. However, unlike the fourth forms of the homid and metis Ratkin, this form is not based upon a "middle" form. Rather, this form was developed by Rat-spirits who learned a few nasty tricks from cartoon mice in the Television Zone of the Umbra. The result was the *Itchy* form, an extremely unsubtle transformation that can only be used in the spirit world.

While in this form, the Ratkin's fur becomes brighter, she begins to move exuberantly like a cartoon mouse, and her actions may even be accompanied by a twisted cartoonlike melody which can be heard by those she stalks. This music seems to come from nowhere, so while it may warn an enemy familiar with this Gift of an impending attack, it won't help his discover the Ratkin's actual location. The transformation requires the expenditure of one Gnosis Trait and expend up to five Mental Traits. Itchy-form Ratkin have the statistics of Rodens form, but gain an extra number of Healthy health levels equal to the number of mental Traits spent. The Ratkin's physiology also takes on cartoonish proportions, such as her eyes bugging out if she is shocked or frightened, or her pounding heart expanding several inches beyond her chest.

By spending one Rage, the Ratkin can also form a cartoon weapon or trap for the duration of one scene; this weapon inflicts lethal damage equal to half the Ratkin's permanent Rage, up to a maximum of three levels of lethal damage. Other Gifts, such as *Open Wounds*, can be used to increase this as



usual. Most weapons and traps one might expect to find on a Saturday morning cartoon show are fair game. Only one cartoon weapon or trap can be devised at a time, so creating a second causes the first to disappear. Even if not replaced with a new weapon, they fizzle out of existence after a scene regardless, sometimes fading as if being erased. This Gift can only be used in the Umbra.

- **Mind of the Swarm:** This Gift allows a Ratkin to summon a swarm of rats or Rat-spirits, seemingly coming out of nowhere, or to gain control over an already-existing swarm. This swarm will stick around for one scene, during which the Ratkin can direct their movements as she sees fit (though they won't necessarily attack anything in their path). The use of this Gift requires the expenditure of one Gnosis Trait and a variable number of Social Traits. The number of rats summoned or controlled depends on the number of Social Traits expended.

Social Traits Swarm Size

- 1 up to 13 rats (normal rats)
- 2 up to 20 rats
- 3 up to 30 rats (large rats)
- 4 up to 40 rats
- 5 up to 50 rats (big-ass rats)

- **Sliver Tooth:** As the Ratkin Metis Gift.

Advanced

- **Furtive Gathering:** Ratkin consider themselves first-rate spies, but don't particularly appreciate being spied upon by others; besides valuing their secrets, it also chafes their egos. When the rodens elders of a colony need to speak with one another in absolute security, they frequently use this Gift to ensure no sensitive information is picked up by any unwelcome eavesdroppers. By spending one Gnosis and making a Static Mental Challenge against the local Gauntlet rating, the Ratkin can call upon the spirits to surround a secretive meeting of rats and wererats. If successful, the Ratkin are sealed off from all interruptions. Anyone not already involved in the meeting becomes completely unable to sense anything about the gathering until the meeting is declared over by the Gift-user. However, if one of the Ratkin attacks a passerby, that means the meeting is at an end prematurely, and the Gift's effects lift.

Tunnel Runner Gifts

Basic

- **Danger Sense:** Ratkin have lots of enemies, and Tunnel Runners tend to have the biggest chance of running into those enemies, accidentally or otherwise. This Gift enables the Tunneler to keep her guard up at all times. The Storyteller should have the Tunneler make a Mental Challenge; if successful, she receives some cryptic hint of imminent danger, such as sensory



information. If the Ratkin receives a hint of things to come through *Danger Sense*, she can negate any surprise benefits.

- **Hotwire:** Sometimes hoofing it just isn't fast or convenient enough. Through the use of this Gift, the Ratkin can jump-start the engine of any vehicle. Spend one Gnosis Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Repair*); if successful, she has just created a "spirit key" that will function with the vehicle in question for one day and can be used by any Ratkin, but only by Ratkin. Of course, if one day isn't enough, the Ratkin can perform further Mental Challenges for additional days. Failure indicates that the vehicle's engine is still jump-started, but the Ratkin was unable to create the key.

- **Scent of the True Form:** As the Philodox Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Sigil:** By making a successful Mental Challenge (retest with *Primal-Urge*) and spending a Gnosis Trait, the Ratkin can encode a message up to 10 words long in a bit of graffiti. Other Tunnel Runners can decipher this message with a Mental Challenge (retest with *Survival*). Tunnelers frequently use this to send warnings or advice to fellow travelers in train yards, bus stations, freeway overpasses and the like. Some compare it to gang tagging, while older Ratkin mention the markings used by hoboes during the Depression.

- **Silent Running:** Knife Skulkers know lots of tracking secrets. Their Tunnel Runners know lots of secrets to prevent tracking — this Gift, for example. By spending a Gnosis and calling on her totem, the Tunneler receives aid from Rat-spirits who conceal her trail and even create some false ones to throw any would-be trackers off. Any attempt made to track the Ratkin requires a successful Mental Challenge against her with the evading Ratkin receiving a bonus of four Mental Traits for the purposes of this challenge; this is in addition to whatever normal costs the power being used has. For example, if a Garou were using the Ragabash Gift *Sense of the Prey* against a Ratkin employing this Gift, the Garou must win the usual Mental Challenge, and even if successful must make another Mental Challenge to fulfill the requirements of *Silent Running*. This Gift also stymies rites like *Rite of the Questing Stone*.

- **Urban Camouflage:** Tunnel Runners blend in wherever they go; they often find it necessary in order to do their job properly. This gift enables an experienced Tunnel Runner to magnify this inherent talent greatly. Through its use, the Ratkin becomes inconspicuous and nondescript, causing others accept her presence and ignore her. If using this Gift while no one is actively paying attention to the Ratkin, success is automatic; she simply blends in with the crowd. If someone is actively looking for the Tunneler, or if she wishes to disappear while someone is watching or approaching her, she must defeat the target in a Mental Challenge to disappear successfully. Otherwise she's able to move about unnoticed, just another nondescript face in a sea of faces. This Gift cannot be used during combat. This Gift lasts for one hour.



Intermediate

• **Evasion:** Tunnel Runners generally dislike fighting, since they're not really designed for it; besides, it's not their job. But sometimes it's inevitable that someone gets mad at them and tries to start a fight anyway; in such a situation this Gift comes in very handy. Once activated, this Gift grants the Ratkin the bonus Physical Traits *Quick* and *Dexterous* and a free retest in any challenge when making attempts at dodging or escaping (the results of the second challenge must stand). These effects last for the entire scene. This Gift requires the expenditure of a Rage Trait, and cannot be used in conjunction with the basic Rodens Gift *Scamper*. The Ratkin cannot attack while using this Gift, but can take other actions.

• **Second Sight:** With this Gift, the Tunneler can gaze into the eyes of a Ratkin of lesser Rank and see through his eyes for up to one day. To do this, spend a Gnosis Trait and make a Mental Challenge (retest with *Empathy*). The Tunneler cannot hear what is going on, but can read lips or use a Gift like *Snitch*. For every Rank the Gift-user is above Rank 3, he may add another scout to this Gift. No more than four scouts may be added to this Gift.

• **Speak in Tongues:** By spending a Willpower, the Ratkin can become fluent in any one human language for the duration of one scene. This does not, however, grant knowledge of cultural humor or peccadilloes of address or the like.

• **Tunnel Echoes:** This Gift enables a Runner to hyperattenuate her senses for one scene, enabling her to detect the sounds of echoes and other noises which would otherwise be overlooked or impossible to hear. If anyone makes a loud noise while this Gift is active, the Ratkin takes a level of bashing damage. Activating this gift requires the expenditure of one Gnosis Trait, and allows the Ratkin to relay messages to other Ratkin in the tunnel system by spending a Willpower for each sentence. Each sentence can be up to ten words in length; other Ratkin can understand the message with a successful Blood Memory challenge (against a difficulty of eight Traits), while the noises simply blend into the background with non-Ratkin.

Additionally, this Gift allows the Ratkin to make a Static Mental Challenge vs. a number of Traits assigned by the Storyteller (according to difficulty) to get a mental layout of the tunnel system she is in; retest with *Enigmas*. If this challenge is successful, she may even sense the identity of someone else stalking around there, providing she's met the individual before (otherwise it just lets her know she's not alone). Secret tunnels, hidden rooms and lost objects can all be found this way.

Advanced

• **Cheese It!** A highly useful, but not entirely reliable Gift, this enables the Tunnel Runner to lend his skills at evasion to his entire pack. Sort of. The use of this Gift requires the expenditure of three Rage Traits, and all other Ratkin who wish to take part must spend another Rage Trait themselves.



Everyone involved, up to the sum of the Tunneler's permanent Rage and Gnosis Traits, then makes a Simple Test against the Narrator at the same time. All those who made the same choice as the Narrator are able to bolt to a place of hiding in line of sight and declare Fair Escape. Any Ratkin who choose the most popular choice can also bolt to the nearest hiding place, also declaring Fair Escape. All the other Ratkin stay where they were; the Gift does not work for them. This Gift can be activated again if the Tunnel Runner doesn't manage to make it to safety the first attempt, by paying the cost again.

Shadow Seer Gifts

Basic

- **Name the Spirit:** As the Lupus Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
- **Protect the Swarm:** Ratkin tend to be pretty protective of their rat kinfolk, and don't like it when others interfere with or mistreat their little friends. The Ratkin possessing this Gift can automatically sense whether a rat she encounters is possibly being controlled by another supernatural creature. By defeating the controller in a Mental Challenge, she can even gain a brief glimpse of her rival's identity. If successful, and her Rank is higher than the Rank of her rival, the rival's control is negated. Treat vampires using the vampiric Discipline of *Animalism* as being Rank 2 in general, modified for age and power.
 - **Rat Mother's Touch:** As the Ratkin Metis Gift.
 - **Sense Weaver:** As the Garou Metis Gift *Sense Wyrn*, save it detects things of the Weaver rather than the Wyrn.
 - **Sense Wyrn:** As the Garou Metis Gift; see **Laws of the Wild**.
 - **Summon Engling:** Gnosis doesn't come as easily to Ratkin as it does to Garou, and sometimes taking the time to meditate just isn't an option. This is the Shadow Seers' answer to such a problem. By spending a Gnosis, the Ratkin summons an Engling spirit (disguised as something mundane, like a '78 Chevy, a kindly old grandmother, or a miniature Goodyear blimp). Only the members of the Rat Pack recognize the spirit for what it is; observers may have some interesting reactions to the Ratkins' actions. If the Ratkin can manage to successfully hunt down and kill the Engling, they receive a total of ten Gnosis to divide amongst them. The Spirit's stats are: Willpower 5, Rage 1, Gnosis 10, Essence 16; Charms: *Airt Sense, Materialize*.
 - **Touch the Spirits:** Sometimes "psychic impressions" become imbedded upon objects, reflecting the people and events they've witnessed or interacted with. By spending a Gnosis and handling a physical object, the Shadow Seer can use these psychic impressions to see back one day, sensing the gist of where the object has been and who was using it. To see back farther, the Ratkin can spend Mental Traits for extra days on a one-to-one basis, to a maximum of five days into the past.



Intermediate

- **Command Spirit:** As the Theurge Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Discarded Dreams:** One man's trash is another man's treasure, and a Ratkin with this Gift can recognize dreams for what they are. By spending a Gnosis and making a Mental Challenge, the Ratkin may find an item she's looking for, one which is part of a discarded dream. By then defeating a target in a Social Challenge and explaining the dream behind the item, she can convince the target that he wants to live that dream. If it is a dream the target finds desirable, he is one Trait down on the challenge, otherwise he's one Trait up.

For the duration of one scene, the Ratkin's target will live out the fantasy she gives him; by spending Social Traits (maximum of three) the target will even temporarily gain some of the Skills or Talents he needs to carry out the delusion, one Ability for each Social Trait expended. A lonely old man with a dusty, worn fedora might think he's a dashing archeologist-adventurer; a teenage girl given a stoppered glass vial might be convinced that she's a chemist. Sometimes it's surprising the kind of dreams one can find in the trash.

- **Exorcism:** As the Theurge Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Feast of the Dead:** Some cannibalistic groups believe that by devouring certain parts of their enemies they can consume their strength. For those Ratkin with this particularly nasty Gift, this is true. By devouring the heart or brain of a victim, the Ratkin will gain three of the victim's Basic or Intermediate Gifts at random (though she can gain Gifts she already has). These Gifts remain for the rest of the day. This Gift cannot be used in conjunction with *Elegy* or the Rodens Gift *Devour the Dead*, and only once per corpse.

- **Pulse of the Invisible:** As the Theurge Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Advanced

• **Elegy:** Ratkin hate waste; the worst kind of waste is the unnecessary loss of a member of their Army of the Wyld. By speaking the last rites over a dying (past Incapacitated, with at least one level of aggravated damage) Ratkin, the gift-user can guarantee the recipient's spirit will survive to serve Rat's cause. Spend a number of Gnosis; the dying Ratkin makes a win-only Simple Test, with a number of retests equal to the number of Gnosis spent. If successful, the recipient's body withers away. He's reborn as a Rat Juggling and scampers off into the Umbra. This Gift can only be used upon willing Ratkin, although the Ratkin need not be conscious to be willing; it's his spirit which makes the decision.



Knife Skulker Gifts

Basic

- **Chitter:** As the Get of Fenris Gift *Snarl of the Predator*; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Death Mark:** Invoking this Gift enables a Knife Skulker to permanently mark a victim who has offended or harmed him in some way, thus branding the victim as a criminal in the eyes of Knife Skulkers everywhere. The Skulker must invest a Trait of Gnosis into a black cloth, then brush the black cloth across the forehead of the target; this marks the target with an invisible spiritual sigil which any Knife Skulker can see. The Knife Skulker who used the Gift can additionally tell the distance and direction of the target; this requires no challenge. Only the original Ratkin can remove the sigil — any other mystical means of removal will only remain effective for a single day at most.

Some Knife Skulkers will use this Gift on other Ratkin against whom they've been authorized for use of high justice. This allows the victim time to perhaps redeem himself before a member of the Aspect hunts him down.

- **Mother's Truth:** Ratkin are pretty suspicious and distrustful, even to other Ratkin. Because of this, sometimes *Truth of Gaia* just isn't enough, since there's no guarantee the user of the Gift isn't lying himself. By spending a Gnosis and winning a Mental Challenge, the Ratkin renders the target incapable of telling a lie for one scene, and may then interrogate the target; if the victim even tries to tell a lie, he will literally bite his tongue, betraying his attempted deception to all those present.

However, getting the target to betray his darkest secrets, however, requires contested Willpower tests, and a lot of roleplay. If the Knife Skulker manages to get 10 successes first, the victim spills all the details of his crime. If the target wins, the interrogation fails and the Gift cannot be used on him again for a full day.

- **Stalk:** As the Ragabash Gift: *Sense of the Prey*; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Sticky Paws:** By spending a Rage Trait, the Skulker can make a Static Physical Challenge against a difficulty of the target's physical Traits plus three. Success indicates the Skulker has grabbed his opponent's weapon out of his hands, and may immediately use it against the wielder, gaining a free attack.

- **Truth of Gaia:** As the Philodox Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Intermediate

- **Doppelganger:** As the Glass Walker Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Open Wounds:** As the Shadow Lord Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Paralyzing Stare:** As the Shadow Lord Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Weak Arm:** As the Philodox Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

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- **Wither Limb:** As the Garou Metis Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

Advanced

- **Geas:** As the Philodox Gift (see *Laws of the Wild*), but with an additional effect; if those being affected by this Gift have committed some wrong in the eyes of the Knife Skulker, she can even force a temporary change of personality. By defeating the criminals in a Willpower challenge, the targets can be given a new Nature for the duration of the quest. Some or all of the victims can be affected in this way; the Knife Skulker challenges each of them separately.

Warrior Gifts

Basic

- **Curse of Hatred:** As the Garou Metis Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Rat's Teeth:** Even a seemingly unarmed Ratkin can be full of surprises — many Ratkin like to keep a veritable arsenal of weapons cleverly hidden on their person. Warriors can do so quite easily with this Gift, which enables the wererat to produce a seemingly endless supply of sharp throwing objects from hidden places scattered over her body. Invoking this gift requires the expenditure of a Rage Trait and one turn spent doing your favorite neat-o martial arts pose. For the rest of the scene you can let off one barrage of thrown objects per turn; successful attacks do two levels of lethal damage. Japanese Nezumi like to use shuriken and throwing knives; other Ratkin will use practically anything suitably small and sharp, from broken glass to circular blades.
 - **Resist Pain:** As the Philodox Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
 - **Slicing Teeth:** As the Ahroun Gift *Razor Claws*, but used with the Ratkin's bite attack rather than with her claws. See *Laws of the Wild*.
 - **Spirit of the Fray:** As the Ahroun Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
 - **Sticky Paws:** As the Knife Skulker Gift.

Intermediate

- **Bolt!:** As the General Gift.
- **Improvisation:** A Warrior with this Gift is never unarmed; to her, the world is just one great big arsenal, since she is able to turn practically any object into a lethal weapon. Use of this Gift requires the expenditure of a Gnosis Trait. When the Ratkin activates this Gift, she must choose a type of object that can be found in the area. She will then be able to wield one of these objects as a weapon for the rest of the scene.

These weapons, which can be anything from kitchen knives to hot coffee pots to trash cans. However, each time she uses this Gift, however, the Ratkin must use a different type of object; if she used glass jugs during one fight, in future fights she could never again use glass jugs in conjunction with this Gift.



As well, with each activation of this Gift, you must graphically describe each attack the character makes to all other players present, and each attack must be different than all previous attacks during that activation. For example, if the Ratkin's chosen object happened to be an electrical cord, on the first round she could use it to whip her enemy, then on the second round she could wrap it around her opponent's legs to trip him, and the third round's attack could find her using it to strangle him.

The Narrator responds to each attack with a thumbs-up or a thumbs-down, depending on how impressed he is with the creativity of your attack. If he gives you a thumbs-up, the Ratkin receives an extra bonus Trait to her attack (in addition to whatever the bonus Trait value of the object is). A thumbs-down means she's at a one-Trait penalty. Damage dealt by the attack is equal to half of your permanent Rage Traits plus or minus one level, again depending on whether it's a thumbs-up or thumbs-down attack. In any case, it deals a minimum of one level of damage, and a maximum of three.

Please note that doing Jackie Chan impressions while using this Gift is entirely optional.

- **Persecution Complex:** Ratkin tend to be paranoid and always on the lookout for an attack. Those who have learned this Gift have refined this paranoia to its most useful levels, attuning her senses to her surroundings and thereby gaining insight into the attacks of any opponents. By spending one Gnosis and succeeding in a simple challenge, the Ratkin may then spend a number of Mental Traits (up to three). The Ratkin's opponent then suffers a Trait penalty equal to the number of mental Traits spent, and she becomes immune to any attempts to gain surprise by that opponent. This Gift can be used against multiple opponents at once, but the costs must be spent for each opponent separately.

- **Treppelganger:** Ratkin work best in groups, but sometimes a Ratkin is caught in a dangerous situation alone. This Gift helps even out the odds of such an encounter. The Ratkin spends a number of Mental Traits, one for each turn that she wants the Gift to remain active. Each turn it is active, she can spend a Gnosis Trait to split a little nine-inch Crinos version of her, called a gangster, off the side of her body, up to a maximum of three.

When the last little one is formed, the Ratkin shrinks down to the same size, becoming indistinguishable from her mini-me's; she's become a self-contained Ratkin deceit of four. A gangster has a few limitations: it may only make one attack each turn, it cannot use any of your gifts, they cannot take part in the Gift: Pack Attack, and finally they must all remain in the same immediate area as the Ratkin. The Ratkin, despite her own temporary miniature form, ignores these limitations.

In this form, all the gangsters use the Ratkin's base physical Traits, but gain the following Traits from Crinos form in place of the usual Traits granted: the Physical Traits Wiry, Quick, Lithe, and Puny, and the Social Traits Cute, Cuddly, and Genial. All have the same number of health levels as the Ratkin.



Any surviving gangsters re-join with the Ratkin at the end of the combat, at which point she returns to her proper size.

Advanced

• **Pack Attack:** Elder Warriors are often put in charge of coordinating hundreds of Ratkin troops. For such a chaotic race, this task would likely be impossible at times without the use of such Gifts as these. By letting out a keening war cry and making a Mob Scene Social Challenge against a number of Ratkin of her choice (who are always given the option of relenting), the Warrior can force other members of her pack to automatically join in the Pack Attack on the next turn. Additional Ratkin can join in voluntarily. Regular Mob Scene rules apply.

The resultant mob all attacks the same target, whether they want to or not, chosen by the Warrior; all members of the mob are considered to act with the Gift *Spirit of the Fray*. For every two Ratkin involved in the Pack Attack, add one bonus Trait (up a maximum of three for a Pack Attack consisting of five Ratkin) to the mob leader. In order to continue the Pack Attack, the Warrior must spend a Rage each subsequent turn.

Engineer Gifts

Basic

• **Control Simple Machine:** As the Glass Walker Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

• **Hotwire:** As the Tunnel Runner Gift.

• **Mousetrap:** Rats can be resourceful little critters, especially when the odds are against them. When you combine that resourcefulness with technological know-how, you get this Gift: the favorite of most Engineers. By using whatever junk happens to be available in the area, the Ratkin can pull a MacGuyver and jury-rig a lethal trap. This Gift requires the expenditure of a Gnosis and a successful Static Mental Challenge against a variable difficulty assigned by the Narrator. The difficulty depends on the trap's plausibility, with an average of 7. Design of the trap takes two turns. Successfully designed traps deal three levels of lethal damage, or two levels of aggravated damage if the trap involved such substances as fire or acid. The trap is not re-usable; once set off, it's ruined.

• **Open Seal:** As the basic Ragabash Gift. (Note System changes.)

• **Scrounge:** Ratkin Engineers spend much of their free time sifting through the junk that gets accumulated in the strangest of places, looking for parts to build their next ingenious device with. Sometimes, they get surprisingly good at finding useful items where one would least expect it. By defeating the Narrator in a Static Mental Challenge, you can name either a specific item or a general type of item that's rather hard to find. The difficulty depends on how hard such an object is to find; the average difficulty is seven Traits.



If successful, then lo and behold, the Engineer will be able to find the stated item in the area by taking a few minutes of search time. Generally, this Gift can find things impossible to find with the ability of the same name, but the Narrator can always rule an item simply too rare or obscure to be found.

Intermediate

- **Battery:** This Gift can be used to “power up” the Engineer or another Ratkin of her choice, giving them enhanced speed, strength, and durability for a time. In order to use this Gift, the Ratkin needs to have an energy source of some sort — direct electricity will do, as will noxious chemical concoctions if the Engineer feels inclined. By spending Gnosis Traits, the Ratkin can boost his own or another wererat’s Physical Traits on a one-for-one basis, up to a maximum of three additional Traits above and beyond the recipient’s Trait maximum.

- **Control Complex Machine:** As the Glass Walker Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.

- **Summon Electricity:** This Gift can put the pink toy bunny to shame. It allows the Engineer to summon an electricity elemental spirit, which can then be put into an electrical device temporarily, providing a power source for that item. If the item is broken, it can be fixed for at least a short while if the Engineer wishes to make the attempt. Make a Gnosis Challenge against the local Gauntlet, and the spirit has been summoned and will power the item in question for a week. Defeat the spirit in a Social Challenge and then spend a number of Social Traits, and the Engineer can extend this time, up to one additional week per Social Trait spent. Five Social Traits spent in this way will bind the spirit to the item for a full year. It just keeps going and going and going...

Advanced

- **Death Ray:** The Engineer with this Gift can become a walking, talking battery, able to fire bolts of electricity from her fingertips with a gesture and a thought. Using this Gift requires that the Engineer hook herself up to a power source of some sort for at least an hour a day, but the benefits of this Gift easily offset any inconvenience this causes.

By spending two Gnosis and a number of Mental Traits, the Ratkin gains a new Trait category called “Electricity”; she will receive one Electricity Trait for each Mental Trait she chooses to expend, and the maximum number of Traits for this category is 10. For the rest of the day, her body will have a constant static electric charge until she has discharged all her Electricity Traits.

To attack with the *Death Ray* Gift, the Engineer must engage her target in a Physical Challenge — if doing so at a range (up to 50 feet), she suffers a three-Trait penalty in the challenge. If she succeeds, she inflicts a single level of aggravated damage. Each attack requires the expenditure of one Electricity Trait, although more damage can be dealt by spending extra Electricity Traits



after the successful challenge, one level of extra damage for every Trait spent in this way. No more than two extra Electricity Traits can be spent in this way. Optionally, the Engineer can choose to burn off points of Electricity instead of Gnosis to power Gifts like *Battery* and *Summon Electricity*.

Plague Lord Gifts

Basic

- **Blur of the Weeping Eyes:** This is an epidemic Gift. By spitting on her victim and spending a point of Rage, the Ratkin can cause him to suffer from a vision defect, having his eyes well up with blood or become slowly covered in scales. The Plague Lord can have the illness show itself in any way she wishes, as long as the mechanics remain the same; the victim suffers a two-Trait penalty in all challenges involving perception, and a one-Trait penalty in all challenges involving combat.

- **Dredge of the Spirit World:** Plague Lords mostly deal with spirits of Pain, Disease, and Night; this Gift is their most common way of doing so. The Plague Lord makes a Gnosis challenge against the local Gauntlet, modified according to the type of spirit desired:

Spirit:	Difficulty:
Pain-spirit	+1
Disease-spirit	+2
Night-spirit	+3
Wraith/ghost	+4

Although the disposition of the spirit is left to the discretion of the Narrator, in most cases the spirit will be friendly to the user of this Gift — or at the very least willing to hear her out. Further spirit-related Gifts and rites can be used on a spirit summoned in this way as normal.

- **Poison Food:** By spending a Gnosis Trait and a number of Mental Traits (up to three), the Ratkin can inject poison into a bit of food, which remains for one scene. Anyone who eats the poisoned food takes a number of health levels of lethal damage equal to the number of Mental Traits expended. A few old fashioned Silver Fangs still employ royal food-tasters for this very reason.

- **Sniffle:** This is the Plague Lord's answer to such powers as *Blur of the Milky Eye*. To use this Gift, the Plague Lord spends a Gnosis Trait and places a pinch of dust on his palm and blows. This invisible cloud of germs travels about the room at a speed of five yards per turn, mindlessly seeking any characters in the area using any powers or abilities of concealment.

Any characters caught within the cloud must make a Static Willpower Challenge against six Traits to avoid sneezing, coughing, and wheezing (which obviously gives away their position). This challenge must be repeated for each turn the would-be victim remains inside the cloud, although it should



be noted that the cloud tends to attempt cycle through those hidden in the area rather than concentrate on any one individual (unless, of course, there is only one hidden individual present).

- **Virulent Curse of Hatred:** This is an Epidemic Gift. As the Metis Gift *Curse of Hatred*, save that the penalties are associated with a temporary affliction of the Plague Lord's favorite disease.

Intermediate

- **Catgut:** Most Changing Breeds find this Plague Lord Gift foul and disturbing; Ratkin find it hilarious. To use this Gift, the Plague Lord must take the corpse of another shapechanger and carefully cure its skin or internal organs (whichever meets with the Plague Lord's preference). This process requires roughly an hour's work and the expenditure of one Gnosis Trait.

The result is a macabre skein which can be worn as armor of sorts. This skein helps absorb damage inflicted; the Ratkin can make a simple win-or-tie test to negate one level of damage from an attack (retest with *Survival*). Non-aggravated damage is removed before aggravated damage. The first time a shapechanger of the same Changing Breed as that which was used in creation of the skein sees it, the shapechanger must test for frenzy. They must also test whenever they enter into battle against the Ratkin wearing it. This Gift cannot be used on Ratkin; even Plague Lords have their limits.

- **Inflict Pain:** This is an Epidemic Gift. The Plague Lord's mastery of disease and pain has reached such a level that she is now able to twist and tweak the pain of her victims to suit her whims. After a successful claw or bite attack, the Plague Lord can spend a Trait of Rage and make a Mental Challenge against her opponent's permanent Gnosis (or Willpower, for those without Gnosis). If successful, the victim is two Traits down in all challenges for the rest of the scene; this is in addition to any other wound penalties. The Gift *Resist Pain* can completely nullify this effect.

- **Lesions:** This is an Epidemic Gift. As the Get of Fenris Gift *Halt the Coward's Flight*, save that it involves lesions and sores breaking out on the victim's legs and feet temporarily to prevent rapid movement. Otherwise the mechanics remain the same.

Advanced

- **Epidemic Contagion:** As if the Plague Lord Gifts weren't bad enough, elder Plague Lords turn them all the nastier. By use of this Gift, the Plague Lord can turn the effects of any other Epidemic Gift the Plague Lord knows highly contagious. If the victim of an Epidemic Gift caused by a Plague Lord with this Gift comes within touching distance of another person (one yard or so), there's a chance the ailment will spread. The would-be victim needs to make a Static Willpower Challenge against five Traits. If this challenge fails, he is also afflicted with the illness. That victim can then pass it on to someone else, and so on, ad infinitum. The Plague Lord is immune to her own plagues,



of course, and can choose to have the Epidemic Gift ineffectual against other Ratkin as well (they usually choose to do so).

Munchmausen Gifts

Basic

- **Name the Spirit:** As the Theurge Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Persuasion:** As the Homid Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Rapier Wit:** All the best swordfighters understand that battle is not just a test of skill, but a test of wits and words as well. Munchmausen, being the swashbuckling types, are some of the greatest swordsmen to ever live; just ask one and she'll tell you this is absolute truth (and a Munchmausen would never lie). This Gift allows the Ratkin to parry and riposte attacks more effectively. So long as the character (and the player) have quick enough wits, a weapon isn't even required. When the Ratkin starts using Rapier Wit, the player must improvise the first two lines of an original poem or song that the Ratkin recites, and spend one Gnosis Trait.

Thereafter, should the Munchmausen be attacked in brawl or melee (ranged attacks are unaffected by this Gift), she receives a free attempt at a parry and counterattack, responding to the attack and still receiving her normal action for that turn. This is true even against powers that provide supernatural speed, such as the Silent Strider Gift *Speed Beyond Thought* and vampiric *Celerity*. However, in order to make the attempt, the Ratkin must add two more lines to the composition-in-progress. It need not make sense, but it must at least rhyme.

Depending on the creativity displayed with the song or poem, the Narrator has the option of declaring that the Ratkin is either up or down one Trait in the parry/counter-attack challenge. The counter-attack deals damage as normal. Once activated, the Gift lasts for the rest of the scene; hopefully by then the Munchmausen's masterpiece is complete.

- **Spirit Speech:** As the Theurge Gift; see *Laws of the Wild*.
- **Tale Spinning:** All Munchmausen are naturally convincing liars, but those Ratkin with this Gift can heighten this ability to proportions that are simply ridiculous. No matter how elaborate, unbelievable, impossible, or illogical a story is, the Ratkin can tell it and the listener (or listeners) will believe it's true; from a tale involving a race of giants with detachable heads who rule the moon, to one involving a romantic dalliance with the Roman goddess of love.

The telling of the tale can take up to one entire scene, and requires the expenditure of one Gnosis Trait. The Ratkin is then able to convince even the most educated or skeptical listener to believe his story. Listeners can make a Mental Challenge versus the Ratkin's Social Traits for each Willpower Trait they possess; each successful challenge allows them to ask one question that should derail the story entirely; the question need not be answered in any



fashion which makes logical sense, as long as it's answered. If any listener succeeds in a number of these Mental Challenges equal to or greater than the Ratkin's permanent Gnosis, or if the Ratkin cannot give even a ridiculous answer to one of the questions asked, the Gift fails and the story is not believed. Otherwise all those listening are wholly convinced of the truth of the tale.

Intermediate

- **Adversity:** Many Munchmausen claim to have traveled or even lived in the strangest of places in their time, from fiery volcanoes to the vacuum of deep space. This Gift gives that claim at least a modicum of credibility. A Munchmausen can survive extreme temperatures for a full day with this Gift. Rank 3 Ratkin are immune to extreme heat or extreme cold (up to boiling lava or antarctic conditions) at the cost of one Gnosis per day. Rank 4 Ratkin gain the ability to live underwater or in a vacuum for two Gnosis each day. Rank 5 Ratkin can produce the Ratkin Gift *Survivor* for three Gnosis.

- **Taste of Madness:** Sometimes, insanity is contagious, especially when you're dealing with a Munchmausen. By defeating the target in a Social Challenge (retest with Subterfuge), the Munchmausen may describe a variant on reality, up to ten words in length. The target then whole-heartedly believes this delusion for the remainder of the scene or an hour.

- **Whispered Dreams:** Masterful tale-tellers, some Munchmausen have developed the ability to have their stories spring into being, taking on a life of their own. By spending two Willpower Traits and making a Social Challenge (retest with Expression), the Moon Mouse can give a whispered description of an illusion, which then comes into existence. She controls this illusion, moving it anywhere in her line of site, and it lasts for up to one scene. It affects all the victim's senses. Anyone who attempts to actively disbelieve the illusion can make a Social Challenge against her; if successful and the person points out the unreality of the illusion aloud, the illusion vanishes.

Advanced

- **Hyperattenuation:** The Arcadian Ratkin are a haughty bunch, very proud of their capabilities. Indeed, many claim to be able to perform outrageous or impossible feats; some of the most experienced Moon Mice are even able to back up such claims. By use of this gift, the Munchmausen can heighten one of his five senses to an absurd level for one full scene. This Gift only works if accompanied by outrageous bragging (Munchmausen work best with an audience to impress), but can accomplish almost any non-combat task related to the senses. Smelling a colorless, odorless poison that was formerly kept in a now-empty-for-weeks stoppered vial from the other side of the room, hearing a butterfly sneeze from inside a closed jar, seeing well enough to strike a bullseye with an arrow miles away, or even feeling another character's Derangements through the lumps on their forehead, are all



possible to those Moon Mice who don't know the meaning of the word impossible.

Use of this Gift requires the expenditure of three Traits of Gnosis and three temporary Social Traits, and lasts for one scene during which the Ratkin receives the bonus Mental Traits *Discerning*, *Observant* and *Vigilant*. Note that sometimes the Ratkin will receive more sensory information than she attempted, due to the chaotic nature of this Gift. For example, if trying to track a Bone Gnawer by the smell of the burrito he ate for lunch that day, the Munchmausen might also locate the Mexican restaurant at which he ate without meaning to.

Twitcher Gifts

Basic

- **Firebug:** Twitchers are angry people, even by Ratkin standards. So angry, in fact, that they are able to focus that anger into igniting any flammable materials (wood, paper, cloth only) within ten feet. To use this Gift, the Ratkin must spend one Rage Trait. This Gift will not work on anything being carried or worn.

- **Holdout:** By spending a Gnosis Trait, the Twitcher can create a spiritual "pocket" somewhere on her person, enabling her to hide an object there no larger than her chest cavity. With a successful Mental Challenge, she can ensure the item is well-hidden. An item bigger than a rat will drop out on a shift to Rodens form. To retrieve the item, she simply spends a Rage Trait, and it's there. Twitchers almost always seem to have a trick or two hidden up their... <ahem>... sleeve. Generally, it's advised for the Twitcher to indicate where she'd like the item to go, or the rat-spirits will simply shove it in any old place.

- **Self-Destruct:** Glass Walkers like being able to control machines. But Twitchers, as the chaos-loving terrorists of the Wyld that they are, much prefer to cause them to self-destruct impressively, with fiery explosions, sparks, and lots of lovely shrapnelly bits. The use of this Gift requires the expenditure of one Trait of Rage. Those caught in the fallout take a number of levels of lethal damage equal to half the Ratkin's remaining temporary Rage, rounded up (at least one level, and with a maximum of three). This only works on mundane technology, not fetishes, talismans, or other pieces of supernatural technology.

- **Sense Angst:** Twitchers are very familiar with emotions like anger and bitterness, being constantly under their effects themselves. So familiar, in fact, a Twitcher can practically smell it in others. By defeating the target in a Mental Challenge, she can determine the Rage of a werewolf or other shapechanger (Nuwisha show up as zero Rage), the Morality of a vampire, the Angst of a wraith, or the Banality of a changeling. Mages or humans simply give the Twitcher a mental glimpse of the last thing that really pissed them



off (and what might do it again). Such results are couched in more mythical terms, not actual gamespeak. Obviously, this Gift allows the Ratkin to make a rough guess as to the type of creature the target is.

- **Sense Weaver:** As the Shadow Seer Gift.

Intermediate

- **Keening of Swarm Panic:** This Gift requires the presence of a crowd of at least fifty to sixty humans. Beyond this requirement, however, it is nothing less than impressive in its effects. By letting out a wailing keened just outside of your typical human's range of hearing, the Twitcher can cause the humans to rapidly grow uneasy, violent, or even panicked.

By spending a Gnosis, the Ratkin enters into a series of Social Challenges, continuing until she fails or until she accumulates three successes. With one success, the crowd begins to force its way toward a chosen exit. With two successes, the crowd panics and surges toward the exit, causing any non-humans in their way to be swept up into the crowd. With three successes, they'll even push, shove, kick, and trample each other on their way, so that any non-humans take two levels of bashing damage in addition to being swept up.

- **Pyrotechnics:** Most Ratkin pride themselves on being masters of shadows and disease. Twitchers see themselves as masters and warriors of flame, a cleansing tool of chaos. By spending at least one Rage Trait, the Twitcher can ignite an object in flames; such a fire will deal one level of aggravated damage to anyone foolish enough to be caught in it. For extra Rage, it will deal extra damage, up to three levels of aggravated damage total. The Twitcher needs to cover up the supernatural effects of this gift by using gasoline, chemical mixes, crossing the wrong wires, or something similar. The fire-starting doesn't need to be physically possible, mind you, just as long as there's a semi-plausible explanation. It is the Twitcher's hate that does the damage.

- **Sanctify:** The Ratkin answer to the Garou klaive is the PainDagger, the holy weapon of Ratkin Warriors. However, Ratkin PainDaggers, thanks to the workings of this Gift, are a lot more varied than the klaives of the Garou. By using this Gift in conjunction with the *Rite of the Pain Dagger* (which can be learned from a Warrior without spending experience points on it if you possess this Gift), the Ratkin can bind a Spirit suitable for a PainDagger into anything with a jagged or pointed edge: axes, butcher knives, machetes, chainsaws, meat hooks, etc; pretty much anything that you might expect to see in a reasonably gory slasher flick.

The use of this Gift requires the expenditure of one Rage and the whispering of the greatest crime the Twitcher intends to commit with it into the blade as the Rite is performed. The weapon now has the normal statistics for a weapon of its type, but when activated will grant an extra bonus Trait, deal an extra level of damage, and all damage dealt will be aggravated damage.



In addition, by spending a point of Gnosis, the Twitcher can force the spirit to use the Spirit Charm *Agony* (see the section on spirits for more details). The spirit remains bound for one week for each Gnosis spent in the casting of the Ritual. As usual, a Twitcher cannot create more than one Pain Dagger at a time; however, they don't worry about losing Renown for treating them as less-than-holy, so a Twitcher can feel free to cut up her steak with her *Sanctified* butcher knife. There is a downside, though. Once per day, if the Ratkin fails a Willpower Challenge, the spirit within the weapon will force the owner to attack a victim of its choice. Unsurprisingly, many Twitchers really don't mind.

Advanced

- **All Hell:** The ultimate chaos-maker of the Twitchers, this Gift summons a swarm of Wyldlings and Rat-spirits. These spirits go about causing as much pandemonium as they can, playing with objects, breaking them, crawling or flying about in swarms, or even just generally doing their best to freak observers out. Activation of this Gift costs a Gnosis, and once activated, anyone present must make a Willpower challenge; those who fail are affected by the Delirium, just as if they were human. Any humans succumb normally to the Delirium, but they are considered to have two fewer Willpower than normal purposes of determining its severity. Embarrassingly enough, even the Twitcher can succumb to her own use of this Gift.

Rites

Ratkin tend to be far more ritualistic than their Garou counterparts, or any of the other Fera for that matter. Every Ratkin pup is taught a Rite according to her chosen Aspect prior to her *Rite of Passage*, and generally Ratkin are sticklers on which Aspects are allowed to perform which Rites; if these rules aren't followed and an elder finds out, a loss of temporary Renown is often the result.

Basic Rites

Contract Rite

All Knife Skulkers learn this Rite very soon after their First Change, which is no wonder considering how important it is to what Skulkers do. Nevertheless, this Rite can be quite important to any Ratkin, not just a Skulker, since it is a method by which a Ratkin can hire herself out to another group of supernatural creatures (or, occasionally, even other Ratkin).

After the creation of the contract, the Ratkin preforms the Rite before acceptance of its terms; by winning a Social Challenge against the other party, the Narrator can point out some of the flaws inherent in the contract. If accepted through this Rite, the contract is binding to both Ratkin and rat-spirits; a Ratkin who breaks a contract rite will lose Cunning Renown, and



will be hounded by rat-spirits until the terms are fulfilled. There are no supernatural consequences to a non-Ratkin who fails to hold up his end of the contract, but doing so is a sure-fire way of getting the Knife Skulkers mad at you; the typical way that they get revenge against contract breakers is assassination.

There is one important *quid pro quo*, however: a Ratkin cannot betray other Ratkin as part of a contract.

Dedication Rite

As the Garou *Rite of the Totem*, though with temporary effects; the pack is formed specifically for the accomplishment of a list of goals, and is disbanded once those goals are accomplished. At the Rite's completion, the ritemaster spends at least one Gnosis Trait, and each Ratkin to be included within the pack spends at least one Willpower Trait. The sum of all these expended Traits must be equal to or exceed the Totem value of the Totem the pack seeks; if they find themselves short, they can spend extra Willpower Traits (or Gnosis Traits for the Ritemaster). The most common Totems chosen are City Father or Mother, and Grandfather Thunder. Rat Packs dedicated to Owl are nearly unheard of.

Rite of Artifice Dedication

As the Garou *Rite of Talisman Dedication*, but with one major difference: if desired, the artifact dedicated can be set to shrink, enlarge, or even disappear entirely when the wererat shifts to certain forms. For instance, a homid Ratkin's favorite pair of sunglasses might reform as tiny rat-sized sunglasses when in Rodens form, should the Ratkin choose. Seeing such small items may cause the delirium in humans, at Storyteller discretion.

Rite of Crash Space

Wererats can't meditate just anywhere; they need a place of relative safety and calm in order to regain Gnosis through meditation. This Rite provides such a shrine, if another suitable location can't be found. Creating crash space requires about 10 minutes of scurrying about and gnawing at the appropriate corners, and the expenditure of a Trait of Gnosis. Finally, the Ratkin must erect a shrine out of nifty stuff from around the neighborhood. Afterward, the shelter is cozy and safe enough to serve as a place of meditation for one week.

Rite of the Birthing Plague

This Rite is used to create new Ratkin. Obviously, it is very important to them, and is treated with much reverence; it can only be taught by rat-spirits, who seek out each Ratkin after her first completed *Contract Rite* to offer tutelage in this Rite. Only Plague Lords are an exception to this rule, since it's the first Rite they learn.



Ratkin Kinfolk have about a one-in-ten chance of surviving the Rite to become full-blooded Ratkin. Normal mortals have about the same chance of surviving, but will not become a shapechanger.

Rite of the Bolthole

When a Ratkin, especially a Tunnel Runner, needs to do some long-distance traveling, especially through dangerous territory, this is her preferred method. This Rite not only provides safety, but also a short-cut for the ritemaster, since the spirit tunnels that this Rite creates can only be reached by the smallest and most perceptive of spirits. Any Ratkin who holds hands or joins paws with the ritualist and his fellow travelers can also enter the spirit-tunnel with the ritemaster.

This Rite requires a shiny object and privacy, and can be performed on either side of the Gauntlet. To perform this Rite, the ritemaster must make a successful Static Mental Challenge (retested with *Enigmas*); destinations in the real world are difficulty 6, destinations related to a specific realm in the Near Umbra are difficulty 9, while an Anchorhead leading to the Deep Umbra is difficulty 12. Failures end up at a destination chosen by the Storyteller. The tunnel created changes behind the pack as they travel travels it, making back-tracking impossible. Travel times are usually reduced with a successful use of this rite (Narrator's discretion as to by how much), and are generally much safer than regular Umbral traveling.

Rite of the Cardboard Palace

The well-known Bone Gnawer Rite, usually taught to Ratkin by Bone Gnawers. The ritemaster can transform something as flimsy as a cardboard box into a decent place to sleep, the inside being warm and dry. A milk carton or similar sized container will usually work just fine for a Rodens Ratkin.

Rite of the Pain Dagger

A Ratkin possessing this Rite is able to create a Pain Dagger. The ritual binds a war-spirit, pain-spirit, rat-spirit or disease-spirit inside a ceremonial blade. The dagger must have a special spiritual significance to the creator, or the Rite will automatically fail. A Warrior cannot own more than one Pain Dagger at a time; if the weapon is destroyed, he loses Renown, but he can create a replacement. Before a Warrior's Rite of Passage is considered to be complete, she must have created her first PainDagger.

Such a blade is used ceremoniously in battle, always with the utmost of respect; failure to do this brings shame, as does the Ratkin using the blade for anything other than combat. A PainDagger is given one extra bonus Trait (above the normal Traits given for a dagger, for a total of three), deals an extra level of damage, and all damage dealt is aggravated (save against the owner of the dagger, against whom it deals lethal). Only Warriors or Ratkin with the Intermediate Twitcher Gift *Sanctify* can use this Rite, although other Ratkin can have a PainDagger as a three-point fetish.



Rite of the Purified Body

By spending a Gnosis when performing this Rite, the Ratkin can cleanse another's body of all poisons, both magical and natural in nature. It can also counter the effects of a Plague Lord Epidemic. This Rite must be performed by a Ratkin who is healthy, i.e., not suffering from a Plague Lord epidemic himself.

Intermediate Rites

Pact of Vengeance

Ratkin take vengeance very seriously (though they often think of it as Justice, and sometimes even refer to the rite as such). This Knife Skulker Rite is usually performed when a member of the Skulker's pack has been killed, or alternately when the local Rat King has met with an untimely end. The use of this Rite requires a successful Static Mental Challenge, of a difficulty equal to the killer's mental Traits. Success indicates an image appears depicting the murderer; everyone present can see this image.

Rite of Investiture

When a Ratkin ascends to the position of Rat King of a Nest, such an impressive occasion is accompanied by the performance of this Rite. Only a Shadow Seer of at least Rank 3 may perform this rite. If the spirits approve, and all of the colony's elders give the Rat Who Would Be King their support, all of the elders present receive a magnificent vision from the Rat Incarna proclaiming the glory of the new king.

Ritual of the Shiny Thing

Sometimes Ratkin fight, and these fights can get rather heated, especially in the larger colonies. This Ritual is for those issues which need to be resolved without Ratkin shedding the blood of fellow Ratkin. To invoke the Rite, the ritemaster simply makes a declaration along the lines of "I demand... the Shiny Thing!" All the pack members then immediately bolt, looking for the shiniest, most impressive object they can find, during which rat-spirits watch over the participants in order to make sure they remain safe while going on this chaotic scavenger hunt.

The first three Ratkin who return to the ritemaster with such an item present the objects they find, and then the pack votes on which is the most impressive. That item becomes the Shiny Thing, a relic which must be carried or displayed by the new temporary pack leader, and which grants the keeper of the object the right to pass a judgement on what action to take with regards to the problem at hand.



Rite of the Shopping Cart

Another Rite that is commonly shared between Bone Gnawers and Ratkin, every Engineer learns this Rite to better collect her junk in. This Rite increases the amount of items any cargo-carrying device can hold. Shopping carts are the most commonly used modes of transport, but it can be used on items such as briefcases or backpacks as well. By spending a number of Mental Traits when this Rite is performed (up to five), you can carry an extra 10 pounds of trash, or one hidden rat, in addition to the item's normal capacity.

Rite of the Swarm

This Warrior Rite allows the ritemaster to summon up a swarm of rats and rat-spirits to be directed toward an appropriate criminal of Ratkin justice. If the Ratkin cannot justify the use of this Rite, the attempt is doomed to failure. Justification can include a call for justice, a statement of the intended victim's crimes, or even general crimes the Ratkin holds the victim's race responsible for. The Rats summoned vary in size and power, depending on the number of Social Traits spent in the performing of this ritual. One Trait conjures small rats, two Traits is answered by huge rats, and three Traits provides the ritemaster with "big-ass" rats.

Rite of Warding

This is the Ratkin's answer to the Garou's *Rite of the Shrouded Glen*, this Rite making it extremely difficult for the Ratkin Nest to be found by any outsider. Whenever anyone who is not Ratkin tries to use a Skill or supernatural Ability to determine the location of the nest, they must win a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty equal to the ritualist's Social Traits. This Rite must be performed at least once each month to maintain this effect.

Knick-Knacks, Doohickeys and Other Ratkin Fetishes

Ratkin by far prefer to steal the fetishes they use from other creatures to creating their own. However, they have come up with a few innovative items they find useful in carrying out their tasks; some of the more common ones are listed below.

Pipes of the Swarm

Fetish Trait Cost: 2 Gnosis: 4

Activating this fetish requires the expenditure of a Gnosis. The effects are identical to *Rite of the Swarm*, save that the Ratkin need not give justification to the spirits.



Circular Saw Launcher

Fetish Trait Cost: 2 **Gnosis:** 5

Bonus Traits: 2 **Damage:** Aggravated

One of the more popular weapons originally designed by the Ratkin Engineers. This device, which consists of plywood, a gun stock (or reasonable fascimile), several industrial strength rubber bands, and a circular saw blade. When activated, this weapon fires circular saw blades, propelling them in a method similar to the *Gift Shadow Throw*.

Rat Mask

Fetish Trait Cost: 3 **Gnosis:** 6

These valuable fetishes can only be used by Ratkin. When created, these masks (which are designed as a parody of a human or other creature) are given an archetypal name, a two- or three-word description of the type of person it represents. Examples include the Slack-jawed Yokel, the Hateful Neo-Nazi, or the Naive Schoolteacher. When activated, a Ratkin wearing a mask can pass himself off as the archetype so long as he can do at least a minimally sufficient impersonation, and none will question his identity. The exception to this is anyone with any powers of supernatural insight (vampiric *Auspex*, *Spirit Sight*, etc.) Possession of such a power allows a Mental Challenge to see past the fetish's illusion, should the possessor be actively looking for the mask wearer's true identity.

Nezumi Kite

Fetish Trait Cost: 4 **Gnosis:** 7

This item, originally developed by Japanese Ratkin, is invaluable for secret reconnaissance and is a favored piece of equipment for those Ratkin assassins lucky enough to possess one. It looks like nothing more than a bulky one-man kite, at least until it takes to the air during night. In such circumstances, night-spirits will cloak it from sight with a variant of the Ratkin *Gift Cloak of Shadows*, and Air-spirits will keep it from falling no matter how inexperienced the Ratkin is at flying such contraptions. The kite is totally silent, capable of landing anywhere, and can carry one Homid or three Rodens form Ratkin. Unfortunately, it can only travel as fast as a gentle breeze, and can't be used during the day.

Mystery Machine

Fetish Trait Cost: 5 **Gnosis:** 8

These extremely rare fetishes were said to have been originally created by a Ratkin Shadow Seer who took the vehicle he used from a group of meddling kids who fancied themselves detectives of the supernatural. These vehicles get horrible gas mileage, look run-down and battered, and aren't any faster than an ordinary van of their type, but they're nevertheless the most valuable fetish any Ratkin could ever own, and Ratkin have been known to kill for one.



Essentially, one of these fetishes is transportable *Crash Space*. It can run off of pure Gnosis if necessary — one Gnosis per day of travel — and when activated it can travel with the effects of the Gift *Silent Running* up to three times per day, making tracking difficult if not impossible. As with any *Crash Space*, Ratkin inside can meditate for Gnosis.

The van is fully visible in the Umbra, and can even be taken into the Umbra should the driver flash the high-beams (doing so while already in the Umbra will bring the van back into the physical world once again). By successfully activating the fetish, the driver effectively has the Charm *Airt Sense* while driving in the Umbra, preventing him from getting lost.

Two or three humans can sleep comfortably in the back of the van. It can fit plenty of rat-form wererats.

Merits and Flaws

Cagebound (3-Trait Merit)

Before your Infection, you were a domestic rat kept in a cage by a human owner who cared a great deal for you. After the Birthing Plague, you still retained much of your patience and even temper, and therefore you lack much of the hatred others of your kind have toward humans; indeed, you know quite a bit about human society from all the time you spent observing it from your cage. This peaceful upbringing helps you enter Rapture, use Blood Memory, and gain Gnosis: you receive a free retest in challenges involving these things.

Caged Folk (3-Trait Merit)

You are fortunate enough to have the rare Caged Folk, super-intelligent rats, as your Kinfolk. These allies can be called upon to aid you through the use of the *Colony*, *Contacts* and *Plague* Backgrounds. However, they are still rats, and while highly intelligent, they see things differently than humans — don't be surprised if they misinterpret some of the things humans do. See the section on Caged Folk for more information.

Adrenaline Addict (2-Trait Flaw)

Your sense of curiosity is heightened to self-destructive proportions, turning you into a thrill-seeker with a need to test your limits no matter the consequences. For rodents or metis Ratkin, you're fascinated with the homid things that you didn't have growing up, and enjoy playing with such pointy and dangerous objects as chainsaws and motorbikes while in Homid form. For homid Ratkin, you've fallen in love with the acrobatic stunts you can pull off in Rodens form, and have no idea of what safe is for such a small creature. You must act out this Flaw at least once per session.

Rat Fink (2-Trait Flaw)

Like most Ratkin, you love gathering secrets about everyone. Unlike most Ratkin, for you this even includes the members of your Rat Pack, and what's more, you enjoy using such information for your own benefit. Many Ratkin who would otherwise be allies will therefore learn fast not to trust you.



Whenever you meet anyone new, you have a compulsion to uncover all this individual's secrets — you need to feel like you know everything there is to know about everyone around you. The only limitation to this Flaw is that you won't betray the secrecy of a colony.

Technological Delusions (2-Trait Flaw)

And you thought Twitchers were nuts when it came to Weaver-tech; they've got nothing on you. You're constantly envisioning technological threats all around you, no matter how ridiculous your delusion is. Coffee-makers may be infesting their brew with a mind-control formula, or perhaps cellular phones all transmit signals of your whereabouts to your arch-nemesis. You must act on this flaw at least once a session. Twitchers cannot take this Flaw.

Kleptomaniac/Pack Rat (2 to 3-Trait Flaw)

This Flaw takes two forms. The first, *Kleptomania* (worth two Traits) means your character can't resist snatching up little knick-knacks wherever she travels. The second version, *Pack Rat*, means that your character must also leave behind an object for each object she takes. You must act upon this flaw at least once a session.

Pack Instinct (3-Trait Flaw)

Ratkin are used to enjoying the advantage of numbers, and you're one Ratkin who doesn't like to be without it. In order to act separately from this pack, you must succeed in a Static Willpower Challenge (difficulty 6). Although you may critique plans that are concocted by your fellow pack members freely, you may not suggest ideas of your own unless you succeed in this challenge. Finally, if you are alone and without your pack, you suffer a one-Trait penalty to all challenges.

Incoherent (4-Trait Flaw)

Although the Infection heightened your effective I.Q. considerably, you never quite got the grasp of speaking human languages. You're unable to express yourself to those who are unable to speak the racial Ratkin language beyond grunts, babbling and odd gestures. Note that this can be a very difficult Flaw to properly portray.

The World of the Spirits

The Ratkin would like to think that they've thoroughly infested all the reaches of the Umbra during the five thousand year period that many of their race was exiled there, and they're actually not far off in such a belief. Ratkin travelers are able to get to many places in the Umbra that other Changing Breeds find inaccessible, thanks to their *Rite of the Bolthole*. With a combination of their Blood Memory and their closeness to the Wyld, they can gain guidance and safe passage in and through many strange and exotic Realms. In the five thousand years spent in the Umbra, they've made valuable allies of



many of the spirits who have been overlooked or underappreciated by other Changers.

Paradise Realms

Naturally, some Umbral Realms are more important to the Ratkin than others; it's a rare Ratkin who doesn't find herself at home amid the chaos and Wyld energies of Flux, for example. But perhaps the most important Realms the Ratkin have discovered in recent years are the isolated Paradise Realms.

As far back as the Blood Memory can remember, the Ratkin have had legends of Paradise, known as the Dreams of a Thousand Rats and formerly considered little more than hopeful myth. In truth, Paradise was not one single Realm, but dozens of strange Realms whose entrances can be found hidden away between the other realms. Most Ratkin either stumble upon them unexpectedly, or reach them after years of questing, and once a Ratkin finds one he is hesitant to leave. Each Paradise Realm represents a rodential ideal of how the world should be.

The Coliseum: This is a realm of flesh, wine and vice, representing the debauchery and indulgence of the fall of the Roman Empire. This tends to be the favorite realm of Homid Ratkin, as they are best able to relate to it.

Carnivale: A place where time is frozen just before the departure of the carnival, providing all sorts of sweets and edible trash for rodents to gorge themselves on, and curious items to steal and hoard. Recent travelers from this realm have spoken of strange, violent clown-spirits at the edges of the carnival which have been tainted by the Wurm. If this is true, then it would seem that in these Final Days, even some of the Paradise Realms can't escape entirely from being affected by the growing influence of the Wurm.

Buboe: The world as it was while suffering from the Bubonic Plague was the greatest achievement of the Plague Lords, and this Realm reflects that time period. A place of utter misery and suffering may not be every Ratkin's cup of tea, but the Plague Lords possess almost absolute power within its borders, and is therefore their favored Paradise Realm.

Corpse of a Thousand Teeth: This favored realm of the Munchmausen is said to be a forest gateway into the fabled land of the fae, Arcadia. The Moon Mice, and their spirit-kin, have infested it thoroughly; it is a land of high adventure and a place where even the tallest tales can become reality.

Rat Kingdoms

There is no such thing as a Rat Kingdom, at least, not at first. Rat Kingdoms are the Realms which many Munchmausen claim to hail from, and are similar in most respects to Paradise Realms. They're just even more bizarre, usually revolving around the individual Munchmausen's dementia.

Although the Paradise Realms actually exist, Rat Kingdoms don't, but the Munchmausen in question is capable of changing that, at least for her own



particular Rat Kingdom. With enough time and effort, by convincing others of its existence, the Rat Kingdom can be made real. This is a rare accomplishment which only the greatest of Munchmausen are capable of succeeding at, and which normally involves a great quest to find the way “back” to the Realm once again. These quests can take many forms, from seeking out the Blue Fairy for directions to the creation of a flying Umbral boat with which to travel the oceans of space found within the Deep Umbra.

Rat Alleys

Some time ago, Ratkin discovered a valuable secret — some of the worst, most run-down, dangerous alleyways in the world can be potent portals into the Umbra for Ratkin. In fact, since this discovery, Ratkin have become adept at sniffing such places out; by succeeding at a Static Gnosis Challenge against a difficulty of nine Traits (retest with *Enigmas*), a Ratkin (and only a Ratkin) can find a Rat Alley nearby within a given city. They can be chaotic things, so just because an Alley acted as a portal once doesn't mean that it will still be there the next time a Ratkin visits. Narrator's discretion as to how long after a successful challenge a Rat Alley will last.

The benefit of Rat Alleys are two-fold. First, the Gauntlet tends to be significantly weaker than one would expect in the heart of a city. Secondly, a Ratkin can lead other supernaturals, or even other humans should she wish to, into or out of the Umbra through a Rat Alley. In this way, any suitably knowledgeable Ratkin consort can help her non-Ratkin allies experience the wonders of the Umbra with her, or abandon a disliked human in such a place by way of punishment.

Stairway Realms

Stairway Realms are a bizarre side-effect of using a Rite of the Bolthole in any one location too frequently, and more rarely of failed attempts by a Ratkin to step sideways. They can be best described as the Umbral nooks and crannies that can be found between matter in the physical plane.

Stairway Realms begin simply enough; in fact, it's almost impossible for all but the most spiritually aware to notice a newly created Stairway Realm. But as more and more Umbral travelers pass through the area, the division between the Stairway Realm and the physical area on which it is based becomes thinner. When this happens, distortions in the physical world occur; ventilation shafts grow and stretch, the spaces between the walls of a building become larger than they have a right to be. Some buildings which sport advanced Stairway Realms can even become extremely twisted and bizarre, with the energies of the Wyld causing the creation of new passageways that shouldn't be there, or even causing the layout of the building to shift around periodically.

It's easy to get lost in these semi-Umbral funhouses. Ratkin have no problems traversing them, but other creatures have been known to become



lost forever within their borders. It's not unheard of for children who have become lost like this to be raised by the Ratkin or rat-spirits who live in and frequent such areas. Rat-spirits prefer these places to make their nests in. Stairway Realms are the source for many an urban "haunted house" legend.

The Itchy Zone

Other Changers know this Realm as well, but by a different name: The Television Zone. It is here that rat-spirits first discovered the secrets to the Rodens Gift of the same name.

This Realm is known as the Itchy Zone to the Ratkin with good reason. Garou enjoy traveling to the Battlegrounds to practice their martial prowess. Ratkin, on the other hand, prefer to take part in the vicious cartoon cat and mouse battles to be found here. Engineers find the Realm particularly appealing, since they can find inspiration for some of their deadlier Gifts and inventions here.

Totems

Ratkin will choose to follow almost any Totem that they deem appropriate to their quest at hand, but despite this practicality they have certain leanings due to both their nature and the type of quests they tend to undertake. The most commonly invoked Totems for Rat Packs are Rat (surprise), City Mother or Father, and Grandfather Thunder (known to the Ratkin as simply Thunder). Those Ratkin who choose to follow Thunder gain the same benefits that his Garou followers do. However, the other two totems treat their Ratkin followers slightly differently.

City Mother or Father

At first it may seem antithetical for the Ratkin, who generally hate human cities and civilization, to invoke the spirit of those cities as a dedicated Pack Totem. However, Ratkin are pragmatists, and every city as at least as many rats as it does humans; the spirit of the city has ties with them as well.

City-going Ratkin invoke this spirit to help them survive in an environment that is frequently hostile towards them. It's very beneficial to a Rat Pack being chased by powerful enemies to know exactly which alleyway to duck into when making their escape.

Traits: Ratkin followers of the spirit of the City receive three extra Willpower Traits per *story*, and three levels of *Area Knowledge* for the spirit's city. Additionally, a Ratkin follower of City Father or Mother can assume the guise of an archetypal denizen of the city, similar to the Rat Mask fetish.

Ban: Should the Rat Pack ever leave the city for any reason, the bond between the pack and the totem is broken. The Rat Pack must then perform some form of quest on behalf of the Totem should they seek to renew the bond after their return.



Mama Rat

Rat is, without a doubt, the most common allegiance for Rat Packs to have. Even Ratkin without a pack receive both the boon and the ban of serving Rat. Rat Packs with this Totem will frequently be called upon to perform strange deeds in her service; they may not always understand the reasoning behind them, but they can be assured that they're playing a part in Rat's overall schemes. Visions from Rat are most commonly received among these Rat Packs. Ratkin know her by many different names; the most common one is the Rat Goddess, but the more tradition-minded Shadow Seers often refer to her as She Who Unleashed the Birthing Plague upon the World.

Boon: Rat Packs who serve Mama Rat receive five extra Willpower Traits per story. They also receive two levels of the *Survival Ability*. Each Ratkin also gains one temporary Trait of Cunning for as long as the pack serves her.

Ban: As with Garou who serve Rat, Ratkin are forbidden from harming mundane rats. Additionally, Ratkin who follow Rat must do something to aid the homeless of the city, even something as minor as buying a meal for someone living on the streets, once a day. This part of the ban is flexible. If a Ratkin must leave the physical realm for a time, or must take to traveling, making it impossible to fulfill this requirement, Rat will understand, as long as the Ratkin makes up for the missed time as soon as possible upon his return.

Thunder

Thunder sympathizes with the Ratkin plight, and their burning desire for revenge. He also respects the ruthlessness they use in the execution of their tasks; Thunder will sometimes request that his Ratkin followers act as thieves or assassins for his cause; he is a favorite of many Knife Skulkers. Ratkin followers of Thunder tend to get along quite well with Shadow Lords.

See **Laws of the Wild** for more information about Grandfather Thunder.

Spirits

Ratkin don't treat all spirits equally. Just like the Garou, there are some types of spirits that the Ratkin find more amiable than others; more often than not these feelings will be mutual. Some of the more common spirit allies that Ratkin make follow.

Rat-Spirits

Rage 6, Gnosis 7, Willpower 8, Essence 21

Charms: *Airt Sense, Materialize, Tracking*

It should come as no surprise that rat-spirits and Ratkin are very close allies. Rat-spirits help Ratkin by acting as information networks, leading swarms, or even just as traveling companions for company and advice. Some of the rarer breeds of rat-spirits that are also included as Ratkin allies are:

Kangaroo Rat-spirits: Desert dwellers with knowledge of the Gifts of *Survival* and *Leap of the Kangaroo Rat*.



Packrat-spirits: Experts at scrounging and finding useful items in the strangest of places, they are always willing to help a Ratkin find something with the right enticement.

Mole rat-spirits: Amazing brown rat diggers who can chew through almost anything.

Pain-Spirits and Disease-Spirits

Willpower 2, Rage 8, Gnosis 5, Essence 15

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

Agony: By defeating the target in a Mental Challenge, this charm doubles the wound penalties of a single target for the duration of a scene.

Infection: Should a pain-spirit ever learn this Charm, it becomes a disease-spirit. By touching the target, the spirit can make a victim perform a Static Physical Challenge against a difficulty of eight Traits. If the victim fails, he has just contracted the spirit's favorite disease.

Most Changing Breeds other than Ratkin would never even think of dealing with these spirits. Garou tend to assume such spirits are Banes. Ratkin know better.

These spirits are dangerous to deal with, outside of *Rite of the Pain-Dagger*; even Ratkin tend to avoid invoking them unless they have to. They have urges that none but they can understand, and communicate with grunts, chitters and hoarse whispers. Of all Ratkin Aspects, Plague Lords deal with these spirits the most, and have the best chance of doing so successfully.

The Freakachu

Rage 2, Gnosis 9, Willpower 3, Essence 14

Cross an electricity elemental with a rat-spirit, and you're left with a Freakachu, a strange little critter with an affinity for the Weaver and the ability to utterly demolish a computer system from the inside. They make their homes in complex electronic devices.

A Freakachu can have odd desires at times, and when it doesn't get what it wants, it will cause the device it inhabits to suffer from glitches or minor malfunctions. It's even been known for creatures with Gnosis to get a glimpse of the creature on the screen of a device.

If kept happy, Freakachu can be quite useful in monkeywrenching projects. If released into a computer network, the network can be wiped out in a matter of seconds. Some Ratkin, especially Engineers, like to train their Freakachu and have them battle one another in enclosed networks. The most esteemed trainers have stables of Freakachu of many different shapes, sizes and colors.

Renown and the Rat Race

Ratkin gain Renown in much the same way a Garou does. By performing various types of deeds that Ratkin society and the Rat Goddess consider



beneficial to their overall causes, a Ratkin gains temporary Renown, and by “screwing up” (as the Ratkin define it), a Ratkin will lose the same. When a Ratkin accumulates enough temporary Renown, he will use one of the tried and true methods of Ratkin society to change temporary Renown into permanent Renown of the same type.

There are three methods with which a Ratkin can have her Renown earnings recognized. The first and most common method is at a moot. At the beginning of every moot, one member from each Pack steps forward and tells the elders the deeds of the members of that pack since the last moot. In this way, if a Ratkin’s actions meet with the approval of the elders and the rat-spirits in attendance, her deeds are recognized and her reputation increases.

The second, somewhat less common method, is at a Revel; this is the favored method of the Twitchers. Amid all the chaos going about them, the Ratkin who seek to be recognized for those Renown-worthy deeds they have performed gather around the central fire and brag about their actions. Sometimes they’ll take turns, but more often a Ratkin has to shout in order to be heard above the din. No Ratkin can gain Renown from more than one Revel per month, although many of the wilder Ratkin attend multiple Revels in a month if they can, simply because they enjoy such events so much.

The third method of earning Renown is often the only option available to those Ratkin cohorts who travel with non-Ratkin. This is by dealing with the spirits in the service of the Rat Goddess directly. The Ratkin leaves her friends for a short time, finding a quiet, secluded spot in which she can meditate and commune with the rat-spirits in the area. This is also the method Ratkin use to convert temporary Renown Traits into permanent Renown.

As one might expect, although they gain Renown in the same way, Ratkin revere different sorts of accomplishments than Garou do. Ratkin care nothing for Glory; rather, Ratkin value the fear Infamy creates much more. Honor, at least as far as most non-Ratkin would think of it, is meaningless to a Ratkin. Obligation to one’s race and the duties of one’s Aspect is what Ratkin respect. And Ratkin do not revere wisdom so much as they revere the cunning necessary to survive in this age and to defeat their enemies. Through the accumulation of Infamy, Obligation and Cunning, a Ratkin will rise through the Ranks of her society and earn the privilege of learning more advanced Rites and Gifts from the spirits.

Also unlike Garou, the society of the Ratkin doesn’t care as much about what renown a Ratkin earns; all Ratkin, regardless of Aspect, follow the same Renown chart, listed below. Also listed are the Ratkin titles for the various ranks.

The Aspect a Ratkin belongs to does affect Renown earned, however. Ratkin of different Aspects earn temporary renown at different rates; a Warrior performing an act of Infamy will generally receive more temporary renown than an Engineer who performed the same deed. The things that each Aspect values most are:



Tunnel Runners: Surviving in dangerous areas, collecting information through spying.

Shadow Seers: Spirit Quests and matters involving the Umbra.

Knife Skulkers: Fulfilling contracts and enforcing punishments.

Warriors: Acts of cunning combat.

Engineers: Protecting Nests and defeating foes with her inventions.

Munchmausen: Fulfilling dramatic quests and adventures, and telling stories at moots and Revels.

Plague Lords: Learning lore of the Wym, and infecting Ratkin enemies with disease.

Twitchers: Fighting the Weaver in any way possible.

When a Ratkin is ready to challenge for Rank, she will seek out a higher-ranking Ratkin or, if there aren't any unavailable, meditate to communicate with the Rat Incarna directly. Rank challenges among Ratkin don't involve besting the challenged, but rather they involve quests that further the goals of Ratkin society or perhaps even the Rat Goddess herself, not unlike a *Rite of Passage*. The earlier of these quests will be simple enough, but as a Ratkin progresses through the Ranks, the quests she is expected to perform to rise in Rank get progressively harder.

Many of the same things Garou earn Renown for listed in *Laws of the Wild* can be translated into Ratkin terms; defeating foes and protecting the Nest, for example. However, there are some things that earn a Ratkin Renown that don't normally earn a Garou performing the same deed Renown.

The Ratkin Ranks

Rank	Renown	Title
Zero	0	Pup (Cub)
One	3	Rakka (Cliath)
Two	7	Voto (Fostern)
Three	12	Tava (Adren)
Four	17	Teppen (Athro)
Five	24	Rrrr't (Elder)
Six	32	Legend



Infamy

Sample Behavior	Award
Proving your strength over your packmates	1
Winning a non-lethal duel	1
Surviving a dangerous area in the physical world	1
Telling a good story at a moot (max per moot)	1
Surviving a nasty wound	2
Drawing first blood in a serious conflict	2
Fighting the Weaver	2
Wounding a dangerous foe and then retreating	3
Significantly harming the Weaver	4
Killing a Garou (more if a powerful opponent)	4
Killing a Glasswalker (more if a powerful opponent)	5
Losing a single combat test of dominance	-2
Allowing oneself to be killed without good reason (posthumously)	-5

Obligation

Sample Behavior	Award
Fulfilling a simple contract	1
Enforcing a punishment	2
Fulfilling a complicated or difficult contract	3
Serving as a Rat Pack's runt	3
Mediating a dispute justly	3
Fulfilling a dangerous or assassination contract	5
Losing a Staredown test of dominance	-2
Siding with a non-Ratkin over a Ratkin	-5
Killing a Bone Gnawer servant of Rat	-5



Cunning

Sample Behavior	Award
Finding another to take the role of runt from you	1
Stealing something valuable from a human	1
Uncovering secrets of Ratkin enemies	2
Fulfilling a Rapture visionquest	3
Discovering missing Bardic lore	7
Serving as a Rat Pack's runt	-1
Failing at a Wits Test of Dominance	-2
Failing at a Wisdom Test of Dominance	-2

Mind's Eye Theatre

← coming next →

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