



*The Players Guide to Werocats for Werewolf: The Apocalypse™
Changing Breed Book 1*

T W O H E A R T S :
A TALE OF THE AMAZON



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I THINK WE'RE LOST.

THE AMAZON IS NO PLACE FOR AMATEURS. LEMME TELL YA WHAT HAPPENED TO FITCHER AND TYR. IT'S NOT A PRETTY STORY, BUT IT'S TRUE. IF YOU DON'T LIKE IT, *BITE ME.*

whine...
whine...
whine...
whine

QUIET!
BOTH OF YOU!

MY BLESSED SISTER, HEAR A TALE OF GREED AND FIRE AND ROTTEN HEARTS. OF ARMIES OF RAGE WITH THE MOON IN THEIR VEINS. THE WIND SHALL SPEAK THE TRUTH.



DOGS WADE THROUGH GREEN DOMAINS BEARING FIRESTORMS AND QUAKING HEARTS. THEY PREPARE TO FEED THE GODS AND FEEL THE ANGER OF WINDS.

Grrr...

QUIET. I HEAR SOMETHING.

sniff
sniff

whine
whine

YEAH, FITCHER, I SMELL IT, TOO.

NO CHANCE BETRAYS THE SMOKING MIRROR WIND. LIKE A SHADOW, HE IS GONE.

FITCHER WAS SPOOKED, WE ALL WERE, I GUESS.

POOR FITCHER. GOOD KID.

O, SON OF THE
BLACK MISTS,
DON THE COLORS
OF YOUR RAGE.

THE STINK OF
ROTTING
HEARTS...

CHACK!

...BETRAYS THE
COMING FIRE.

HEY,
DUDES!

**LET'S
PARTY!**

**ROCK 'N
ROLL!!!**

YAAHHHH!!!

CRUDE THUNDER
ROARS BELOW...

CRUDE,
BUT THUNDER
NONETHELESS.

AN ARMY OF NIGHTMARES MOVES TO MEET...



HIT 'EM HARD!



hahrrr!!!



...BRAVE DOGS WHO'VE COME TO FIGHT.



YIP!

NAAAAH!!



SKLCH!!

YIP-#!



BRAVE DOGS...

...AND DOOMED.



GULK!

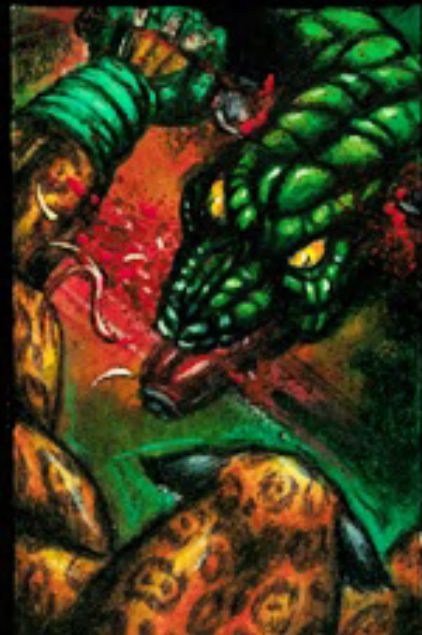
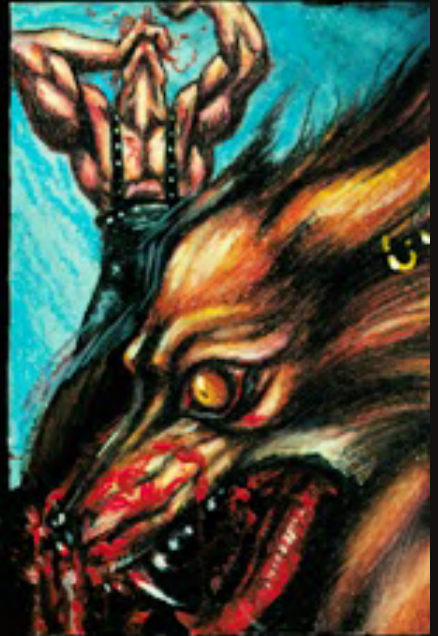
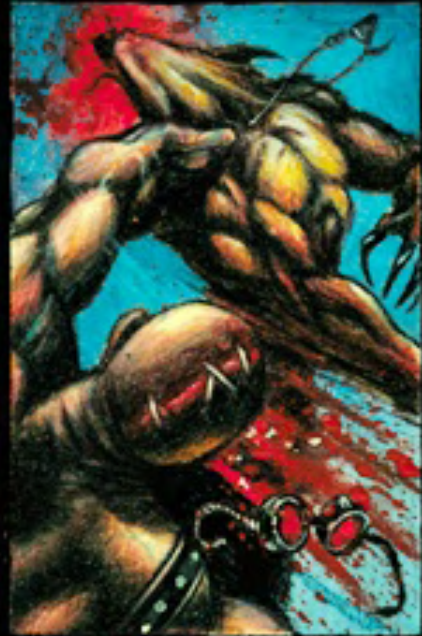
HA HA!
NICE
DOGGY!

TIME FOR THIS ONE
TO ENTER THE
STORM.

WAAAH-CHURRR!!!

GEH...





SHIT!
JAMMED!



TREACHEROUS
THUNDER
FALLS SILENT.



THE WIND IS FASTER...



...AND SURE.



LIKE I SAID, NO
PLACE FOR
AMATEURS.



AND A PRO
KNOWS WHEN
TO LEAVE.



GET THAT
SHAGGY
SUNUVVA-!

SKIN 'I M!!



COURAGE,
OUTMATCHED,
FLEES THE FIELD...



...WHERE THE
UNMAKERS
DANCE...



...AND THE
WINDS...



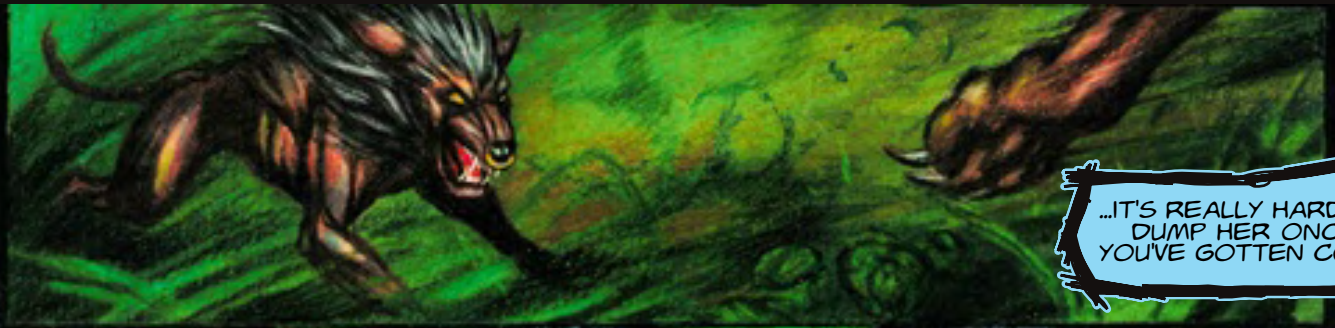
...SOWS THUNDER
OF ITS OWN.

BOOM!



KILL THAT BASTARD!

BATTLE IS A
HARSH
BITCH...



...IT'S REALLY HARD TO DUMP HER ONCE YOU'VE GOTTEN COZY.



blp



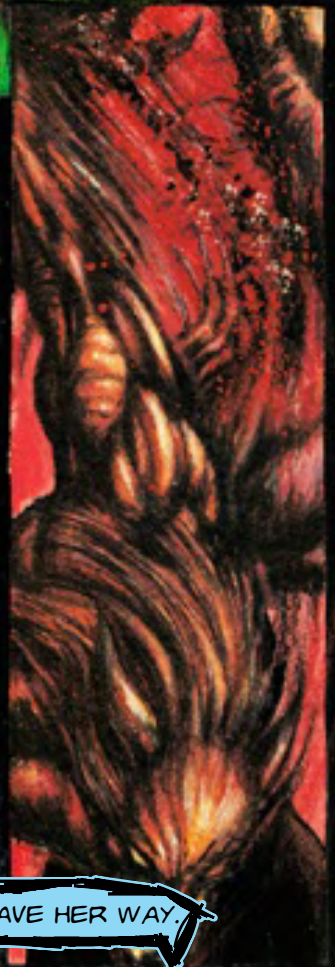
SOMETIMES...



...IT'S BEST...



...JUST TO LET HER...



...HAVE HER WAY.



booble

blp

pup



NOT THAT IT'S EVER THAT EASY.

IN THE HEAT OF PASSION, YOU CAN MISS STUFF...

YOU'RE DOGMEAT, BOWSER!

YEAH.

BURPLEI

BLOPI

HHAAH

BURPLEI

BLOPI



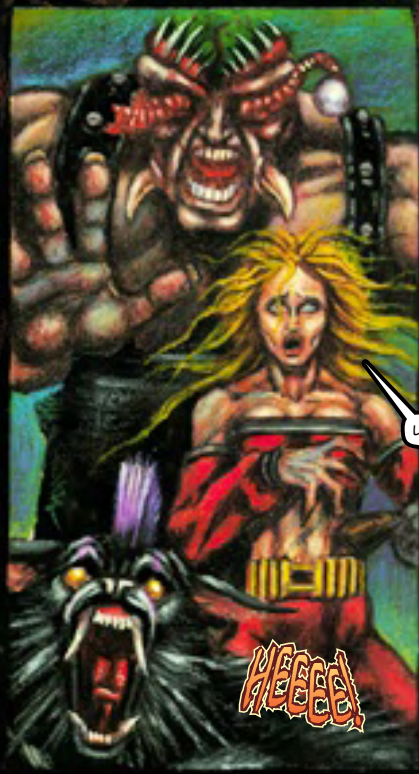
WE COULD BE NICE, Y'KNOW...

HAH?



BUT YOU PLAIN NEED KILLIN'.

HAAH!



UH...

HEEED!



MOTHER O'GOD!

NO...

WHINE...

WHINE~

...STUFF THAT CAN TURN BOTH A BATTLE...

...AND YOUR STOMACH.

GRUNCH!!

HOLY SHIT.





YAAAHH!!

WEEEN

"MY LAND," SAYS THE WIND, "IS FULL OF DRAGONS."



"AND OF RAGE WHICH MOVES THE EARTH."

UHHH

SMELCH!

YTO-



NO...

NO...



WAR'S AN UGLY BITCH...



"MY LAND IS FULL OF ANGER..."

AND YOU NEVER REALLY KNOW...

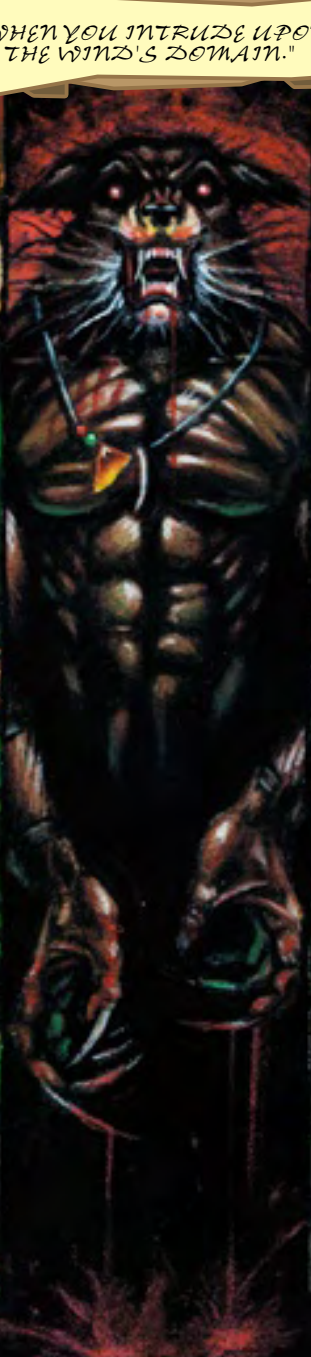


"WATCH HOW YOU TREAD..."

WHAT SHE'LL DO NEXT.



...WHEN YOU INTRUDE UPON THE WIND'S DOMAIN."



THERE'S TIMES IN A MAN'S LIFE...



THUP

...WHEN IT PAYS TO VISIT MOTHER.



WHEN I CAME TO...



...IT WAS QUIET AS THE BREEZE.



DAMN.



SO THAT'S WHAT HAPPENED. WAR'S
NO PLACE FOR AMATEURS, AND SOME
WARS ARE TOUGH EVEN ON THE PROS.

ME, I'M THINKIN'
ABOUT SOME R&R.

TWO HEARTS BORN
BENEATH THE MOON.
TWO HEARTS TO
FEED THE GODS.
TWO HEARTS PASS
IN PEACE, FOR NOW,
TWO HEARTS WITHIN
THE WINDS.

MY TALE IS ENDED. OUR TALE
GOES ON. THE SMOKING
MIRROR NEVER SLEEPS.

BASTET™



Nine Tribes of Twilight

By Phil Brucato, with Bill Bridges and Richard Dansky

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Chris "11:17 Sharp" McDonough, for avoiding the rush.
Aileen "Not the Rats!" Miles, for taking the fight to the *rodentia sapiens*.



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<http://www.white-wolf.com>; alt.games.whitewolf.com and rec.games.frp.storyteller

It's good, clean (well, not always) fun.

PRINTED IN CANADA.

Author's Dedication

To Bill Bridges, who opened the door;
To Wendy Blacksin, who *deserves* a dedication after all she's been through for this book;
To Nicky and Jackie, for reminding me how long my legs can grow;
And, yes, to Byron and Solome, for being such attentive study subjects.

Word from the White Wolf Game Studio

Well, by the time you read this, our newest developer's going to be so helplessly mired in his line that there won't be any room to congratulate him. Justin "Pocahontas Firestein van Elfinburg della Escondillo" Achilli, recently of **Rage** fame, has been kicked right into the role of developing **Vampire: The Dark Ages** (And you thought there wouldn't be support for it! Shame!), and he promises to give the fans exactly what they want — 64 new clans!

Watch for this new celebrity at a convention near you. He's easy to spot — he's filled with hatred, strong enough to pull the ears off a Gundar and sometimes signs books as Mark Rein•Hagen. But he really, really likes to have people buy him drinks. Tell him about your characters, too.



BASTET™



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Introduction

*For he counteracts the Devil, who is death, by brisking
about the life.*

*For in his morning orisons he loves the sun and the sun
loves him,*

For he is of the tribe of Tiger.

— Christopher Smart, *The Jubilate Agno*

• Old Man Speaks of a Meeting

On the southwest 50, I met two youngsters just before sundown, riding the boy's bike like young thunder twins. One, a pretty white girl who her companion called Rucksack Mary, laughed and waved to me as they passed by. The other I had heard of before. Rainsdance Smith, I believe, a good-looking boy with Apache cheekbones and the mane of a well-kept stallion. He handled the motorbike like another set of legs, but he didn't have much sense of direction. Soon, they circled back to ask me where they were. Did I know the land? Why yes, I allowed. Me and the land, we've got an understanding.

I could tell their kind from a mile away. Road dust didn't dull their spirit, and the sun couldn't hide their shining eyes. They could tell there's something different about me, too, so we got on okay. The girl loved to hear herself talk, as white people do, and the boy, it seemed, loved to listen. I remember my youth well enough, even if those days are like the dust on my feet. They seemed like good folk, so we stopped and set camp for the night.

Clouds spread like Thunderbird's wings across the sky, but I had no fear of rain. Mary talked for a while as the night grew chill. The blanket thrown around her shoulders made her seem older, not a girl. The fire shone in her traveler's eyes: not as wise as mine, but seasoned. She talked of the places she'd been, of a barefooted walk from one coast to another and back for more. I allowed as I'd done the same myself once or twice,

and we laughed. The young brave rested his back against his bike, and said nothing, only laughed with us when it seemed polite to do so.

We talked in circles for a while, for my benefit, of course. I got the feeling they knew each other, and I was the odd one out. Rucksack Woman was too polite, in that way of her people, to let me sit there quietly, so she talked at me until I answered. There wasn't much to what she said, but I could tell she was fishing for something. A grand game came to me as she talked, and when she took a breath, I proposed it.

"My people have a game," I said, "called tahla." The word got their attention, as I knew it would. You could almost see their whiskers quiver and their ear tips twitch. "It's a story game. You tell me one, I tell you one, he tells us both one, and we go around again. Each story is a secret, all dressed up but there just the same. If we understand what the others have said, then we have shared some wisdom. If not, then at least we will have shared a few good tales. Interested?"

They both seemed agreeable, so we sat around the fire. Rainsdance added some brush as the night wind rolled across the plain, and the smoke rose to the open sky. "Who will begin?" I asked the others.

"It's your game," said Rucksack Mary. Her eyes grew bright and they shone like gold.

"So it is," I agreed, and so it began.

Greetings from the Twilight

What goes on behind the eyes of a cat?

Some people don't wonder. They know. In hidden places, they shed their human guise, grow sleek and prowl the shadows on padded feet. This book is for them, and about them.

Their name — *Bastet* — refers to nine tribes of cat-breed shapeshifters, born of primal spirits and raised to watch over creation. This book, **Bastet**, forms a self-contained sourcebook about these enigmatic creatures: sort of a rulebook, tribebook and players guide all in one.

Bastet aren't just people with cute cat heads; they're a mysterious and defiant race all their own. To most Bastet, the Garou are messy, genocidal dogs: They do a dirty job, but they've let the violence in their own nature go to their heads. The Bastet have a higher purpose: to watch over the earth, to taste the shadows' wisdom and bring it back to Seline, the Moon Mother whose blessings created all changing breeds. Although the werecats have a nasty primal edge themselves, they like to boast that they combine the best aspects of cat and human. It's a nice conceit. Sometimes, it's even true.

Theme and Mood

Bastet are alluring folk — exotic, sensual and enigmatic. To them, learning secrets is a divine right, a power and an art. Their love for mysteries translates into an almost insatiable curiosity, and their keen grace and senses make them the most glamorous of the changing breeds. Even so, that beauty has an edge. No animal is as beloved and yet as hated as the cat. The challenge of playing a werecat is capturing the feline mystique and blending it with familiar — and not so familiar — humanity.

Nor are they cute little kittens. By human standards, werecats seem spiteful, cruel and savage. Although more refined than their lupine cousins, werecats are still wild animal-folk, fiercely passionate and murderously territorial. With their Kinfolk and prey hunted to near-extinction, these huge shapeshifters are fed up with human carelessness. Those who tread upon the tiger's tail will be bitten — badly.

Who are the Bastet?

*The fog comes
on little cat feet.
It sits looking
over harbor and city
on silent haunches
and then moves on.*

— Carl Sandburg, "Fog"

The Bastet aren't simply man-sized kitties with an attitude problem. They're supernatural creatures with a passion for riddles, a nose for trouble, and a hunger for life. Though every werecat is fiercely individualistic, all of them share a few common birth-rights, powers and weaknesses.

The Nine Tribes

From nine families, the Bastet come — nine ancestors plus a disowned sister. The original parents sired 11 families; one of them is long extinct, and the others survive as the Nine Tribes of Catkind, plus one:

- The **Bagheera**, werepanthers and wereleopards who embody the noblest and most ferocious sides of the Bastet.

Bastet



- The **Balam**, werejaguars who supposedly came from two different branches of the family, but now fight for the survival of their ancestral homelands.

- The odd **Bubasti**, who plumb the mysteries of magic and science to discover a way to undo the extinction of their Kinfolk.

- The **Ceilican**, werecats in the truest sense, who supposedly died off centuries ago, but still survive in the modern world, wreathed in their own madness.

- The **Khan**, mighty weretigers sworn to battle the Asura demons on their own terms. If any tribe could lead the Bastet, the Khan would be the ones to do so.

- The **Pumonca**, wandering werecougars who keep a watchful eye on the lands of North America.

- The **Qualmi**, riddling werelynxes who confound their companions with enigmatic remarks and tricksters' tales.

- The **Simba**, proud werelions who believe even now that they were born to rule the other tribes, by force if necessary.

- The **Swara**, werecheetahs who embody the messenger's speed and the traveler's urge. Unknown to most Bastet, these sleek and subtle creatures hide a spiritual power few other werecats can match.

- And the **Ajaba**, forsaken hyena-folk who were cast out of the Tribes long ago, and who were more recently driven from their homelands by the Simba's scourge.

The First Twins' cubs, the **Khara** sabertooths, are long gone. Their legacy lives on, however, as the primal bridge between the modern cats and their human aspects. This Chatro form summons up the ancestral fear that lies at the core of cat-terror: the memory of the sabertooth tigers from the earliest days of the Impergium, the culling of the flock that kept humans' destructive tendencies at bay millennia ago.

These Nine Tribes (or *Eight Tribes*, as most of them still believe), maintain an exceedingly loose social structure, held together with common blood and common purpose. They call themselves "the Eyes of Seline," guardians of the Moon Goddess and companions of the Earth Mother. To them, the finding, gathering and exchanging of secrets is the most important thing in life. Life itself, of course, is important, too. Most Bastet feel creation is a gift — tempestuous, often dangerous, but exhilarating as well. It's a poor cat, you see, who could not enjoy her existence for all it's worth. Passion lies at the heart of creation, the passion of the *Nyota Jamaa* who dance and fight eternally, keeping the universe in a constant state of change.

Werecat Society

- **Lost in Africa**

It's morning on Victoria Falls. As the rising sun cuts a thousand rainbows through humid air, a voice soars above the falling-water thunder. His words are English, but their rhythm carries a sing-song Bantu lilt. Beside the man standing naked in the spray, a lion waits, shoulder deep in the swirling river. Droplets weigh the big cat's mane and sparkle in the sunlight. Fierce though he might seem, the lion is the lesser of the man, who finishes his nyimbo and stretches catlike to the morning. "Do you see," he says at last, his voice a whisper to the great falls' roar, "the magnificence of our heritage?"

The lion nods, an oddly human gesture for a soggy hunter, and yawns. Knife-length teeth flash spittle to the sunlight. "I see that I'm goddamned tired," the lion rumbles in a language no human would understand. "When're we going home?"

"Don't disrespect me, boy," warns the man in a tone of growing annoyance. "The twelfth month comes all to soon for you, and after that, you're on your own."



The great cat grumbles. "Jeeze, Radi, I hate these early mornings. Don't you ever sleep? I need a break from this."

The Bantu shrugs and walks toward shore to retrieve his things. "You want your break, you shall have your break. When you are finished, we may speak again."

"Wait!" The cat bounds forward, stumbles face-first into the river, emerges dripping, already changing, and scrambles against the current's pull. "Wait a minute, Radi! I'm sorry." The lion, now a boy, thrashes against the sudden strength of the river, flowing toward the gaping falls. His skin and rounded features betray an ancient link to Africa. "I didn't mean to yawn! Hey, I was just tired. You kept me up all night chasing shit, is all. Wait a minute!!"

At the banks of the rushing river, Radi turns to regard the boy. "Some lessons are best learned after class, hey? Now, I think we will find out how you fend for yourself, Tekhmet. Kwaheri!" With that, the man becomes a lion, a huge black-spotted killer, still wet from praying to the morning. As the boy reaches the shore, the lion turns, flicks his tail, and bolts into the forest.

"Wait!!" screams the American kit, lost suddenly in a land he's only heard about. "Radi! Bon Bhat! Come back...!!"

"Werecat society" is a misleading term, actually. Only the Simba work together as groups for any length of time. The notion of armies of Bastet, put forth occasionally in the rants of some of the more demented Bubasti, has never been a reality and never will be. The cat, for the most part, walks alone.

Allies and Associates

Bastet can and do gather into temporary prides, where a rough hierarchy is quickly established and frequently contested. Spirit allies, called Jamak, assist werecats who perform some great kindness for their mortal cousins. Vampires and wizards often join werecat quests, and even the hated Garou serve a common purpose at times. The most troubling yet indispensable companion, however, is the normal human being.

People fascinate the cats; they always have. The Bastet, for all their ferocity, have pursued human companionship since the monkeys first reached into their little bag of tricks and brought forth fire. For the watchful werecats, humanity is a constant source

There's Power in Secrets

We cannot stress enough how important it is that the contents of this book remain rumors at best. The Bastet are exceedingly closemouthed about their secrets, and will not divulge them to even the closest of outsiders. They may work them into riddles or stories, but they do not speak them aloud except to each other. The ways of catkind are reserved for werecats only — the average vampire or mage will not know the history of the Simba or the Yava of the Khan. Likewise, a Balam in the company of dogs will not blurt out the hierarchy of Bastet society. It just isn't done. The fates of the Ajaba and Ceilican show vividly enough what a secret shared can do.

Storytellers should be prepared to take harsh steps against a player who abuses his own knowledge for his character's gain. As far as the Bastet are concerned, knowledge has mystical power. Anyone with uncomfortable levels of that power is therefore a threat, and should be treated as such. Odd "coincidences" befall Shadow Folk who know too much, and the cats declaw other Bastet who talk too freely. The werecats and their allies do not suffer those who put their species at risk.

of surprises. Unfortunately, one of those "surprises" has been a genocidal war upon the werecats, their feline Kinfolk, and the very lands Seline put under their guard. Much to the Bastet's collective disgust, man has taken a boundless gift for creativity and used it to demolish the natural world, the spirits and himself. Werecats share an ambivalent view of human beings: on one hand, they're endless sources of imagination and comfort; on the other, they destroy everything in their path, either out of greed, lust or fear.

The half-human Shadow Folk, like vampires, ghosts, wizards, faeries, other shapeshifters (called Killi), and odder things, intrigue the Bastet. Naturally, such interesting parties are never left alone if a werecat has something to say about it!

Fosterings, Den—Realms and Prides

As for the Bastet themselves, their independent nature makes them as restless as moonbeams. Close company is too restrictive for them. For the most part, they prefer the open spaces and solitary freedom. Cats may gather for brief meetings called taghairms, but in the end they scatter to their own respective wanderings. One of the reasons the Simba and Bubasti have failed every attempt to unite the Folk is that, quite simply, the werecats are too independent for such nonsense.

Some social structures do exist, even among the cats. The first and most important relationship a Bastet will ever enter is his fostering. In this "apprenticeship," an elder cat takes a new-changed kit and teaches him the ropes. Like a mother cat passing on the secrets of hunting and play, the teacher (the *kuasha*) takes the youngster on a twelve month learning spree that ends when the mentor tells the youngster their tribal secret, the *Yava*, which no werecat dares to reveal. From there, the *kuasha* melts away like the mist she is named for. Although she may appear again throughout her pupil's life, she will never again take on the mentor's role. What he does from there is his problem, and his prize.

Part of that prize is territory, a shrinking commodity in the modern world. As solitary as most werecats are, they need a lot of room to move, prey to hunt and things to observe. When one Bastet enters another's territory, there's liable to be trouble. A passing stranger is one thing; a rival who comes to claim a bit of that shrinking space is asking for a fight. Frequently, he gets it, especially if the Bastet in question are both males. These fights can take all kinds of forms, from the ritualized duels called *Hanshii* to subtle manipulations that send other creatures to harass the rival. Occasionally, these rivalries take a back seat to greater problems — when it looks like no one's going to get anything, werecats band into war bands to wipe out the invaders. Once the threat is dispersed, the former allies return to bickering over territory. Few werecats, male or female, can tolerate another Bastet's presence for long.

A powerful werecat can consecrate part of her territory through a magical rite, linking it to her essence and effectively walling it off from outside incursions. This ritual creates a Den-Realm, a spiritual stronghold where the reigning werecat magickally dominates the land and its inhabitants. Such strongholds are fading fast these days; powerful spirits and voracious machines knock Den-Realms down like cardboard. Now the cat's own independence turns against her, and she goes up against the trespassers alone. In the old days, her power was enough to decide the issue. Now things fall the other way, and the Bastet, who have always been rare, grow rarer still.

Some Bastet realize how stupid it is to work at cross-purposes. These werecats band together into loose confederations called prides and taklah. The pride is a cat's family, and any ally, Kinfolk or loved one who is considered a member. Only werecats can join a taklah, a pride where everyone has put their differences aside to



accomplish a common goal, such as kicking Pentex out of the rain forests. Taklah members usually pick their leaders through mutual respect and consensus; really powerful Bastet occasionally seize control of such prides, but unless their “subjects” are Simba (who accept leadership more gracefully than other werewolves do), such dictators are likely to find themselves alone when the hammer falls.

How to Use this Book

Bastet: *Nine Tribes of Twilight* presumes you’ve got at least the basic **Werewolf: The Apocalypse** rulebook. Other alternate rules and such can be used from supplemental books, but they’re not essential. There’ve been a few changes made between the sourcebook and the werewolves’ original appearance in **The Werewolf Players Guide**, and some of the rules and details might contradict the earlier supplement. When in doubt, consider this book the final authority. Several of these changes have been made to accommodate **Werewolf’s** second-edition revision, while others seemed more appropriate over time. We apologize for any confusion or inconvenience.

The layout of **Bastet** runs as follows:

- **Introduction** — A short summation of the Folk and this book.
 - **Chapter One: Caliah** — A variety of oral histories that collect the ways of the Bastet.
 - **Chapter Two: The Nine Tribes** — Short descriptions of the nine tribes of twilight.
 - **Chapter Three: Breath of Life** — Rules for character creation, including new Traits, the five forms and a description of the First Year.
 - **Chapter Four: Cat Magic** — A collection of the many Gifts and rites of catkind.
 - **Chapter Five: The Pride** — Nine character templates for beginning Bastet characters.
 - **Chapter Six: The Others** — Descriptions of creatures that share the twilight world — Asura, Ajaba, spirits, Jamak and animal companions.
 - **Appendix** — Bastet of note, fetishes, weapons and templates for various Ranks of Bastet.
- Keep your eyes bright in darkness, and enjoy....
- **Colorado Taghairm**

In a remote Colorado lodge, the cat-folk come together. They sprawl about the room like stolen skins, draped over furniture, spread across floors, basking in the hearthfire’s heat. Outside, the November wind turns the hills to icicles. Snow flies on spirit wings and drifts like blankets across the sleeping earth. Inside, the cat-folk meet. Soon, they’ll share their secrets. For now, though, it’s enough to share the fire inside. After all, they aren’t animals!

The host, a huge, scarred Khan with money to burn, lies closest to the fire, fur glowing, tail twitching, eyes half-closed yet watchful. His bulk spills over the wolfskin beneath him. The rest respect his gaze, nodding slightly when it falls on them, one by one. The taghairm is large — it’s rare meeting so many of the Folk at once — and diverse. A black man, tall and well-muscled, scratches a puma’s belly; two women, sleek as runners, rest their heads in a lion-man’s mane while a panther cub stretches across their own bellies. Big cats, people, and forms in between rest easily as the wind calls from outside. Some still wear city clothes, but most lounge naked or furred. Some groom themselves, some groom each other, and some just warm their bones and wait.

Finally, the tiger uncoils and slowly rises, blocking the fire. His shadow falls across the room. “Welcome to my home,” he rumbles. “Let the tales begin.”



Lexicon

Common Terms

Ahu: The beginning and end of all things, epitomized by the Deep Umbra or outer space. Usually, but not always, considered feminine.

Asura: Singular and plural; refers to both the spirits of darkness (Banes), which feed on the destruction of the world, and to their father. Unmakers and corrupters, the Asura often disguise themselves to better serve their purpose. Some ghosts take that name as well, but remain blind to the true significance of the term.

Caliah: Verbal lore, specifically about the beginnings of things as we know them. Usually, but not always, recited during a ceremony.

Cahlash, the Unmaker: The Dark Father, whose influence grants mysteries but also destroys what exists to make way for what is to come. The personification of Entropy. Although Cahlash is technically the entity the Garou call the Wyrn, the Bastet consider him the Father of Night, the Author of Mysteries. To them, he's dangerous, seductive and ultimately essential. Interestingly, both Cahlash and his brother Rahjah are known collectively as "The King of Cats."

Chatro: The huge sabertooth war-form that all Bastet attain between Crinos and Feline forms.

Chaya: Denizens of the Umbra, the brood of Cahlash and the shadows at the edge of the world; spirits.

Crinos: The half-human form of Moon-Rage, when the power of Seline brings forth the strongest elements of a Bastet's nature and focuses them into a mystical killing machine.

Dakat: The traditional name for fomori. Seen by most Bastet as children who got too close to a fire and were burned beyond recognition. Given this state, they should be put out of their misery.

Den-Realm: An Umbral home territory, staked out by a powerful Bastet. Creating a Den-Realm is hard work, and violating it is a deadly crime.

Folk, the: A casual term for Bastet, also applied more loosely to all the changing breeds.

Gaia: The Earth. Unlike the Garou, werecats consider Gaia a lesser player in the cosmic drama. Her survival is essential for those who dwell with Her, but the death of Gaia means the end of the Earth, not the end of existence as a whole.

Hakarr: Bastet ceremonial blade, similar to the African hungamunga (see Appendix). Like a Garou klaive, the hakarr is a favored dueling weapon, especially among Simba and Khan.

Hanshii: Ritual combat, usually to decide territorial rights. These contests may be riddle games, formal duels or fang-and-claw warfare.

Homid: The human form, or human breed, of a werecat.

Jamaa: Powerful spirits, like Celestines and Incarna. Akin to gods, but still considered "part of the family." See also *Nyota Jamaa*.

Jamak: Spirit allies who aid a werecat in return for favors and friendship. Similar to the totems of the Garou, although the relationship between Bastet and Jamak is more egalitarian.

Karoush: The werecat Litany.

Kheuar: The shared language of all Bastet.

Kit: A young werecat, a baby, or a new-changed pupil learning the ways of catkind from a *kuasha*.

Killi: Fellow shapeshifters, gifted by Seline and Gaia (Garou, Corax, etc.).

Kuasha: Literally, “mist.” The mentor who takes a Bastet under his protection, teaches her what she needs to know, then drives her away (or leaves) to teach the cub self-reliance.

Lune: One of the moonbeam messengers, the handmaidens of Seline.

Madness, The: The great European witch-craze of the 1400s-1700s, during which cats were demonized and the Ceilican tribe was believed to have been exterminated. Also called the **Burning Times**.

Nala, the First Mother: The half-crazy Mother of creation. Torn between two lovers whom she both adores and despises, Nala’s dance keeps creation in motion. Known by the werewolves as the Wyld, and called Dynamism by some magi.

Nyota Jamaa: “Star Family”; those primal entities the Garou call the Triat — Nala, Rahjah and Cahlash. Also known simply as the *Jamaa* (“Cousins”), a name that applies to less-powerful spirits.

Padaa: A sense that combines smell and taste from a distance. To use it, a Bastet opens his mouth, flares his nostrils and inhales. The air passes across his tongue and an organ in the roof of his mouth.

Pride: Technically, one’s family. Usually describes a werecat’s allies, dependents or friends.

Pryio: The “Moon Favor,” a personality tendency based upon the time of day a Bastet attains her First Change. The werecat’s true essence, not the face she shows to others except in the most general ways. Though the concept resembles the Garou Auspices, carry no special Gifts or social requirements.

Rahjah, the Maker: The ambitious brother whose drive to impress Nala gave form to the Earth. Unfortunately, Rahjah doesn’t know when to stop, and tries to define everything into rigid forms. Known by werewolves as the Weaver, Rahjah personifies the metaphysical state of Stasis, and is sometimes called “The King of Cats” (q.v. *Cahlash*).

Seline: Gaia’s sympathetic sister, the Moon, who birthed the Changing Breeds as a gift to the Earth. She favors the werecats, of course, and considers them her finest creations. Her body is said to be the final sanctuary for all Bastet.

Shadow Folk: A common term for other supernatural creatures, i.e., mages, vampires, faeries, etc. Other shapeshifters are not usually considered Shadow Folk. (q.v. *Killi*.)

Sokto: The huge proto-human form between the Homid and Crinos states.

Taghairm: A cat gathering, often called in one Bastet’s Den-Realm or home to exchange information and pleasantries. Usually performed during the height of the full moon.

Tahla: A secret disguised as a story or riddle. If you understand one, you’ve learned something; if not, you weren’t smart enough to deserve enlightening.

Taklah: An all-werecat pride gathered together for a common purpose.

Tribe: One of the nine werecat races. Technically, eleven tribes once existed; the Khara (weresabertooths) are now extinct, the Ceilican are believed destroyed, and the Ajaba (werehenas) have been exiled and aren’t considered family any longer.

War of Rage: The genocidal war for dominance that the Garou once waged upon all other Changing Breeds. Although it occurred over 10,000 years ago, old grudges linger.

Yava: A tribal secret, hidden from all outsiders, that supposedly grants another being power over you if learned. The most tightly guarded of all Bastet lore, these are exposed only under the most extreme circumstances, if even then.

Formalities and Rank Titles

Akaa: “Truthchaser”; honorific for an equal of either gender. Also the formal title for a Second Rank Bastet.

Bon Bhat: “Great parent”; a respectful term for an elder. Often used to address the host the first time a werecat attends a taghairm in a new country. (“Thank you, Bon Bhat Kareem, for allowing me to enter your sanctum.”) Also the title for a Bastet of the Fifth or Sixth Rank.

Buree Pa: An ancient secret revealed only during a great ritual, usually as a reward for some service or accomplishment.

Hamaal: “One family”; A formal term for catkind which excludes all other races as inferiors.

Ilani: “Wonder favored”; a flattering address for a Bastet of some notoriety. Also the term for a Fourth Rank werecat.

Naa: A werecat who comes from nowhere; an outsider, a stranger who hasn’t earned the trust of others.

Shining Child: An archaic term for a human.

Tekhmet: “Little one”; a condescending address from an elder to a youngster. Also the title for a Rank One Bastet.

Tilau: “Accomplished friend”; a respectful title of address for an experienced and prosperous werecat. Also the title for a Rank Three werecat.

Watua: “Children”; an affectionate (and somewhat condescending) name for feline Kinfolk and other true cats.

Slang

Brain-Wading: Spying on another’s thoughts; using telepathy.

Caloo: A wild party or celebration.

Declaw: To mess up another Bastet, usually as punishment.

Dog: A Garou. Highly derogatory. Also pretty common.

Ghat: An insult directed at one Bastet who sleeps with another.

Housecat: Insult; a Bastet who’s grown too civilized or has forgotten her roots.

Meshing: Going into cyberspace, or hacking.

Monkey: A human, especially a stupid or loud-mouthed one.

Ngiri: “Warthog”; an insult for vain or pompous individuals.

Playing Blood-Tag: Hunting humans or other outsiders, especially in trouble zones like the Amazon or African grasslands, for fun or revenge.

Puss-in-Boots: Derogatory term for teaming up with a human, especially in an “inferior” role. (“She pulled a Puss-in-Boots and fell in love with the monkey!”)

Ratshit: Panic, usually cowardly (“He went ratshit and ran.”).

Scratching One from Nine: Pulling off a really close escape. (“I scratched one from nine getting outta that one!”)

Spiderface: A mage, especially an evil one. Coined the creeping sensation many Bastet have when looking into a mage’s eyes for the first time.

Yabba: A moron. Possibly derived from a mispronunciation of “Yava.”



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Chapter One: Caliah (Lore)

In the beginning of things, wisdom and knowledge were with the animals; for Tirawa, the One Above, did not speak directly to man. He sent certain animals to tell men that he showed himself through the beasts, and that from them, and from the stars and the sun and the moon, man should learn.

— Letakots-Lesa

• Old Man Speaks of a Cat who Dreamed

Once there was a cat who dreamed he was a man. While his littermates played, he stared at the stars and wondered what made them shine. Then one day, he became a man, and he wondered how such things could be. He sat by the side of a road and watched men pass, speaking many sounds, and he wandered through the streets while they slept. Sometimes he was a man and sometimes he was a cat, yet he knew in his heart that he was neither and both.

One day, a woman came to him. Like the morning mist, she appeared from nowhere, or so it seemed. "Little brother," she said, "I've been looking for you. The winds have spoken of your dilemma and I have come to show you the way home."

"Who are you?" asked the cat, for he understood her words and yet did not understand them. "Why do you call me brother?"

As an answer, she became a cat, a huge, spotted cat like none he had ever seen. "We are family," she continued, though she spoke in cat-tongue. "We have different parents but share the same blood. Walk with me, little brother, and I will show you what we are."

He walked with her for a year and a day. She showed him many things and taught him to speak the tongue of cat-people. Finally, she took him to a steel mountain filled with light. "You need to meet your people," she said, "and I must go away."

The young cat was very sad. "You are my sister," he insisted, "I have no other family. Don't leave me!"

"We all have family," she replied, "and someone lives inside the stone who knows your tribal secrets. I cannot teach you such things, but he can. Go to him, and know that I will never forget you."

The young cat wept, and his sister did too, for she had become fond of him. When they finished, she led him to the door of the great stone house and told him how to greet his brother. He knocked on the huge door and waited. When he turned around, she had gone away. He did not see her again, but as his brother opened up the door and welcomed in the young cat, he knew he would never forget her.

The cat grew to be an old man, and he wandered many roads. He grew wise in the ways of cat and man, but he never saw his sister again. Sometimes at night, he would watch the mist as it came from across the mountains and settled on the city. The night is alive with lights, but to this day, the cat has not seen her. Still, without the mist he would walk through the streets alone and puzzle at the words of man. So she'd left him with a gift.

He shared that gift with another cat who dreamed he was a man, and they grew together for a year and a day. For this is the way of family: to come and to share and to teach and to leave. The dreams of the cat-folk must be shared. In the night, the young cat takes his place, and he shares the dreams in his sister's name.

What are the dreams of a cat? Many things, my friends. Many things.

The Caliah of First Light

Is not the sky a father and the earth a mother, and are not all living things with wings and feet or roots their children?

— Black Elk, *Black Elk Speaks*

• Colorado Taghairm

At the Khan's command, Violet rises and strides to the hearth. Young and sturdy, she has a carpenter's broad shoulders and a rebel's spiky hair. Bright tattoos blaze across pale freckled skin, and when she speaks, her voice holds the tone of a lorespeaker. With the fire behind her, she spreads her muscled arms and begins the taghairm:

"To our newcomers, welcome. To our cousins, well met and greetings again. Ours is the fire of the Colorado snowshine, the

Aspen Protectorate. Our hall is the home of Lord Barrister ali Khan, and we thank him for his hospitality. Our way is the path of the silent shadow, and we bring the gifts of our passage to share with our siblings. Let us welcome each other and speak of hidden things.

"Let the newcomers come forth, and tell us about themselves. If they come in peace, we welcome them." As she speaks, the fire wavers, stirred by cat magic. A tingle fills the room, raising fur on arms and necks. The rituals have begun, and from there, the tales.

Several newcomers rise — a blonde woman, a young black man, a thin, whiplike girl and a Pumonca of repute. All introduce themselves in turn, then sit again. When they finish, Violet steps to center stage. Her chant fills the room's expanse with words, magic words. The room fades. Creation is born again.

Bastet Customs

So what do I know, huh? I'm just an old Bone Chewer who's been around. That's what they call us, y'know. "Bone Chewers, Bone Grabbers," that sort of thing. You'd think the so-called "Eyes of Gaia" would at least be able to get your name right, but hey, what do I know? I'm just a mutt.

I tell you what I know: a lot about the cats. Listen up and listen close, 'cause this isn't stuff you'll hear from any old place. I've got friends with friends, if y'know what I mean, and this is good stuff. Very good stuff...

The Taghairm -Where do kitties go to howl? To the taghairm, that's where. Since the War of Rage, their tribes have been congregating in one another's home spots, trading gossip, Kinfolk rights and anything else they might wanna trade. It's kinda like a moot, only not as organized. The cats, they're not ones for organization.

They don't get along, y'know. Not like we mutts are great diplomats outside our septs or anything, but cats really don't like each other much. They can only stand to meet once a month or so, and only for a night or two at that. One guy we'll call the host calls everyone in the area together through a network of information only cats understand. They meet on the full moon, and God help ya if they find you spying on them then! They work together well enough if they're tearing out your gizzards, that's for damn sure, and I've seen proof!

Anyway, they start the meeting with a long story called a caliah, where they talk about who they are and what they've done. These caliah are like our fire tales, only lots more stuffy. One favorite cat, called a lorespeaker, gets up and drones for about a half hour or so. She'd better be good 'cause cats get bored easy. I'm told they're like our Galliards, but without the social station. They just speak good and memorize the stories. Most taghairms fit their caliah to the number of new folks there; the same old people don't need to hear the same old stuff, and they won't often stand for it. A good lorespeaker tells different stories every time, and she makes 'em as cool as possible.

When that's done, the host invites guests to tell where they came from, what they did and what they saw. Sometimes they trade secrets this way, but most of the time they just brag. That's how they get their status, see: They brag about it. Sound like anyone we know? Nah! Couldn't be!

Anyhow, they finish bragging eventually and get down to trading secrets. That's what they call Gifts, kid — secrets. They don't learn 'em from spirits — at least, most of 'em don't — they learn 'em from each other. After that, they cozy up, take care of business (which might or might not include a few rites — the cat-folk ain't formal), get loaded and have a caloo, a wild blowout somewhere between a Fianna party and an orgy. They've got different ideas on the Litany than we do, and they can be real perverts when they get going. Ugh!

That's a werecat moot. From what I've heard, they vary from host to host and from country to country. Like I said, the cat-folk ain't formal. A tiger lord's gonna run a different show in India than some panther in the Bronx. Touching base and trading secrets are the reasons for taghairms. Everything else is window dressing.

Tahla — So how do you trade secrets, anyway? After all, isn't a secret shared a secret lost? Not if it's told in tahla, in the form of a story or riddle which only a smart person gets. Tahla is the Bastets' way of keeping outsiders in the cold. If you don't play the game, you don't learn a thing.

Tahla comes from wizard codes and the word games of tribal folks. Unlike caliah, stories told in tahla aren't myths or traditions. They're not so much folklore as story games and wordplay. Most are made up on the spot, and they're hard to understand unless you hold some of the pieces already. Each element of the message becomes a metaphor, and the message becomes a story.

Let's take an example: say a Bastet was talking about a warning from her teacher. Rather than saying, "Hey, dude! My mentor told me to watch out for the vampire prince!" she'd say, "The mist came out of the night to whisper to a cat. This kitten was dancing in graveyards and pulling the sheets off corpses. 'Don't chew the shrouds,' said the mist to the kitten. 'Sometimes they bite back.' The kitten looked at the shrouds and noticed a moonbeam glinting off a ring of gold. She got scared, leapt away and ran from the graveyard. The mist faded and the shrouds grew cold again." Florid? Hell yeah! But ya gotta admit it's more graceful – and exposes a hell of a lot less – than blurting out the truth.

Now if you wanna understand tahla-speak, keep in mind:

- All tahla are told in third person. You might say, "I heard a story about so-and-so..." but you'd never say "I did so-and-so." If your audience has a clue, they'll catch on.

- Everything's told in metaphors. Teachers become mist; vampires become shrouds; humans are Shining Children; cities are stone playgrounds. There's no set code for the images – they just have to be appropriate. A good obtuse metaphor makes you look imaginative if someone gets it, really stupid otherwise. It's easy to look smarter than you are just by throwing around obscure tahla and letting other folks figure 'em out for themselves. Usually, the more obscure the images, the more valuable the secret. Magic Gifts get passed in tahla, and the high Rank ones get pretty damn wild.

- Everything is larger than life. People don't just cry, they "explode in showers like the sea." Folks don't just get mad, they "turn into coals that burn through the floor." If what you're saying is important, bigger is better.

- Cultural references can make a tahla more obscure than it already is. If I said "The Rotted Hearts have pinned their blankets to the ground," you wouldn't know what I meant unless you knew that Indian braves used to pin their sashes to the ground before getting serious. Blankets were a luxury trade thing. "Rotted Hearts" is Balam slang for us white folks. See, I said "The white trespassers are gonna do or die and they don't care what it costs." Simple? Not if you don't get the lingo. And that, my friend, is the point.

Cats don't talk in tahla all the time, except the Qualmi, and they get on your nerves quick. Most of 'em just do it as a test, a test of cleverness, secrecy and security. Tahla is one of this race's little secrets, and they don't teach others how to do it. How do I know, then? Hey, that'd be telling!

Hanshii – When all else fails, there's always Hanshii: ritual challenge or combat. Some Hanshii get sophisticated, but most of 'em are pretty direct: Spit a few times, whip out your hakarr (a big-ass blade with edges all over the place – kinda like a cross between an ax, a machete and a saw blade. Nasty!), grow real tall and kick somebody's ass – you know, wolf style.

Any cat can challenge another. Rank ain't an issue for anything but survival, although a badass who picks on a kitten looks pretty bad. Bastet hiss in each others' faces a lot during Hanshii, and they bristle and arch and fuzz all over. Most times, a formal challenge goes on in a taghairm, with the lorespeaker keeping score and the host calling quits. Sometimes they just scrap alone. Most werecats won't fight to the death – there ain't enough of them left! A wounded cat can surrender without disgrace. He'll lose the challenge but not his life. The Khan used to go in for death duels, but they've banned that completely these days. Not enough to go around. Heh! Lions still do it, though, and their Hanshii get bloody and bad.

Hey, don't let on you know what I told you, huh? That's bad news for a wolf like me. I keep to myself for a reason, kid, and it ain't because I want cats in my yard.

– Raggedy Ears, Bone Gnawer Ragabash

[Storyteller Notes: Consider tahla to be "Gamecraft" (Werewolf, page 223), or role-play out the message. Details about Gifts and rites can be found in Chapter Four.]

First Light

Ahu was a vast, eternal night in the silence before creation. She hungered for company, but all was void and nothingness. It was a time before life, a longing when the dream of birth was yet to be. In darkness She spoke, and in light She was answered.

Nala came forth, First Mother of All Things. She howled like a great cat into the void, and Ahu shivered, for Nala was mad as a whirlpool and alive with grief for Her loneliness. Her body danced and spun, formless as Her mind, a thousand things in an instant of eternity. Ahu spoke again, eager for saner company, and another light shone forth. Like a grand panther came Rahjah, the Bright Brother, shimmering like a morning lake with eyes like tundra ice. And in His shadow came Cahlash, the Shadow Brother, with paws like velvet and eyes like flame. They heard the call of Nala and both went to Her and shared Her like mates. The First Mother ceased Her cry and purred into the darkness. Thus was Ahu content.

To light the void, Rahjah spun bits of Himself off into the sky. By their glow, Nala appeared as a great leopard, with eyes across Her pelt and claws like starshards. Cahlash grew jealous as His shifting mate settled into form. With a wave of His paw, He sent the winds to caress the mother, ruffling Her fur into spikes and scattering Her like dust. Free again, the mad mother settled against Cahlash's pelt, sparkling like waves on a night sea. Thus began the Brothers' battle, the contest that shapes creation, and that someday will end it, and birth another.

To the delight of Ahu, the three became a pride, tumbling together through endless reaches. *Nyota Jamaa*, some call them now: The Star Family, Celestial Cousins. In Her madness, Nala wept tears of joy and anger, and the Brothers shaped them into *chaya*, the first and eldest spirits. Some *chaya* glittered with the light of the Maker; others deepened into shadow hues like their dark Unmaker; still others whirled without form like the madness of She who wept them. Like drops of water, these spirits

splashed and spattered, creating puddles and droplets from which other spirits sprang. Ahu was overjoyed, and drew many of the chaya to Her bosom to tell them secrets from before time. Those secrets passed along the story of the lonely void and of the coming of the Jamaa. The tale I tell you now.

In time, Nala swelled from mating; Her kittens glowed like dim stars and whimpered in the darkness. To comfort them, Rahjah wove the sun from the stuff of stars; to help them sleep, Cahlash breathed out the night, the essence of Ahu. The chaya midwived the kittens, whisked them away and wrapped each one in fine spirit blankets until it could move on its own.

The kittens spun into orbits as they played, dancing around the sun as their fur dried and their eyes opened. Each parent gave the kittens three secret names, and these are lost to us. Instead, we know them as Gaia, Seline, Ahknet, Sabaal, Jurima, Pah, Divaa, Siku, Liau and Kwa. In later times, these would be changed to Earth, the Moon, Mars, Venus, Mercury, Saturn, Jupiter, Uranus, Neptune and Pluto, but we remember them as cousins, as Jamaa, not as bits of rock.

Love was not to be the kittens' lot, nor the fate of their parents, either. Soon the Jamaa quarreled. Each brother insisted His creations were finer than the other, and each claimed He had sired each of the Firstborn. Nala would have none of that, and demanded that both brothers acknowledge Her as the rightful creatrix. To prove His point, Rahjah seized Gaia and licked her, ruffling her skin into ridges that formed the mountains. Cahlash licked her next, and His spittle remained wet, creating the oceans and the rains. So began a contest that left young Gaia huddling and confused. Finally, Nala exploded, raging against both fathers, and stormed away. The fight sent tempests spiraling across the universe, and all the Firstborn shuddered. This marked the end of peace and the beginning of struggle.

The Earth

Nala's tears fell upon Gaia; where they landed, life began. As She fled into Ahu's embrace, the brothers marveled at these new miracles. When Nala didn't return, They grew worried, and both began to howl. When Cahlash wasn't looking, Rahjah added His own tears to Nala's and willed them to grow. Cahlash saw this and was angry; in return, He licked Gaia's cheek, sweeping His brother's works into chaos. As Seline and Sabaal looked on, horrified, the two fathers wrought mighty changes to the life upon Their sister. Each tried to out-do the other, to provide a better and more impressive gift for Nala upon Her return. Their activities diminished Them both, although neither noticed; from vast and formless entities, They took on forms of Their own, then shrank those forms so They could walk upon Their daughter and enhance Their creations.

The creatures themselves changed to adapt to the brothers' whims; from tiny organisms, they grew to invertebrates, to fish, to insects, lizards, dinosaurs and a thousand other things. Each time, these Nextborn creatures died faster, then grew larger. Soon, the brothers began to kill each others' children, replacing them with His own. Finally, the earth herself began to wail, assaulted by her fathers and wracked by the changes they worked. Suddenly, Nala returned, drawn by Her daughter's cry. Enraged, She leapt upon both fathers, raking Them with Her claws and rending Them with Her fangs. As Gaia broke free, the fathers' creatures died in droves. Nala's anger swept across the Nextborn, and the earth took the brunt of the storm. Seline,

Ahknet and Sabaal took their sister aside, cleaned her and nursed her wounds. To comfort her, each gave her gifts, formed by their own tears and crafted by their essence. As the Jamaa retreated away from Their brood, the moon, Venus and their brother looked down and marveled at the final result of their fathers' dispute: human beings.

Soon, Nala returned to Her children. They saw the madness in Her eyes, however, and all of them lined up to protect Gaia from further punishment. Nala cursed them all with barrenness for standing against Her, and they bore Her curse in silence. In time, Cahlash crept from hiding and approached Nala. With sweet words and caresses, He calmed Her. Soon, they made love again. When Rahjah returned, Nala left Cahlash's side and lay with the Maker as well, and then with both. In their repose, She warned them never to abuse Their children as They had, and made Them swear to end Their feud. Both swore to do so, but such promises are soon broken.

The Coming of Asura

One day, Cahlash walked upon the earth in a foul mood. Nala had left Him in favor of His brother, and He boiled with despair. A giant among giants, He stood taller than the highest tree and His skin was the color of poisoned night. For spite, He toppled forests, fouled rivers and smashed hills into rubble. Cahlash laid waste to the land for miles around, and the stone itself quailed at His approach. He entered the greatest mountain, and its sides fled His touch. "Why does even the skin of my daughter flee from my hands?" He cried in a voice like glaciers breaking. "Why must I always be alone?"

His cry shook the mountainsides. His anger bubbled like venom within Him and He loosed it in all directions. The power of His hate gathered into a cloud of seething darkness and burst from the top of the highest mountain. The winds caught the cloud and scattered it across Gaia's face, changing it to rains of serpents who spoke with a single voice: "Master, what would you have of us?"

This cloud, which was one yet many, was the essence of Asura, the many-faced corrupter. Our distant cousins call Cahlash the Wyrn, but we know better. Asura is the true destroyer, the shade of a greater entity. Cahlash unmakes, but from His deeds, greater things come. Asura is decay without rebirth. Nothing exists for him but annihilation.

Cahlash looked upon His anger incarnate, and He was both troubled and pleased. "Go across the world," He commanded, "and take root in the cracks between my brother's works. Let that which is pure stand whole, but erode that which is impure from within." Cahlash sat in the rubble of His anger and watched the evil spirit depart. He assumed Asura would only destroy the workings of His hated brother, but He was wrong. Quite wrong.

The many parts of Asura became a multitude and nestled in the broken places. From the living rock to the beating hearts, Asura darkened the world. Some places, he became like gods; in others, like serpents; in still others, he swirled into storms or leached the life from vital places. His essence became raksasha, vampires, demons, dakat. Others would call him Banes or ghosts or chaos spirits, but we know them all for what they are. All are one, and that one is Asura. He tells many tales, but all of them are lies. He is rage made manifest, and he coils within us all.

The Changing Breeds — First Twilight

Contemporary man has rationalized the myths, but he has not been able to destroy them.

— Octavio Paz

Some Killi claim our world was once a place of peace, where all things lived in total harmony. There was no want, no war, no anguish, and all living things gave of themselves to help others exist. Until some cataclysm happened, everything lived in peace and plenty.

Fantasies. Lies.

Life has ever been a struggle, my brothers and sisters. Life has always meant that some may die for others' pleasure. That pleasure may be as necessary as hunger or as frivolous as sport, but it has always been fatal and always will be. Only through struggle can we progress. Only through sacrifice can we succeed. We were born from conflict and we grow through adversity. Our ancestors are predators, great cats and human hunters who rose above their surroundings and mastered them. We know our place in the Great Order, and it is not passive.

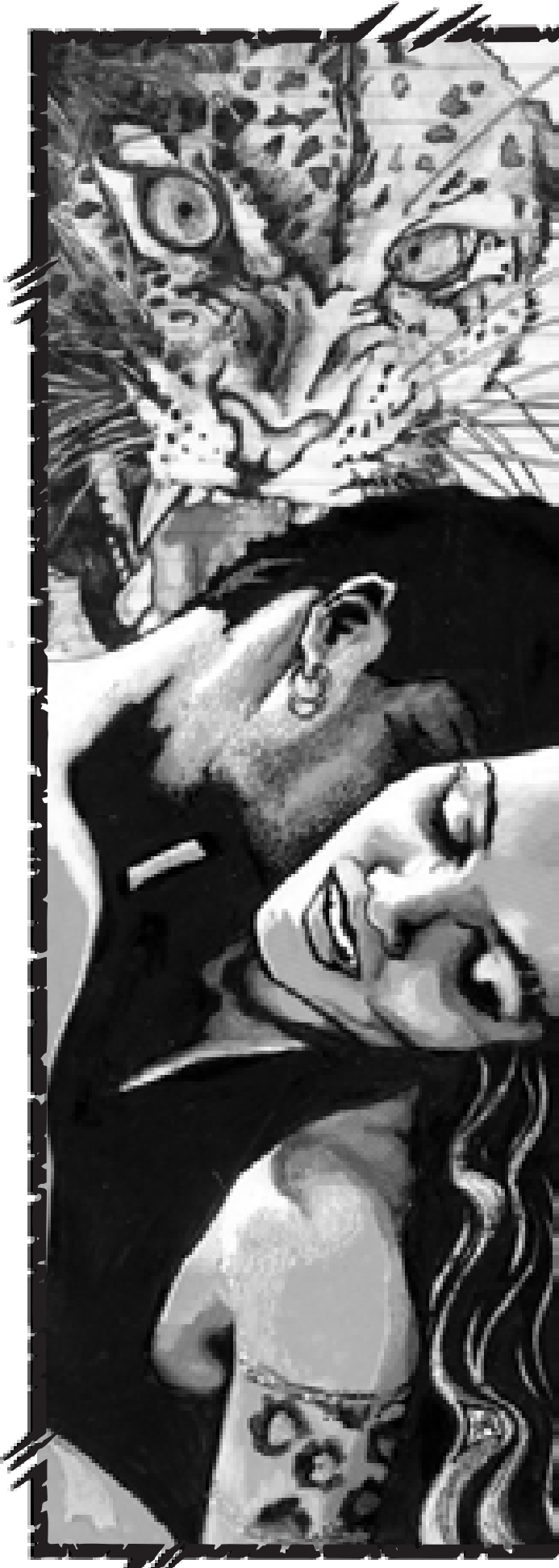
Like the moon, our world waxes and wanes. Each era glows brightly, then fades into night before rising again as some new age. As creatures of light, dark and twilight all, we are not moved much by the vagaries of fortune. Still, we notice the cycles of our earth and respond to them.

Each tribe has its creation story, and they differ in many ways. The Bagheera claim descent from a woman and two cats, while the Pumonca say they were shaped by wind and dust. The Bubasti claim they were *always* here, that the rays of the moon raised them from the Nile mud. I have my own ideas. Rather than insult those who tell a different tale than mine, I will simply say this: We were born as gifts of the moon to the earth. All Killi were brought forth from the greatest of animals and melded with the greatest of people and spirits to become something that was better yet worse than our forbears. Better, for we shared the powers of each; worse, because we were put apart forever. We may walk among our cousins, breed with them, love them or kill them, but we will never be *like* them. We are a breed eternally apart, and we are rare.

Each of the Killi was shaped of light, shadow and the elements, wedding spirit, human and animal forms. The Mokolé and Gurahl were born of Earth, that they might be solid and strong; the Nuwisha and Garou came from Fire, to temper or consume the weak; the Ananasi spider-folk share Air with the Corax, for both are as capricious as the winds. We are the children of Water, and share that liquid grace with our strange cousins, the shark-folk. The foxes, it is said, have little bits of all four parts, yet none in any great abundance. All Killi responded to a need, to a cry from the earth that was answered by the moon.

Does it seem strange that cats should carry the spirit of the waters? Then consider that water is purity, mystery and grace. Water runs silent, yet crushes with the power of an elephant. Its depths hold secrets that only the brave can find. Water is quick, quiet, always in motion. Like a cat, it carries enigmas in its flowing depths. It may seem clear and shallow, but it never is. Never.





Khara: The First Tribe

The first of our kind were nearly the last. When the multitude of Asura came to rest in a giant lizard, that creature became a dragon with 14 heads. The beast raged across the continent, driving both cats and people into the caves for shelter. Those it caught were devoured. In the gloom beneath the earth, the refugees fought bears and killed each other. This was before the days of fire, and the caves were dark as tar.

Palar was a mystic, one of those humans later called wizards. He saw in the dark through the blessings of the spirits, and he went forth at night to speak to the moon. Akuma was a huge cat, what we would call a sabertooth, and she had been cast from her pride for eating siblings. The two met far underground; after long fighting, they reached a truce. Both had failed to kill the other. Why not, they reasoned, join forces to kill the dragon?

The fight began soon enough. Palar threw fierce magicks against the dragon while Akuma tore its hide to ribbons. The dragon ripped into both of them with teeth and claws; before it died, it left its foes bleeding in each others' arms beneath the moon. Other cats and humans crowded to the cave mouths, drawn by the sounds of war. When they saw the dragon was dead, they rejoiced. When they saw the bleeding heroes, they wept. Their wailing roused the Moon Mother, and She finally descended to the earth.

Palar and Akuma lay tangled in a ragged heap, and their blood flowed together in a sluggish stream. The tears of their people watered that stream; when Seline beheld the sight, she wept as well. Her tears of light splashed into the watery red; where they landed, children appeared. Kittens with long saber teeth and babies with the eyes of cats. "Let this be your legacy," Seline told Palar and Akuma. "The birth of a new tribe, formed by the blood of you both." And so it was.

This new tribe was not the peace-bond many thought it might be. The blood of the heroes and the tears of their people had mingled with the dragon's poisons and the moonlight; the result was a strange and deadly mix. The Khara hunted both their Kin, and were soon as feared as the dragon had been. By this time, the humans found fire and drove the Khara away from their caves. The true cats fought back, but were helpless against the magical tribe. When Seline saw the carnage, She cursed the Khara. "My tears, shed for you, will boil in your veins. Silver, the moonlight rock, will burn you like the fire you so fear. All people will fear you, and all animals, too. Begone and tend the flocks that need killing. I banish you from sight!"

In a flash of light, the Khara were dispersed across the world. They found mates among the other cats, but their blood soon thinned to the point of extinction. As the humans raised the first town walls, the sabertooths disappeared... as a race, at least. They still live on in us, and we carry their curse to this day.

The Killi and the Impergium

After the dragon's rampage, the Shining Child — humans — became the great prize and the battlefield for Rahjah and Cahlash. One gave them tools, the other gave them war. One gave them fire, the other taught them to burn. The mother gifted them with magick, which both fathers twisted to their ends. In short, the Shining Child became a Problem Child. In one hand, he held wonders; in the other, a brand.

In time, other Bastet rose. Their caliah tell the tales of their creation. By some accounts, we each had duties in the First Days, but it's not in our nature to obey. All cats are curious,

and we hunted down whatever mysteries we could find. The world was a duller place then, though, and our Folk grew bored with petty secrets. The humans tantalized us with each discovery they made, and our forebears crept into their towns to spy on them. We grew fond of our two-legged Kin, and some say we allowed them to grow faster than was healthy.

As the humans prospered, they grew quickly out of hand. Some tribes practiced the Impergium, a systematic culling of

the human flock that our lupine cousins began. Other tribes objected — humanity had great secrets we could learn — and our forebears went to war. The Bubasti and the Simba sought to lead our people, and the Bagheera sided with both. The last Khara fought beside the lions, and the Khan battled them all. It was a bloody, useless time, and we fractured as a people. Secrets became the only thing to bind us.

Secrets, and a threat.

Legacies of Rage: The Shadow-Folk

Ah, yes, says Raindance, we see a lot, and we have our prejudices. The lore we learn makes us more impartial, I think, but we keep our minds made up once we get an opinion. What opinions? Funny you should ask....

Garou — It's hard to forgive these raging bastards. They've warred on us twice at my count, and still do in the Amazon forests. They disgrace our ancient Tona with their piss and blood and chase our Kin into the mountains. My people made peace with their Indian tribes long ago, and we fought side by side with 'em in the West. Still, even the best wolves are careless and hungry. They have some smarts, I think, but they don't use them much.

Mokolé — Wise dragons from a lost age. Very territorial, and I know how that feels. It's hard to find 'em when you need to — most times, you could be walking right over one and not know it unless you're getting rude — but they make an impression when they do show up.

Our people know the Dragon Kings from long ago. Most old Tona are set up around Mokolé grounds. Some Simba, Pumonca and Balam set up deals with the Old Folk, but most of us just avoid 'em. It's easier to not get stepped on that way.

Other Killi — My Folk have old ties with Coyote and Crow, so we've got a strong respect going. Corax pass us things they overhear, and we do the same for them. Put cats and crows together and nobody gets away with *anything!* Still, they're odd Folk and so are we, so we don't get too snug.

The Khan speak of the *hengeyokai*, so I guess they've got an understanding. Most Folk I know don't trust 'em, but then we don't trust many Killi. As for the spiders and the sharks, who in hell *wants* to get to know 'em? I know the tales of Grandmother Spider, but the stories I've heard of Ananasi don't make 'em sound like weavers of wisdom, more like demons in spider form.

I will not speak of Brother Bear. He has suffered too much, and I will not disturb his rest with gossip. We were friends and remain so. That is all you need to know.

The Children of the Rat are not true Folk at all. Our caliah says plenty about their vicious ways. Not that we can't be vicious — the wolves are proof of that — but these bone pickers don't seem to have any purpose other than disease. Maybe I'm wrong. I don't claim Thunderbird's wisdom. All I know is that the Ratkin are bringers of plague. And my people have seen too much of sickness to like it much.

Fae — I will not speak of Changed Ones, either. Yes, I know the fae did not die with Arcadia, but their business is not my business, if you know what I mean. Some of our wilder Folk dance around with the Dream Chasers, and they seem natural enough companions. Still, their lords threw the Ceilican into slavery, and many of us still remember that.

Vampires — They *are* fascinating, you know. Too fascinating for some Folks' own good. Me, I keep a wide step away. Some of our brothers and sisters invite them out to play, and raise all kinds of hell. *Nobody* has more secrets than the Kindred (that's what they call themselves, you know), and we know how cats are about secrets. That fire has singed many a good cat's fur, but I don't suppose they'll ever stop sticking their faces in it. There's too much to learn in a bloodsucker's court.

I've heard tales of cats who wanted to be Kindred. Sad, really, what someone might do for power. The blood of vampires carries Asura's taint, and it eats its way through a Bastet's moon wisdom, her Gnosis. As she dies to the moon, she loses her magic. When the bond is broken, her spirit dies, too. The Abominations that wander the night afterward are pathetic things, consumed by hungers worse than blood thirst. We kill them on sight, of course. There are enough horrors in the night already.

Wizards — From our beginnings, it seems we were one with the Medicine Folk. Their blood became ours in the veins of the Khara, and we haven't strayed far since. We have watched their kitchens, stalked their laboratories, curled in their laps and danced with them in storm circles. We fought in their wars and suffered their burnings in the Madness. When their machine sects trashed our homelands, we fought them; when their shamans built Realms away from Earth, we went there. The Bubasti have the tightest ties with wizards, but our eyes always follow theirs. They call us consors, lovers, allies and pests, but they have not ignored us. Our people share a blood, after all.

Chaya — Dancing on the side of the world, chaya tempt us to cross over. We speak to them often, but the wall created by the War of Rage seals most of us off from them. We feel their touch and carry their mysteries to the waking world, but the blanket of the Dreaming Ones comforts us even when we cannot feel it.

We do know the Jamak, powerful chaya who befriend us. My people call them totems, but they're far more than distant voices or carved poles. These totems are alive — they give Gifts, cross over and appear to us in dreams and waking hours both. A totem makes an odd friend, and a demanding one. But as one chosen by the Thunderbird, I can tell you that it's worth his price to walk his road.

I'll tell you a secret of my own: The Swara know the chaya better than I do. Go ask one of them for spirit lore — if you can *find* one. Maybe they make themselves scarce to avoid telling too much to too many.

Asura (Banes) — Corruption has a million voices; sometimes they drown out the song of the moon and lead us over cliffs. That song wails from nightclubs, boom boxes and televisions every day. Stop up your ears, my friend and listen to the wind.

The War of Rage

Those secrets led the wolves to our door — literally. The Garou assumed that since we didn't share our lore with them, we had sided with Cahlash. Some tribes fought the dogs in the streets of human towns, while others took the battle to distant places. In those dark days the wall slammed down between our world and the realm of spirits, and it sealed us off from our birthright. Some secrets let us walk between the worlds again, but they are rare and powerful Gifts. Most of us can only sit on this side of the wall, pawing at the things we see but cannot touch. Gods *damn* the dogs for that!

Damn the dogs for slaughter, too. Their misbegotten crusade killed hundreds of our Kind and Kin. They pursued the Great Bears into the Earth from which they had been born and shattered their bones to prevent them from returning. They hunted the Trickster and ripped him limb from limb for daring to laugh. They brought down the Great Beasts to provide them with medicine and drove the Dragon Kings into the mud. They even massacred their own kind in their frenzy. Since they were so inclined, we joined them in their sport. Life is battle, after all, so we retreated to our own lands and killed any wolf who entered.

In time, emissaries came from the wolves to make peace. Some Garou tribes, like the Silent Striders and Stargazers, settled in our lands with our consent. Others, like the Children of Gaia and the Black Furies, won our respect and overcame our hatred. The Wendigo, Uktena and Croatan actually shared our space with little bloodshed; we were never friends, but we accepted each other. The infernal Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords never made official peace, but insinuated themselves in our domains. We make it a priority to this day to harass them, but resist the urge to fight an open war. They outnumber us, and have earned the title "Fangs of Gaia" for a reason.

The other Killi were not as fortunate as we. Some survive in the further reaches of the world today, but their secrets are too precious even for our caliahs. If you meet one, respect its privacy. They're grumpy even by our standards, and have every right to be so.

The Ajaba

Pity our half sisters and half brothers; their mother sinned and birthed monsters. Neither cat nor wolf, the hyena-folk carry bits of us both. Pity them, but avoid them, too, their blood carries the taint of Asura in his purest form. More than any of us, they embody the curse of the darkness.

Long ago, a sorceress named Siracca sought the rites of shapechanging. Mad as Nala, she tried to follow her patron's example. She mated with serpents, wolves and great cats in an effort to become like them, but gave birth to monsters instead. Some legends portray her as one of our kind, but *we* know this isn't so. The Khan say she was filled with the taint of a bhuta when she bore Adeo, the first Hyena King. Adeo's changing gender marked Seline's curse and Cahlash's blessing. All Hyena Kings switch from male to female and back again. It helped them, no doubt — homids generally listen to males as war leaders, and among hyenas, the women-folk are the ones in charge. These days, we might call the kings transsexuals, but in the First Days, it was a sign of disfavor.

We might have made peace with the hyena-folk if they'd let us. Instead, they attacked our brothers and sisters, fouled the drinking holes, and practiced black magic with Asura during the nights when the moon had gone missing. Our people have watched them sacrifice children of all species and dance with

the snake-ridden dakat. Occasional emissaries have been tortured, skinned alive to provide capes for the Hyena Kings, then crunched to bits by the Ajaba's huge teeth. Pity our cousins, but beware them. If the tales I've heard are any measure, they have no pity for us at all.

We rode out our world's First Twilight to see the sun rise on busy apes. Our human Kin grew quite industrious, and the next millennia saw an age of wonders. We shared those glories as we often do; who could've seen where they would lead?

The Rise of Man — Second Twilight

It is better to have a lion at the head of an army of sheep than a sheep at the head of an army of lions.

— Daniel Defoe

We are where we are born. That makes most of us partly human, at least, and many feel more than halfway so. I think our unique insights show us that humanity is a mixed blessing — especially where the earth and the wild are concerned.

Men are the cleverest monkeys, no doubt, but they don't have much sense of self-preservation. They shit where they eat, and where we eat, too, and foul the water holes like Ajaba, but worse. I don't think I need to recite a litany to tell you where our Kin have gone wrong. We all hug the shadows, and we know stupidity all too well.

Our forebears fought to let humanity prosper. I wonder what they'd think if they saw the results today. We have an amazing world at our fingertips, but it's filled with poisons and lies. Honor seems to be a fading dream in lands where the rich starve their people and the poor kill each other. In many places, our forebears were reared with ideals of honor, but we obey a higher law, still: The Litany Law of Catkind, the Karoush. Handed down from our forebears, these laws are bigger than any Bastet, greater than any Rank or title. These are our codes of honor, and they separate us from the monkeys who form one third of our souls — and guard us from their mistakes.

Karoush: The Litany

This is the Code our Ancestors made.

This is the Law of the Moon and the Sun.

This is the Law of the Shaping of Secrets.

This is the Law of the Change.

Honor Yourself

We hold magic within ourselves, within our hearts and minds and spirits. To dishonor ourselves is to disperse that magic and scatter our souls.

We are to remain clean — to cleanse ourselves of filth, divest ourselves of our former lives, care for our own health and avoid the inbreeding sickness. Possession is unclean, and we must shake other spirits from our skins, lest they taint our own.

When we fail — we must purify ourselves with washing, seek cures for our sickness, raise the deformed ones we bear and cleanse our souls with ceremony. If the Unmaker's spawn ride us to destruction, we are obligated to take our own lives. If we do not, others will do it for us.

Honor Your Word

We are the wisest of the Changing Breeds, and come from places that respect the meaning of honor. Let the dogs and monkeys piss on trust; we are honest Folk — with each other, at least. It's acceptable to lie to other creatures; they're not of our blood and not bound by our laws.

We are to remain truthful — to break no oaths before the Folk, and make no false witness against one of our kind. A promise made is a bond sworn to Seline; we will act on it as if the goddess Herself would punish us for failure. We will flee to survive a fight, but will not run when others depend on our strength.

When we fail — we must make restitution to those we deceive, in deeds, trade or money. We may be challenged to Hanshii or punished by rite. We may be exiled or branded. At the very least, we will be disgraced, and remembered as liars to all of the Folk.

Honor Your Kin and Kind

We remember the Kinfolk who keep our kind alive, and we respect our cousins in the other tribes. The great cats are more precious than our human lovers, but both of them are blood relations. All Bastet are sacred in the light of the moon, and our sternest oaths protect us in these twilight times. All our laws pertain to Kin and Kind, and we respect each other as siblings under the moon.

We are to remain just — to quarrel not with each other without cause, to seek open restitution and honorable combat, to respect a challenge and the challenger, and to obey the lorespeaker and host of the taghairm. When our Kin and Kind are in danger, we will aid them; when they cry, we will succor them.

When we fail — we will take the judgment of our fellows, distance ourselves from our Kind, forsake the taghairm and accept the brand of the oathbreaker. If we allow our Kin to come to harm, we will accept that their spirits will carry news of our cowardice, and we accept that label as just.

Honor Your Earth

We are the children of the moon and the earth together, shaped by the fathers, sired by the mother and suckled by the teats of Seline and Gaia as one. When corruption eats at the heart of our world, when the Asura devour the spirit of the land, we will not stand by. Our weapons are many — secrets, claws, teeth and allies — and we will not hesitate to employ them for our world's survival. Our people have walked too close to extinction for us to take such matters lightly.

We are to remain fierce — to poison not the earth nor allow it to be ruined. We will inform others of plans to pollute the wild and hunt down poachers of game. We will stand beside the other Killi, even the hated dogs, if that means stopping the demons. We will not ally ourselves with shadow powers or drink corrupted wisdom. We will stand brave in the face of the Unmaker's wrath and we will triumph.

We do not fail our Earth and mother. That path leads to death.

Honor Your Silence

We are the keepers of secrets, and our fates depend on silence. Each of us bears the hidden doom of our own people, and we know the cost of betraying that trust. We also know that we have what others want — or what they *think* they want — and it amuses us to make them squirm. Our knowledge is our concern. We will not share it unless we wish to.



We are to remain quiet — never to let our Yava leave our lips, nor allow them to fall into other hands. Our mysteries are our own to dispense, and we will value them by Rank and title. We will hide ourselves from outsiders; they will think they know us, but we will delude them. We will wrap our lore in riddles and tales; let the clever ones puzzle out their meaning. We will act as if we know even more than we do, for it keeps outsiders guessing. Let them wonder at our insight; they value us more highly when they do.

When we fail — we will cover our tracks with misdirection, pretend to be other than what we are, fill the air with idle rumors and hide messages in code. She who fails to keep the Yava will be killed — there is no better mercy — and he who acts upon it will be ripped apart by hunting cats. There is no forgiveness for this crime.

Old Man Speaks of the Karoush

Oh, yeah, they've got their standards just like any other Folk. Do they keep to 'em... Well, let's just say I know what I've seen. And I've seen a lot.

- **Honor Yourself:** They're good enough at this, I guess. I haven't seen many dirty cats, nor watched 'em ridden by the Banes. They take their hygiene so seriously you'd swear they lick themselves to sleep. Some do, actually — I've seen 'em. In all my wanderings, I've only met one vampire cat, and he was in a miserable state. Fur all matted, tongue gone black. His eyes were so filled with pain that I decided to help out. I'd swear he was grinning as the semi ran him down. That felt good.

- **Honor Your Word:** Oh, I've seen enough cats pin their tails to the ground to make a point, but they're no more honest than other folk and sometimes less so. They lie like anything to "monkeys," which is what they call people, to get good news to carry back to their meetings. They don't think this is lying, though I suspect most folks would disagree.

- **Honor Your Kin and Kind:** Oh, yes, they honor each other all right. That's why the tigers are almost extinct and the lions wear hyena pelts all over Africa. That's why there's a mountain of skulls in Kenya. That's why the big cats are almost gone. This is a load of kitty litter and I dare any cat to say otherwise to my face.

- **Honor Your Earth:** I'll admit, they're good about this. Most of 'em, anyway. I've met a few cats who stunk so soundly of the Wyrms that I had to walk away. They get that way when one secret looks too tempting to give up on. In general, though, I've gotta say that the cats take Momma Gaia seriously. Guess they've gotta live here, too.

- **Honor Your Silence:** Heh heh, well, I guess they're good enough at this... when they know they're being watched. All the same, the cats are proud Folk and they brag a lot. They decide their Ranks by cleverness, but I say they're not as smart as they might think. Then again, that may be *their* false trails. Maybe I'm the one who's being fooled.

Wouldn't *that* be something!

Culture and its Shadow

We've done what we could to remain a part of three worlds — those of our Folk, the humans and the cats. As the caves turned to villages, the villages to towns and the towns to walled cities, that became harder and harder to do.

I could tell you stories all night, all week, all month and more. The lorespeakers of our kind have gathered hundreds, even thousands of tales from the ages of men. Our feline Kin went to the Land of Black Soil, Egypt, to the barbarian lords of Britain and the high North, to the people of the Americas and the tribe-folk of Africa. As the temples rose and the hordes crossed through, our parents sat on the sidelines of history and observed the passing of kings.

The cultures we witnessed shaped our own ways. The Simba and Bubasti adopted the hierarchies of command, and soon the Khan did as well. Bagheera ventured into the temples on the Ganges and padded through the streets of Zimbabwe. Pumonca counted coup and Qualmi told riddles and Swara danced with the villagers near Kilimanjaro. We loved their people, spirited our Folk away when the First Change came, and made their secrets of Naming and Crafting our own.

Cities rose, each with secrets too tempting to ignore. Even ruins drew us in. Forests fell, but we hungered on the fringes of the land. Some of our kind retreated with their Kinfolk into the wild reaches, which were still plentiful then. We made our Den-Realms and warred to keep them clear. As cultures rose and fell, some tribes did the same. A long war with vampires undid the Bubasti, whose Kinfolk died out before the sun set on Egypt. Roman hunters drove the lion-folk out of Europe and wore down the Ceilican, who had themselves escaped a war in Africa. The Olioiqui, who founded the Balam, became gods to several cultures before the conquistadors destroyed their people. Even so, we persevered and prospered. For a long time — 4,000 years — there was all the room in the world for us, and no lack of secrets to keep us entertained.

The Madness and the Wars of Conquest

We should have seen the signs in the Classical Age, when armies swept across the land in the names of gods, kings and conquerors. We should have met en masse when trade and crusades brought East and West together. We should have taken heed of the plagues that racked overstuffed cities: Something was terribly wrong. Asura, whose thousand faces had become a million, crept through the Dark Ages and emerged in the Renaissance as a parasite full-grown.

Suddenly the flames roared up, consuming our Kin. The Ceilican, who had danced with faeries and villagers alike, were enslaved by a fae lord and a careless cat. Those who were not dragged down when Arcadia fell were hauled to the torture chambers. The Madness had begun, and it kindled a firestorm that has chased us to the edge of extinction.

Three tribes fell in less than a century. The Ceilican were the first to go, butchered and burned as servants of the Devil. The winged Olioiqui and star-eyed Hovitel Qua died beneath the Spaniards' lances; they left us the Balam, but that tribe shares a poisoned heart. Across Europe, our Kinfolk were condemned; the ships that bore them away landed on other shores and began a new chapter.

Fall of the Wild Lands

I will not belabor the point. We know what happened. Explorers, slavers and great white hunters bounded into the wilderness and cast a chain around our kind. Suddenly, we went from having all space to having little. We were dragged across the seas, wiped out by plague, hunted for sport and chased from our feeding grounds. Our prey was stripped from the land, and fences and bullets tore our Den-Realms to tatters. The wise monkeys had set wisdom aside. From 1600 to 1900, our lands disappeared with the crack of a rifle.

The Second War of Rage

Our loving cousins completed the damage. When the white settlers arrived in the Americas, they brought werewolves with them. Silver Fangs, Fenris-Get, Bone Crawlers and other tribes crossed over and fought their brothers for the caerns. Our neighbors called them "Wyrcomers," and blame them to this day for the rape of the land and its people. I can't say I don't share the sentiment just a bit.

The first War of Rage was long ago, and it'd be easy to forgive if the vicious bastards hadn't done it again. The bloodbath that arrived with the wolves, when they came here, was unprecedented. Some Folk, like Old Stone Face and Strange Owl Woman, made peace with the native wolves and broke the attackers' bones. Still, there were more of them than there were of us, and they carried sicknesses even we could not resist. Asura had nestled in their hearts, and he exploded across the west with their coming. Creatures that had lain asleep woke up; beasts that had been tamed lashed back; monsters that hadn't before existed soon boiled across the plains in clouds like the Unmaker's own. Somewhere in the void, Cahlash must have laughed. The gifts of Seline were killing each other. We didn't stop until a greater evil forced us to align, but that's another story.

The Tiger Feuds

Cahlash would have laughed even harder at the last Tiger Feuds, the final gasps of the sultanate that had ruled the Khan for 1,000 years. The first began when the tigers sired a lord by the name of Clouster, an English Khan with all his people's arrogance behind him. Young as he was, Clouster had connections in the English presence — contacts who could muster up a tiger hunt or feed a siddhu down a cannon's mouth. Lord Clouster had cobras for a heart; he tossed his own kuasha beneath the wheels of a train, fed his wife to a *suttee* fire by pretending to be dead, then killed his children when he found they did not carry the Changing Touch. He began a war with the Sultan Jampal which ended with Clouster's execution by silver needles. By the time Clouster's Purge ended, tensions between the Indians and English had risen high enough to frighten tigers. Thirty Khan and untold Kinfolk died, and the track was been set for the final feud: Nagda-Rackbur war.

The sultan's final act was treason. After a long war which began during the partition of 1947, an English Khan and the tiger sultan sent assassins to kill each other. Each side courted dark allies — vampires, dakat and bhuta, human mercenaries and far worse — and used black magic to bring its rivals down. Taken over by his rage, the Sultan Nagda betrayed his race and used a tribal secret. During an eclipse, his assassins struck all over Asia, slaying nearly 100 Khan and many Kinfolk outright. The Bagheera, outraged, set a huge force against him. It was a bloody battle at the height of monsoon season, but Nagda and his followers were killed.

The Tiger Duels reduced the Khan to a handful of survivors. For their own protection, they scattered across the world. Our own host, Lord Barrister, is one such refugee. I'm sure he has some tales to tell, himself.



The Sangoma Shida

These so-called “difficulties” involved a witch-war across central Africa. As Europeans charged through the continent, the local wizards — sangoma, among other names — reacted with a barrage of curses and nighttime horrors. Khan, Swara and Bagheera joined the fight, and floods of foreign vampires added to the slaughter. The hot nights became nightmares. It’s a wonder anyone survived.

The Simba say that many of the white explorers brought magicians with them, odd wizards who called themselves Technocrats. We studied their secrets, but could learn nothing from them. Their machines devoured the jungles and shot our brothers full of silver. The vampires aided the Technocrats in covert but effective ways, crossing claws with our brothers in the midnight jungles. Some newcomers exploited tribal hatreds between our Kin, and the sangoma turned against each other. Our people faltered in the chaos, and the colonists took the continent. Harsh reprisals stilled many of the sangoma and we lost more Kin than we could afford. By 1900, Europe had divided up the land as our Folk retreated to the wilderness again. There our brothers and sisters made a stand, one which continues even now.

The Rise of Cahlash — Third Twilight

The future is a war.

The future is a war!

The future! Is! A! War!

— Exene Cervenka, “The Future is a War”

This is the simple truth, my brothers and sisters: We were not watching. We contented ourselves by collecting trinkets while an entire world raced past our eyes. We stuffed our ears with clever tales but never put the pieces together to see the pattern they made. We warred with each other while the monkeys and the dogs took our lands away from us. We bickered and avoided each other while Asura brought the darkest hand of the Unmaker down across the entire world. We have no one to blame but ourselves.

For all our vaunted sight, we’re blind. For all our gathered lore, we’re stupid. The world is falling apart. Our cousins say an Apocalypse is at hand. I don’t know whether to believe it or not, but we *are* living in interesting times! Call it Third Twilight; I hope we see a forth.

These days, all we lorespeakers call for a truce; we must pool our secrets, combine our efforts, and bring the world’s secrets to light. We must act on what we discover and disperse what we learn. The Asura and their kind have tainted the world, and even the moon might not accept us now.

Do I lose my cool? Am I dropping the voice of the lorespeaker and falling into the voice of Violet? Good! Pretty metaphors fit the First Ages all right, but the future is now and that future is war!

Even so, I wouldn’t trade it for a hundred Golden Eras past. The modern age is the greatest puzzle we could want — endless streams of secrets, enigmas, wonders and dazzles, wrapped up in an explosive package that could blow us all to hell. Anywhere, at any time, the whole ride could fly off the rails. But it’s such a wild ride, so vital and intoxicating, that we wouldn’t hop off if we could. And we can, you know. Oh, yes, we can....

The Scatterings

Some Folk don’t share my enthusiasm for the modern world. They lock off the wilderness and say “Keep Out Or Else!” Those who ignore the warning feed the vultures the next morning. Outsiders say our kind is dying, but we know we’re simply better hidden. My own tribe, Bagheera, is healthier now than it’s been in ages. So many people have returned to the old ways in some parts of the world that we have our choice of Kin. Modern travel makes wandering easy, and modern media allow us access to things we hadn’t dreamed of before. My tribe sees the next sun through this Twilight, and we hope to help bring it to morning.

The Simba have experienced a different kind of renewal, one I’m not sure I like. A great leader, Black Tooth, has risen out of the dust and taken his fight to his enemies’ homes. They call him the Dark King of Endless Storms, and he left the Hyena King’s court a bloody mess. The lions revere him, but the tales I’ve heard recall the Khara — vicious, genocidal and cruel. In respect to our guests, I’ll avoid speculation, but the common word is that he’s fallen to the demons inside.

Black Tooth’s rage has driven our skittish cousins even further into hiding. The Swara are so distant these days it’s rare to even hear of them in this part of the world. Contacts in Africa say they’ve taken up a prophet’s role, urging other Folk to repent their worldly sins and retreat to the Court of Seline before the world ends. Some rumors say they’ve taken up posts at the most sacred sites in Africa, while others tell of new recruits throughout the game preserves — recruits who vanish at odd hours and return looking happy. Draw your own conclusions; I feel our siblings are busier than they appear.

The Khan, as I said, have scattered from Asia. The last century has made them so many enemies that staying home is suicide. I’ve heard that many have disappeared into the vast cities of China and Hong Kong, but that’s only speculation. We sit tonight in the home of a titled lord, so offer him your thanks and respect before you leave. I’m sure our host would rather I leave further guesses to the spirits. I’ll simply say the tigers are not where you’d expect.

The shadowcats do what they’ve always done: survive. Word has it that they’ve grown healthy in the last few years, but they stay so far in the shade that it’s difficult to tell. These ancient Folk are strangers even to us; while a celebrity or two bears the look of the Bubasti, they do not advertise their heritage and never have.

Our quirky cousins in the far north are much the same. One Qualmi visited our protectorate some time ago, confused everyone and left. That’s their way, I’ve heard, and it seems to serve them well. The tribe appears to be strong enough, but so scattered that a consensus is impossible. Not that I would expect a straight answer from these Folk; if they serve the moon, they do so in ways I cannot explain.

We have several Storm Walkers with us this evening. Good welcome to you all, especially you, Raindance. Your tribe has shown remarkable tenacity in the face of the second Rage War, and the tales I hear tie you closely with the fame your ancestors enjoy. This age needs you, my friends. People have begun to open their eyes, but they still need your counsel to see the cliff’s edge before falling off.

It’s a shame the Ceilican could not live to see the current age; from the tales I’ve heard, they would’ve enjoyed the view. Idle rumors speculate that they do enjoy it from some hidden vantage point. Maybe the changelings on the fringes of our realm could say more, I don’t know.

The Amazon War

Which brings us to the Amazon. I'm sure you've heard of the War; the days of conquest never ended down there. Nor did the second Rage War, some say. Both struggles have long-lived and active ghosts. This conflict has attained a new ferocity with the addition of automatic weapons and modern explosives, and it spills across the whole region — the land of the Balam.

Our cousins have been wounded, no doubt about it. We all know the stories, so I won't belabor them, but their tribe has suffered as few of us have. They are curt and violent and practice magic that makes skin crawl — even mine. Still, they've encountered an aspect of Asura that makes the dragon of the First Days look paltry.

A dragon called Pentex.

Perhaps you've heard of it.

Pentex

We've all stolen secrets from this shadow-corp: boardroom coups, hostile takeovers, sick experiments, even dakat mercenaries. Those stories are true — violently true — and they add up to an appalling picture if you string them all together.

We know the ways of monkeys all too well. They get an idea, work on it a bit, and try to rule the world. Typical. We've seen their kind before. But these monkeys *aren't* typical; they're not Hyksos or Englishmen, Spaniards or even Technocrats. They're the incarnations of a Final Twilight — of a night that *has* no dawn. And they're growing quickly.

Cahlash has eaten a hole through the heart of the modern era. Look around you if you doubt it. Surely the secrets you've uncovered have given you the idea that maybe, just *maybe*, something's going on, something bigger than another plunder, another invasion, another city that falls to ruin in a century. Pentex is the Unmaker, Incorporated. It eats its way under the modern world with a dozen Asura faces, but it's standing naked in the Amazon. It's a hideous sight, I'm told — corruption even the Bubasti would reject. I doubted it myself when I heard the wolves raving, but this time I think they may be right. Discover what you can, but bury your tracks well. Cahlash is a seductive lover, but in the case of Pentex, His touch may be eternal.

Closing Boast: Defiance of the Folk

We *all* bear the mark of Cahlash, to be sure. We're restless Folk, arrogant and aloof and filled with a curiosity that nothing can fulfill. Like our eldest cousins, we bear the moon-rage and a fear of silver, and our changing genes lie close beneath the skin. Stress causes even the best of us to shift forms suddenly, and we lose ourselves in the passion of a moment. We're strangers to each other for most of our lives, and we like it that way — a few careful gatherings are all we can stand. The moon is our patron, but the shadows are our father too, and they call to us at our weaker moments. Some of us embrace them, and fall further in than they can ever travel back. Most of us dance on the edge, though, and that's where we like to be!

Despite our pains, we're spirited and wild, inquisitive yet careful, sensual yet refined. Our beauty is our greatest pride, and our wits are second to none. We chase and trade them like gemstones for their prettiness, offering them like gifts to our Mother Seline, the true creator of our kind. She shows Her thanks in presents of magic and pure breeding, and brings us around when we finally die. Nine lives, indeed! More like nine thousand! Until the moon goes dark, we will always return.

So let the dogs run ragged searching for "wyrms" beneath our skin. We know what we are. We have seen their own taint, but we stand proud, our tails held high. To hell with them all! We are Bastet, each tribe, each breed. Our differences pale before our strength, and that strength flows like water through each cat on earth! We are Bastet, and our gifts are legion!

Still, we cannot let pride blind us to the facts. This is the age of the Third Twilight. The morning it foretells is up to us. We must come together, yet retain our pride. We are immortal, yet our world falters. We are the keepers of secrets. Perhaps it's time those secrets were revealed.





Chapter Two: Nine Tribes

Little one, I would like to see anyone — prophet, king or god — persuade a thousand cats to do anything at the same time.

— Neil Gaiman, “A Dream of a Thousand Cats” (from *The Sandman*)

• Rucksack Mary Speaks of a Rich Man

Once I met a rich man who told me of another rich man. This second rich man had an evil power; he would raise his hands, and the mountains turned to fire. The rocks took wing, then fell like rain, and the rich man went through the wreckage looking for the stars beneath the mountain. He filled his pockets with the stars and carried them back home.

At home, the rich man had built a house of bones, paid for with the stars in his pockets. He ate on plates made of flesh and watched his children go hungry. Well, some of them, anyway. Two of the children watched the rich man carefully, and learned his evil trick. They did things a little differently, though. The man's son waved his hands in circles and made water turn to mud; his daughter pointed her fingers at the wind and made snakes fall from the skies. The youngest daughter just shook her head and went away. She wrote letters and those letters turned to gold.

One day the rich man was going through the bits of rock he had just sent flying, looking for stars to put in his pockets. As he picked his way along, he suddenly met a kitten, hungry and scared. “Well, get a look at you,” he said to the kitten. “You look awful. What happened?”

The kitten looked at the man and her whiskers twitched. “Someone turned my home inside out. They sent the stone into the winds and watched it fall. Now I've got no place to live.”

“That's too bad,” said the rich man. “You're such a pretty kitten, too. I don't see kittens like you every day. I wonder why.”

“No,” said the kitten then, and her voice went deep as coal mines. “You don't see kittens like me every day. When I get done with you, you won't see anything... anyday.”

The kitten became a cat; the cat became the four winds, and each wind had a knife. The four winds spun in a bloody dance around the rich man and cut him into bits. The stars fell from his pocket. His eyes rolled on the ground. His liver slopped to the dirt, but his heart could not be found. Maybe it went into the air and never came down. Maybe it went into the ground and never came back up. Maybe someday it'll show up.

The winds became the cat, which in turn became the kitten. The kitten scooped up the stars, put them in her pockets and wandered off. “Thanks,” she told the throbbing bits of rich man. “I've got no home left anymore, but with these stars you've given me, I'll have a nice start.”

And so the kitten went into the cities and learned to read scurrying crickets. The scurrying crickets sat still for her, and she soon spoke their language. Other rich men paid her to tell them what the crickets said, and to teach them to dance for them, and she did. The stars from her old home bought the kitten a palace made of ivory, and there she read letters made of gold. With the profits from the dancing crickets, she bought another mountain and fed the winds that lived around it. No rich men could turn this mountain inside out, because the kitten had hired the winds to watch over it. Lots of rich men tried anyway. The first man's son was one of them.

Perhaps their hearts went up and didn't come down. Maybe they went down and didn't come back up. Maybe someday they'll be back. Personally, I doubt it.

Tribes of Twilight

What can be said about a race of individuals?

Bastet aren't social in the ways we're accustomed. Independence is part of their allure. They don't, as a rule, congregate into nations, create governments or politick amongst themselves. When they gather, a hierarchy among cousins emerges, but it's a more fleeting structure than the societies of the humans, the Garou, or especially the ageless vampires. Like most cats, Bastet gather because they want to, or because their circumstances have forced them to stay together... at least for the moment.

Among the Bastet, tribes are racial distinctions, not social ones. Their blood carries the legacy of parents without number; a cat can no more change her tribe than change her spots, as they say. Each tribe has distinctive features that mark it from the others. Some are physical, others cultural. There is always a hint of a Bastet's history in each of the five forms — a bulky Khan will always out-mass a sleek Swara, even in his human aspect. But most statements made about any particular tribe, such as the following notes, are gross generalizations. In the end, a Bastet is who he wants to be, not who his tribe says he *should* be. Each cat is free to choose his destiny.



Moot



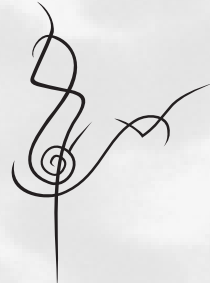
Nala



Rahjah



Cahlash



Keep out, Mine, Stay away



Seline



beware



Gaia



Asura



oathbreaking



Balam



Simba



Bubasti



Swara



Pumonca



Ceilican



Qalmi



Bagheera



Khan



Ajaba

Bagheera

Caliah

Does it puzzle you that our natures should be twofold, threefold, yet one? Do you wonder why the gods, who have decreed a place for each thing, have offered us so many places in one? Sit, Tekhmet, while I tell you a truth. It is but one of many, but it will serve.

Our kind began long ago, outside a village near the mountains. Some tales place those mountains near the Indus Valley, while others place them in the Ethiopian highlands. The location is no matter; what matters is that those lands were fertile and inhabited. For many years, perhaps centuries, the people of those lands lived in harmony with the true cats. No Bastet yet existed. No Bastet were needed. The people kept to themselves, and they respected the land. The cats remained in the forests, and everyone was pleased.

But in the time of Saraam, fierce men came down from the mountains with weapons in their hands and serpents in their hearts. These serpents were the essence of Asura, the Snake with 10,000 heads who eats at the core of the world. The snakes, with their men, soon overran the land. Serpents filled the air, crept along the ground, bloated the babes and men with fiery poison. Spirit-snakes slipped into ears and crawled down throats, possessing the bodies and driving them to evil. Dakats with a hundred heads stalked the forest cats, ripping their flesh and spitting poison into their eyes. Women wailed in the night as the serpents fed deeply on the people of our land, and the cats yowled as their ribs were crushed and their skin bubbled from their bones.

The snakes drove the people to madness, and the cats followed. Hunters crept into the forests to skin the cats for their beautiful coats, and cats raced through the villages, bearing off children to eat in the night. Violence became war, and men and cats clashed in horrible battles. Days and nights rang with screams. When the monsoons came, they carried rivers of blood to the seas.

Now, Saraam was the wisest and most beautiful girl in her village. She was spirited and strong, yet disobedient. In later days, it would be said that she had been touched by Uma, but had the temper of Kali. She had not yet wed, but had a host of young men waiting upon her word.

But one night, Saraam awoke to see a serpent crawl between her brothers and her parents. It sank its fangs into each, and laid babies in her mother's ear. Horrified, Saraam fled into the night. She ran far from the village till she collapsed in a clearing beneath Mother Moon, then cried and raged at the sky. "What can I do," she wept, "to save my family and my people? The snakes poison them and turn them bad. The cats run through our village, for the viper men skin them alive. Our lands are cursed! Mother, what can I do?"

To Saraam's surprise, Mother Moon answered in a cold yet loving voice. "The serpents' name is judgment, and they answer the dark calling inside each mortal secret. As one, the vipers seek corruption and breed where they find it. Each mortal carries snake seeds inside. The serpents and their viper men merely bring out what is already within. This is the Age of Twilight. You can do nothing."

"I cannot leave my family this way!" Saraam snapped.

"It is not your place to change them, or to cleanse their sins."

"I do not care about my place!" The girl surprised herself with her own temerity. Who was she to argue with the Sacred Way? Yet she continued, cursing the sky and the order of things. "What can I do? This cannot continue!"

Moon Mother sighed. "The cat kings will visit you next evening. If you would make peace, lay with them."

Saraam was horrified. Take wild cats as mates? Throughout the next day, she shivered in the rain, fighting the urge to return to her dry but poisoned home. That night, the rains subsided. Mother Moon bathed Saraam's clearing in merciless light. Eyes glowed from the shadows at the clearing's edge. Saraam shivered, but did not run.

"Have you decided?" The voice came from above.

Saraam stood. "I have."

The cat kings approached the girl, one deep black, the other light and spotted.

Each one regarded her with cold interest.



"I am wisdom," said the black cat. "The secret-keeper who rumbles in the night. Call me Gyani, the watcher from the forest."

"I am anger," said the spotted. "The raging claws with a thousand eyes. Call me Agun, the watcher from the plain."

"I am both of you and more," said Saraam. "I have the wisdom to call the gods, the anger to fight, and the love to give myself for my people. Call me Saraam, welcomer of the cat kings."

So saying, she opened herself to them both, and they loved her with fierce tenderness. The monsoon howled and rain poured down. Three times, she loved the cat kings. Once in daylight, once at twilight and once at night. When the sun rose, they all lay spent upon the ground, washed by sun, moon and elements.

The cat kings stayed with Saraam as their children grew within her. The labor was hard, but Gyani and Agun lay by her side. As each child emerged, they licked it clean, and held it to her breasts. Ten children Saraam bore, five babes and five kittens. As Mother Moon emerged, She looked down upon Saraam and her family and smiled.

"Blessed are you, Saraam, and blessed are the sires of your children. Blessed most of all are the fruit of your union. They shall be agents of salvation." So saying, She touched each child in turn. Her cold, bright hands changed each to its opposite, cat to human, child to cat. With a breath, She rose them up full-grown and kissed the belly of Saraam, from whence the children came. Saraam slept well that night.

The children of the three went forth across the land. Gyani had taught them magic. Agun had taught them war. Saraam had taught them wisdom and told them of the Mother. In time, they drove the serpents from the land, and thus began our task, the one we continue to this day. It is our dharma to keep the truce between the cats and people. We seek out the serpent of corruption and crush its head between our jaws. We are cat and human, wisdom, love and anger. We chase the serpents and judge the mortals and sometimes we die for the good of all.

For our mother's sacrifice, we can do no less.

Tribal Background

Werepanthers and wereleopards are one and the same, brothers and sisters of a common tribe that hails from India and upper Africa. Their existence carries on a pact which began during the Impergium and continues to this day — a bargain in which humans and big cats keep peace between each other and cull the worst elements of both.

Legend states that Bagheera came from a forbidden love between cats and humans, and remain close to both. Over the millennia, they've urged their cousins to end the Impergium, striven for peace with the Silent Striders, Children of Gaia and Black Furies, and policed their own kind for the Unmaker's taint. Unlike many cats, most Bagheera keep close ties to their human and feline Kinfolk; this bond may account for the tribe's strength and numbers. No other Bastet race is as plentiful or as respected as the children of Saraam.

Even so, no one who's met a Bagheera wants to risk her temper. The panthers are renowned for their threefold nature. When calm, a werepanther can be wise, inquisitive and even-tempered; when her passions are aroused, she becomes aggressive, wanton and temperamental. If she grows angry, look out — a frenzied Bagheera lays waste to everything around her. Like the goddess Kali, she becomes a cyclone of destruction. Even the Simba steer clear of a panther's wrath.

Bagheera are perhaps the most well-traveled cats of all. Curious and scholarly, they enjoy new experiences and take advantage of

modern conveniences to wander as much of the earth as possible. Most panthers go through three distinct phases in their lives: the *akari*, or "searching"; the *pourra*, or "foundation"; and the *doyala*, or "passing on." During the first, a werepanther revels in her new identity. Anything she cares to do, she will do with total abandon. The second phase is one of calm and contemplation. The cat finds a serious mate, raises a family and sees to their well-being. Many Bagheera set up semipermanent homes in their *pourra* phase, and establish libraries and networks of friends. Finally, the cat reaches the *doyala* stage, where she shares the wisdom and lore she's discovered in her youth. A Bagheera never really stops moving, but she tends to bond more closely with her community than most Bastet do.

Supposedly, the Bagheera were originally supposed to fill an arbitrator's role in Bastet society. Although the post never materialized (much to the panthers' relief), they still carry a collective authority in their manner and bearing. Perhaps it's the Bagheera temperament — calm and relaxed by Bastet standards — or the caste-oriented cultures from which many of them come. In any case, a werepanther, it is said, can be counted upon to be fair, honorable and wise.

So long as one stays on her good side.

The *Arthashastra* says "Government is the science of punishment." The Bagheera certainly live by that rule. Panthers tolerate a lot of free-spirited behavior, but serious crimes (rape, cannibalism, oathbreaking, etc.) warrant stern justice. Outlaws — human, cat and Bastet alike — find themselves hunted by Bagheera war parties. Like the posses of the Old West, these *taklah* gather quickly, bring a target to bay, dispatch it and disperse. The quarry is judged by a combination of Gifts and intimidation. If he's innocent, the group's leader turns the *taklah* around to apprehend the real culprit. If he's guilty, the panthers often kill him on the spot. At the very least, the offender is branded (often with an Exile Rite) and sent on his way. Some Bagheera practice justice as a vocation, and travel the world hunting down criminals of all three species. Truly outrageous crimes have provoked massacres led by leopard-men and screaming black panthers. In recent years, the tribe has run afoul of Pentex, and this has cost the cats — badly. Even the largest werecat tribe is no match for Corruption, Incorporated.

As a rule, a Bagheera is generous, trustworthy, playful and fair. She's slow to rage, but when she does, nothing but total destruction will satisfy her. The greatest werepanthers can call up Gifts that turn them into huge, multiarmed killing machines, and even young ones can drop a Cape buffalo with a good hard swipe. "Vishnu birthed the cat, Uma stroked it and Kali set it in motion" is a common expression. Although most Khan claim it applies to them, the Bagheera certainly fit the bill.

Tribal Home

Like their feline Kin, Bagheera range from Africa to southeast Asia. The greatest number of the tribe, which may claim as many as 500 members worldwide, settle in the jungles and cities of India. Before they reach *pourra*, however, most panthers rove widely, gathering gossip for later life.

Culture and Kinfolk

Raised among Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists, tribal cultures and Catholics, most Bagheera have very strict ideals of honor. A youngster is expected to be a little wild, but there are rules, even for Bastet. The Litany is taken very seriously by Bagheera elders, and cats who spit on it are punished quickly and without mercy.

This sense of justice marks relations between the panthers and their Kin. Humans across India and Africa still go into the jungles at night to find werecat lovers, and they revere the children as gifts from Heaven. Four great societies — the Ambari Macho, Chui Mal, Beral Meye and Leopard Men of Chupa — worship the panther and leopard as deities. Many Bagheera Kinfolk come from these societies, although modern Folk choose lovers from across the world.

In the wild, leopards are the most common wild cats alive; between the zoos, preserves, jungles and plains, Bagheera have no trouble finding feline mates. Thus, the tribe enjoys a healthy mix of homids and felines, with almost no metis members.

Organization

Bagheera remain very loose; most lower-ranking panthers remain in touch with their elders, and often respect any advice or command she might give. Other than that, the cats are left to their own devices unless a war cry sounds. This summons, often conveyed by spirits or through Kinfolk networks, calls a war party together. The Bagheera of highest Rank leads the group, judges the accused and decides the punishment. Such calls used to take weeks to assemble, but modern communications allow most elders to call a hunt in a day or so.

A Bagheera who responds to a war cry agrees to do as she's told; she may sometimes dispute a judgment, but most cases favor the elder. After disastrous fights with Black Tooth, Pentex and the Nagda-Rackbur Khan, the tribe has put a moratorium on large-scale cries unless some disaster threatens. The tribe has lost too many members in recent years to risk more one-sided battles.

Secrets Sought

Bagheera prefer learning cultural lore, supernatural puzzles, languages and political gossip. Their innate sense of honor keeps most away from forbidden occult research, although some Bagheera cultivate darker secrets.

Yava

- Bagheera sleep deeply during the New Moon. Once they slumber, nothing short of violence can awaken them.
- Make a trail of salt; a panther will follow it from beginning to end without stopping.
- Blessing a leopard's prey with Aabhaya (a hand gesture meaning "protection") will force the cat to flee unless his rage is just.

Appearance

The Bagheera are sleek and graceful Folk. While the majority of them have black fur in their cat-forms, some African members of the tribe have spots and yellow-brown fur instead. For some reason, the black line runs truer in women than in men, while the yellow-leopard genes run stronger in males. An exceedingly rare bloodline has the tricolor markings of the clouded leopard of southeast Asia; these markings favor neither sex — they're just plain rare. Bagheera heads (in cat-forms) tend to be flat and boxy; in human form, they often have strong cheekbones and prominent noses. A werepanther's eyes are said to be the wisest among catkind — even the youngest of them appears to be deep in contemplation.

Of all werecats, the Bagheera are perhaps the most attractive — they're choosy when picking their mates, and have very good genes on both sides. Many favor the arts and sciences, and enjoy high-tech toys or the performing arts. As world travelers, they dress however they please; some prefer the simple garments of Indian villagers, while others love ostentatious eastern designs or comfortable western fashions. Their choice of weapon and ornaments are likewise eclectic — if making generalizations about werecats is hard, making them about Bagheera fashion choices is impossible.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +1	Str: +3	Str: +2	Str: +1
Dex: +1	Dex: +3	Dex: +3	Dex: +3
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -3	Man: -3	Man: -3
App: -1	App: 0	App: -2	

Quote:

Our wisdom is older than the Brahmins, more ancient than the sutras. We have seen the Aryans, the Greeks, the Mughals and the British pass through, and we have been unmoved. In the First Days, we learned our place under Heaven: to observe, to destroy and to usher the soul to its next life's destiny.

Stereotypes

- **Balam:** They are wiser than their fury suggests. Listen to them in good spirits and watch the visions they bring.
- **Bubasti:** Creatures of Cahlash. They bargained their souls away long ago, and cannot be trusted.
- **Ceilican:** It's said their kind is dead, but I am not certain. Every so often, a breeze carries their scent. I've met impostors that claim to be of our own tribe. Are these Ceilican? Anything is possible.
- **Khan:** Our cousins are honorable Folk, but they need to curb their rage. It weakens them.
- **Pumonca:** I cannot trust anyone so landless. They believe they walk alone upon the earth, but they are wrong.
- **Qualmi:** Wise liars and grand tricksters.
- **Simba:** Long ago, I've heard, they were noble. Not now. We lost many good cousins to Black Tooth and his brood, and all their race must wear his shame.
- **Swara:** I've never spoken to one long enough to learn much, but I've heard they keep the sacred places safe. That is enough to earn my respect.

Balam

Caliah

We are the daughters and sons of the moon. Once, the spirits say, we lived upon the moon and ran like rushing water through her silvery forests and across her luminous fields. But that was long ago. We still dream of Ix Chel, for we above all others are her favored children.

The jaguar is the mother of shamans, just as she is the mother of the jaguar changers — we have many mothers. A shaman knows nothing without the aid of the jaguar. The jaguar is the jungle; there is no part that she does not command. To anger the jaguar is to turn the jungle against you. No one will protect you then; not the trees, not the streams, not the snakes, the birds or the monkeys. The jaguar will most often kill he who offends her. But other times she will take the offender's hunting powers. Woe to such a man and his family, for they will slowly starve. Under such a taboo, no animal will dare walk into a hunter's trap, or allow itself to be seen by him when he has bow or spear in hand. Revenge is reserved for the jaguar.

Some say that the father of the Balam was Tezcatlipoca, the Smoky Mirror, god of night. Perhaps this is so, for his nagual, or spirit aspect, was the jaguar. But we owe allegiance only to Ix Chel, the Moon. Long ago, in another reality called the First Sun, the Balam killed a race of giants and claimed the jungles from them. They have ruled jungles ever since.

The jaguars sometimes lived among humans, aiding them in their hunts, teaching them the powers of the plants. They introduced the ways of ayahuasca, sabo and nu nu, so that humans could speak to their prey in dreams, and if the prey was willing, gain visions of when and how to kill their meat. The hunting tribes of the jungle still remember these secrets, even though the children of the Olmec and Maya have long since forgotten.

When the whites came, they brought their evil with them. Vile spirits of disease and mania plagued the humans. Their masters feared the power of the jaguars, and sent men into the jungles to tame them. The jaguars fought back, using their allies in the jungle to attack the foul spirits and their human puppets.

But the evil was too great, and the jaguar mother chose to make a supreme sacrifice. She appeared in the jungle as a black jaguar, the most dangerous and powerful of cats, and attacked the conquistadors. They hunted her down and cornered her, prepared to kill her and bring her skin to their captain. But she turned and growled, calling upon all her power of night. She grew and grew, squashing the men with her great bulk, flattening trees and damming rivers with her massive limbs. She grew until she reached into the sky, and opened her mouth wide and swallowed the sun.

The world went dark. Night descended on all, and the celestial magics of the humans failed. The only light which shone in all the land was that of the moon. Ix Chel spoke then to her children, not just animals but some humans also, and told them of the coming dangers. The sun would rise again, as it must, but their power would be diminished. She gave them the chance to leave the dying world of humans and return to the moon. She offered her reflection in the mirrors of a thousand lakes and rivers. All her children had to do was leap into them and swim deep down, leaving this world for hers. Many animals ran to the rivers and dove in, seeking the moon. Some humans also went, and their tribes disappeared from the world.

But the jaguars hesitated. Their anger was too great. Many wanted revenge. Blood must be paid with blood.

The black jaguar could no longer hold the sun. It burnt her insides and she spat it out. Light flooded the jungle, overcoming the light of the moon, wiping her reflection away. The moment of true night was gone, and the offer of escape was forever denied those who remained. After this, it is said by the Balam that the Fifth Sun, the present age, began to die.

To this day, the reflection of the moon causes deep yearning in the hearts of our tribe.

But it is just a reflection, nothing more.

Tribal Background

These Central American cats favor their ancient heritage, though some Amazon warriors adopt modern weapons to wipe their foes off the earth. The embodiments of wrath, Balam are temperamental, hardy and xenophobic. What they don't like, they attack, and they don't like much. Khan may be the chosen warriors of Seline, but the Balam are by far the most aggressive of the Nine Tribes.

Among the region's native people, the Balam hold an ancient place in folklore and religion. Legends claim the single tribe extends from two ancestral families. The Olioiqui were spiritual travelers, winged wercats who stepped into the spirit worlds and granted visions to those who obeyed the gods. These jaguars taught Olmecs, Aztecs and Maya the ways of war, and accepted bloody sacrifices in return. Their stealthy cousins the Hovitl Qua cultivated the ways of invisibility and purification. Patrons of the jungle night, these mystical cats could dim the sun and awaken the forest with their arts. To the people of the rain forest tribes, they offered hunting lore and trips into the spirit world.

Both tribes claimed the right of sacrifice from their followers, and both got what they wanted. Warriors among the preconquest peoples dedicated the hearts and heads of their enemies to the jaguar gods, who assumed grand places in their pantheons. The Olioiqui themselves walked as gods in the streets of Tenochtitlán, Xicalango and lost Atloxtliá, calling rain and culling the lawless. The Hovitl Qua wandered alone, calling mystics and hunters to play deadly games in the night. Those who returned were considered touched by divinity; very few did so.

Then the Spaniards came, bringing diseases, new spirits, conquering wizards and worst of all, Garou. Rash Olioiqui died by the hundreds, and their descendants fled into the jungles. There, they mingled with their Hovitl Qua cousins, who had their own problems. Sickness raced through the forests, poisoning the night cats' people and killing the cat-gods themselves. Wolves came from the north and east — Silver Fangs, Black Furies, Bone Gnawers and Uktena — and began a new War of Rage in the jungles which had escaped the first. The jaguars, never social to begin with, turned on their siblings, and both tribes were virtually extinct by 1600.

The survivors were wiser than their parents had been. Establishing a new tribe, the Balam, they recalled the old Litanies, retreated into the jungles, and created a code called the *Flore Ki Wenca* — “the Blood of Two Hearts.” This covenant declared an

end to the old tribal rivalries, set up new territories, and promised that Balam would always aid each other in need. Two Balam, the warchief Six Birds and the healer Blue Morning Skies, called on the great totem Night Jaguar and the healer Blue Morning Skies, called on the great totem Night Jaguar to bless the tribe. This partnership of two shattered tribes is remembered in the werejaguar honorific “Two Hearts,” a title they alone can claim. To this day, the tribes’ descendants resent the white invaders — whom they call “Rot- ted-Hearts” — for forcing two to become one.

Once the *Flore* was sealed in a blood rite, the Balam scattered and set up new Den-Realms. For several centuries, no one disturbed them. This peace ended as human settlements and firms began cutting through the rain forests. The jaguars have not been amused. Today, the Balam fight a war on two fronts; in the cities of Central America, they struggle with the corruption that has come with the newcomers’ ways. In the rain forests, they war upon Pentex and other agents of destruction. Despite their impressive magics and war savvy, the jaguars are losing. They’re too few, too fractious and too independent to organize as a tribe, and so they fall. The invaders — human, spirit and Garou alike — are too numerous to be driven away by a single Balam or a small war party. Fierce as they are, the jaguars are outgunned, outnumbered and outclassed.

The saddest thing about this siege mentality is that the Balam have a beautiful culture underneath the sheen of blood. Their rites, often practiced alone, involve melodic songs, devoted prayers to the ancestors and hallucinogenic visionquests. In their Den-Realms, the Balam recall their rich heritage in elaborate artwork that only Umbral travelers can see. Those werejaguars who’ve established such homes offer sanctuary to other Balam in need, and always wear some bit of jewelry that ties into the designs they have “at home.” These tokens represent the tie between the jaguar, his land and his ancestors. In many ways, they’re symbols of the jaguar’s soul. The fact that many Garou and Pentex fomori in the Amazon War take Balam jewelry as trophies infuriates surviving jaguars, who make sure to reclaim Two-Heart honor in Rotted-Heart blood.



Tribal Home

Most Balam retreated to the rain forests of Central and South America long ago. The founders of the tribe established Den-Realms there, and have left them to successors (often, but not always, family) before their deaths. These Realms, called *Tona*, feature rich vegetation, healthy wildlife, pure streams and a strong spiritual presence (in game terms, the equivalent of a level three to five caern, a five dot Den-Realm or a powerful Node). Naturally, this makes them prime targets for loggers, farmers, Garou and fomori. Many of these ancestral “estates” have fallen to invaders, and this makes the Balam even madder.

Some modern jaguars prefer the cities to the wilds, and others range across the mountains and plains. Sooner or later, a Balam sets up his Den-Realm and consecrates it to his forbears. From that point on, he rarely leaves the place for long. The average jaguar will sooner die than leave his Den-Realm to be destroyed; those who do are considered a disgrace to the tribe, and are shunned by their people.

Culture and Kinfolk

Balam place great importance on honor and family. The cultures from which they come stress strength under pressure, personal responsibility and family honor.

While the jaguars themselves don’t get along with each other, many choose lifetime mates from the local humans and cats. Many tales tell of a jaguar who came in the night to lure a young man or pretty girl away from their village. Such people are never heard from again — the Balam take their mates to the Den-Realms and give them whatever they desire.

Despite their ferocious temperament, the Two Hearts are extremely affectionate to their loved ones. A mate, human or animal, is pampered and protected for the rest of her life, and the children are raised with love. The tribe’s haunted history breeds a desperate attachment to the family; once bonded, a Balam never strays.

Bloodlust aside, most Balam revere the spirit world. Many use natural hallucinogens to bring them vision-trances, and they covet the secret of Walking Between Worlds. Jaguars with territories bond closely with the spirits there, and protect the land from invasion and corruption. In essence, they promise themselves to the land’s service, and take that promise seriously.

Organization

None, really. In an emergency, a jaguar calls on his allies to deliver a plea to other Balam in the name of the *Flore Ki Wenca*. This cry for help might or might not be answered, depending on the situation and the caller’s

Rank. Occasional war parties come together under stress, but they rarely last longer than a month. The Balam are notoriously fractious; even the most well-tempered were jaguars fight each other at the slightest provocation.

Secrets Sought

Like any culture in search of its identity, the jaguars treasure secrets about their ancestors — language, artwork, cultural details, etc. Some gravitate toward their human roots and built collections of Aztec, Mayan, Olmec and Toltec lore; others wheedle secrets out of the spirits who walked beside their people. Some commune with the animal spirits and ignore their human ties completely. All Balam, however, have one common interest: any secret which hurts the invaders.

Yava

- Demons feed the wrath of the Balam; send one against him, and he will rage into madness.
- Burn the heart of the jaguar and you destroy its soul forever.
- Jaguar feathers hold great power. If you find one, burn it by the great cat's face. Once it is ashes, the Balam will die.

Appearance

Like the Bagheera, Balam are born black or yellow. Black jaguars tend to be women, but both colors claim strong birthrights. Black cats command the powers of the Moon, while their brighter siblings carry greater wrath in their hearts.

Most Balam come from hardy South American stock. They favor Mayan jewelry, Incan body art and modifications (extended earlobes, body paint, flattened foreheads, pierced tongues, etc.), and archaic clothing. Nearly all of them have sharp-filed teeth, even in Homid form. Few Balam are white — the Rotted Hearts have caused too much damage to forgive. Although many Balam use archaic weapons, modern firearms fascinate them, both for precision and for sheer destructive power.

Form Statistics

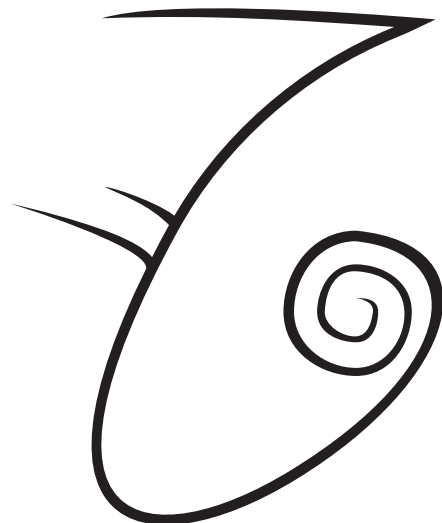
Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +3	Str: +2
Dex: +1	Dex: +3	Dex: +2	Dex: +3
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -4	Man: -4	Man: -3
App: -1	App: 0	App: 0	

Quote:

Take your demon filth and get out of my home. Stay, and die.

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** You take life far too lightly, my friends. I watch you from far away, but my eyes are too filled with tears for me to dance.
- **Bubasti:** (sound of gunfire, followed by a loud splat)
What Bubasti?
- **Ceilican:** They weren't strong enough to survive. I'll drink to their honor, but their dust is not my problem.
- **Khan:** Honored brothers, if you need me, I will come.
- **Pumonca:** Where were you when we needed you? Wandering a trail? How nice. You're no longer welcome, brother.
- **Qualmi:** Who?
- **Simba:** We all do what we must to survive.
- **Swara:** If they find happiness in solitude, it is a pleasure I can understand.



Bubasti

Caliah

Make no mistake: We are older than the pyramids. Older than the Pharaohs. Older than Bubastis or the Sphinx that once bore our image. We are more ancient than the vampires, and the Striders and the tribes. We were the first. All others are usurpers.

When Mother Moon smiled down on the Nile's banks, she left our first-kin Cymaa as the guardian of those shores. Our Kin, the great cats of Kyphur, roamed the night as agents of the gods. No, I do not dissemble. There were gods in those days. If they are gone, I will not weep. We have more freedom without their strictures, anyway.

I will go so far as to call Cymaa a goddess. A daughter of Queen Cat in Her regal aspect. With her children, she chased the spawn of Rat away from the pitiful food stores of the ancient Egyptians, who had yet to master brickwork, much less stone. The men of the Nile respected us, then. They called her **Ubastet** and flocked to be her lovers. When need be, we hunted them like rats, but overcome by curiosity, we soon allowed ourselves to become their friends. Over time, Ubastet taught them secrets of the Nyota Jamaa, and their wizards grew mighty. Then proud. Then too proud for our liking. They would have to be punished, And they were.

Great plagues fell upon them. The Nile flooded past its course and devastated the homes of man. The children of Ubastet relaxed and watched. When the rats returned, we drove them away, then waited for the credit. It came. It always did, after that. Wise people, those men of Khem.

I will never say we ruled. Why should we rule? What use has a cat for the duties of kings? Merely say that we received our due: food, shelter and secrets. Many secrets. They were clever, those men of Khem, and they invented complex signs and words of power. They gave form to the formless with their clever little names. I must say we were impressed. So we kept a bargain, one that lasted many hundreds of years. We told them of the *chaya*. They told us their names of power. We defended them in the night. They gave us their own flesh and blood to keep our line strong. In time, they built a city in our honor — Bubastis, our sanctuary, and the place our Kinfolk dwelled. We returned our lore to the Mother Moon each rising of the Nile, and everyone was satisfied.

Then came the vampires Osiris and Set. They have other, deeper names, but we will settle on those for now. Osiris had a wise wife, Isis, who knew the secrets of magic and shared them with us. She even lay with some of our tribe, and she sired a rich bloodline within our tribe.

Set, or Sutekh, had ruled a portion of the Upper Nile for hundreds of years. We shunned him, for the secrets retrieved from his cities were terrible even to mention. But when Menes, the first pharaoh, united our lands with Set's, a war began.

For two thousand years, Set battled Osiris. Imagine that: two thousand years of conflict! We sided with Osiris, of course. We even stood beside the jackal-headed Silent Striders, but still Sutekh prevailed. In vengeance, the corrupters looted our city and smashed the idols of Ubastet.

Worst of all, they exterminated the cats of Kyphur. Our Kinfolk. Slain, or worse yet, turned into blood-drinking ghouls. It took two millenia, but our Kinfolk died—and with them, our tribal strength.

This was not, I should add, the worst outcome of the war. I tell you this secret now, so you will understand our path: We committed sacrilege against ourselves. In doing so, we doomed our descendants to share the "honors." You and I suffer today a curse our ancestors earned millennia ago. There are some shadows that hide secrets too evil for consumption. The children of Ubastet reached into those shadows, and drew forth a blackened paw.

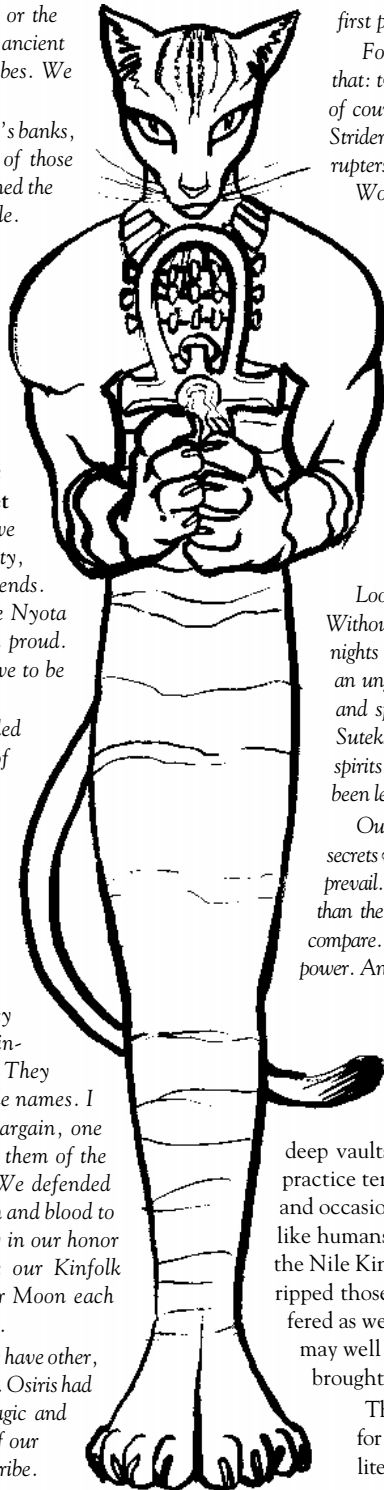
Look at your fur, and at mine. Black as midnight, yes? Without mark or highlight. This is the cost of those endless nights of spying. The secrets we learned turned us black as an unfound tomb. Once, we were a colorful race, happy and spirited as well. Too many nights in the temples of Sutekh drained those colors from our fur, and leached those spirits from our souls. We learned secrets that should have been left alone. Worse, we still hunger for them, even now.

Our Kin are dust, or worse. Our fur has been stained by the secrets we have learned. Our race is all but vanished, but still we prevail. Two thousand years later, we survive. We are older than the Pharaohs, and the arts at our fingertips are without compare. No shattered sculptures, we. One day, we will return to power. And we will thank Set's children for what they have done.

Tribal Background

This rare tribe has a sinister reputation as sorcerers and conspirators. It's not undeserved — the Bubasti pass mysteries to each other in deep vaults and underground chambers. The magic they practice tends to center on spirits, the elements and souls, and occasionally involves the sacrifice of "lesser" beasts — like humans. For almost 5000 years, they've been a part of the Nile Kingdoms. As the war between the vampire elders ripped those kingdoms apart, the fortunes of the tribe suffered as well. The harshest penalty of that fight, however, may well have been one that the shadowcats themselves brought on: the curse of eternal hunger.

These werecats are always lean and hungry: starved for food and drink, ravenous for knowledge. They literally can't get enough of either. By the time he



reaches middle age, a Bubasti has probably acquired a huge library, a host of enemies and a mortgaged soul. His power is often vast — these cats are masters of Shadow Craft and even darker arts — but it's never vast enough to satisfy him. The average shadowcat can eat a table's worth of food in one sitting and not gain a single pound of weight. This curse gives them an endless appetite, and they pursue it with abandon.

There's a certain glamor to their condition. Most shadowcats are eerily compelling, and most humans find them irresistible. They can argue anything from history to quantum physics, and carry an almost physical aura of command. Those sensitive to the touch of Cahlash (or the Wym) grow uneasy around a shadowcat, but people with morbid tastes flock to his side. This fascination may be one of the things that's kept the race alive. It hasn't been their feline Kin.

Long ago, the Egyptians worshipped the cats of Kyphur, a huge breed of wildcat that flourished along the lower Nile. These cats became the casualties of the tribe's long war with the vampiric Followers of Set. Most Kyphur cats were simply killed, but several of them were captured, Blood Bound and preserved as servants of the vampires. Aside from these gruesome relics, the breed has been extinct for 2000 years. In the deepest chambers below Cairo, Memphis and the tombs of Giza, the Followers of Set keep captive Kyphurs for their own amusement. These ghoulish beasts, now swollen to the size of panthers, live blind in filthy pens. Sometimes, for a favor, the Setites let a Bubasti see one of its ancestors. Occasionally, one might even be allowed to mate with it.

This insult has not gone unrewarded. A bitter if one-sided war has crept quietly along for nearly 2000 years. The shadowcats remain on the losing side, but they manage to bloody the noses of the Kindred every so often. This war has taught the Bubasti patience; hungry as they are, they learn how to delay a strike for years or even decades. Hidden between the cracks of some of the world's most ancient and overcrowded cities, a shadowcat or two reaches out every so often to tweak some vampire's nose before disappearing into the crowd again. Their archives are filled with tomes and scrolls looted from the holdings of Set's children, and those cats who survive their forays grow clever and wise.

From birth, the Bubasti tend to be very quiet children. Books and questions are their passion, and they eat like there's no tomorrow. Most shadowcats are born to rich, scholarly families, but a growing number have come from the gutters. Until recently, they were a sickly tribe, mentally impressive but physically frail from 2000 years of inbreeding. The millennia of Egyptian blood got an infusion in the 1800s when Napoleon's troops came through; the English and German occupations added another ethnic mix to the tribe's stagnant genes. The result has been a boon for the tribe; the Bubasti, whose birthrates and health had declined since the Ptolemaic Dynasty, have enjoyed a surge in vitality. More shadowcats have been born in the last century than there had been for ages past, and they've been stronger than their predecessors. The vampires may receive an unpleasant surprise in the coming decades.

Tribal Home

Unlike most Bastet, the shadowcats tend to remain in a single place for years or decades. Surprisingly, they have never fled their homeland despite their setbacks and ancient enemies. Perhaps it's pride that keeps them rooted to Egyptian soil, or maybe it's something more. Some outsiders claim there's a mystical connection between the tribe and their motherland. These guesses are closer to the truth than most Bubasti would admit.

Culture and Kinfolk

In their glory days, the shadowcats bred only with noblest aristocracy. Those days ended long ago, and the last few centuries have seen strong infusions of "mongrel blood." This "contamination" has probably saved the tribe, though no Bubasti would admit as much.

Since the slaughter of the Kyphur cats, Bubasti have bred with servals and caracals to keep their feline blood alive. This Kinship is weak, and produces very few cat-breed Bubasti. Weird magical rites, including experiments with vampire blood and enchanted human "hosts," have bred feline offspring from human mothers. Horrifying tales of women giving birth to cats in Cairo delivery rooms attest that such experiments are occasionally... successful.

Organization

For Bastet, this tribe is fairly unified. Six elders, called kheper, maintain sanctums deep in the bowels of Egypt's large cities; they meet once a year. Each one sponsors a group of two Bon Bhat, four Ilani, and a number of Tilau and Akas, who in turn watch over the Tekhmet. Estimates vary; according to common wisdom within the tribe, 52 Bubasti exist across the world. The kheper try to keep close watch on those they know of — at such numbers, every cousin is important. Although the kheper do not issue orders per se, their younger cousins know better than to refuse direct requests from such powerful Bastet.

During the height of the Bubasti's influence, the tribe worked as a fairly unified group, meeting each full moon in the necropoli and celebrating terrible rites in the Temple of Bast. Each year, human celebrants joined the cats for a wild festival which lasted from late April to early May. Both normal cats and the larger Kyphurs were revered as sacred beasts, and their devotees flung themselves at the vampires and their agents. Allied spirits filled the night, scourging the bloodsuckers with pains and plagues. The eldest Bubasti (who, according to legend, received eternal life during that powerful age) recall those days fondly. Every so often, they speak of a gathering of shadowcats and allies that will fill the streets of Cairo and return Egypt to its former glory. Most younger Bastet dismiss those plans as ravings, but who knows? If the elders are as old as they claim to be, and as patient, they may have set events in motion that could unite the tribe after all. Only time will tell. Meanwhile, the shadowcats lie still, emerging every so often to take a tidbit for their ever-present hunger.

Secrets Sought

Bubasti prefer to uncover ancient or forbidden lore, magical enigmas and gossip about vampires in general and the Followers of Set in particular.

Yava

These secrets are so deeply guarded that even the Tekhmet don't know them. The passing of the Yava occurs at the *second* Rank among the Bubasti, and involves blood-oaths before the kheper. The Followers of Set would do a lot to gain these tribal secrets, and young shadowcats are told "Better death than the serpent's kiss."

- When all immortals of the tribe are slain, the tribe itself will die with them.

- The Black Soil of Khem is forever tied to the tribe; if all Bubasti in a generation flee the land, they will be the last of their kind.

- Bubasti are always hungry. Though no amount of food or drink will ease their craving, they will always eat what's put before them.

Appearance

All Bubasti have a certain "look" — dusky skin, black hair, greenish eyes and thin, long limbs. Even those cats with European blood adopt the traits of their more exotic parents. Bubasti are unusually attractive, with a graceful manner and disconcerting gaze. In cat-forms, these Bastet are always midnight black, without any form of markings.

Bubasti favor clothing and jewelry with a Middle Eastern flavor (never turbans, however), and conduct their secret ceremonies in classical Egyptian garb. In all forms, they stay exceedingly neat, even for werescats. Any Bubasti, regardless of race or breed, wears occult jewelry and symbols of some kind. Moon, ankh, scarab and eye motifs are common designs. The weapons they favor tend to feature slender blades and spikes, and can be quite artistic.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +0	Str: +1	Str: +2	Str: -1
Dex: +1	Dex: +3	Dex: +4	Dex: +4
Sta: +0	Sta: +1	Sta: +1	Sta: +1
Man: +0	Man: -2	Man: -2	Man: +0
App: +1	App: -3	App: 0	

Quote:

If there's a viper in your soul, purge it. The road we walk is treacherous enough alone.

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** Noble, I'll confess, but hopelessly rural. They favor their wild sides too much to be as enlightened as they would believe.

- **Balam:** Savage, bloodthirsty monsters. How I would love to have one or two around for errands!

- **Ceilican:** It's said that their kind is extinct, but being "extinct" myself, I find that difficult to believe.

- **Khan:** Wonderful weapons when given a righteous cause. More cultured than those infernal lion-kin, yet refreshingly strong and ferocious. I sent one after a vampire once, and the results were pleasing to see.

- **Pumonca:** A distant breed that I'll confess is a bit remote for my tastes. I've heard a great deal about them, but they keep to their land and I to mine. As long as they kill the Kindred, they're fine Folk in my book.

- **Qualmi:** Too obtuse for my tastes. If their chattering held wisdom, I would gladly listen.

- **Simba:** Obnoxious louts who deserve to be shaved. Some day soon, they will be. I'd be pleased to do the honors. Perhaps I shall.

- **Swara:** Timid, nervous beasts, but Oh so quick. They make lovely pets if you convince them they're free.



Ceilican

Caliah

Kid, we don't just collect secrets, we are secrets. We're not even supposed to exist, so if you've got any plans to go dancing down the street singing, "I'm a Ceilican, I'm a Ceilican," I'll gut you right here. There's a lot of folks who'd put us in chains — real ones and magic ones — if they knew we were still breathing, so listen close while I tell you a fairy tale. It's important, kid, so shut up till I finish.

A long time ago, the world was a dream. No, I'm not being cute — it was. All our kind were dreamed into existence. Well, most dreams didn't like thinking of themselves as figments of anyone's imagination, and they willed themselves into forms and took credit for their own creation. We call those guys "Prodigals," but that's another story. Have you ever seen a dream walking? Well, take a look in a mirror, kid. King and Queen Cat dreamed us up after a long night of lovemaking, and we became the best and worst sides of passion. Unlike the Prodigals, we never forgot what we were, and that insight let us spin objects out of wishes alone. Our cousins, the fae, shared their courts with us; we did the same for humans with a bit of imagination. We joined their revels in the dead of night and shared their joys and sorrows. While our cousins went south and east, we went north. Those cold folks needed some company.

Well, those cold hearts turned on us soon enough. It's understandable, I guess — I mean, we danced in faerie rings, but we called witches' sabbats, too. We can be a nasty folk when we set our minds to it, and those who danced with us set themselves apart. Folks called us "ring dancers" when we were happy and "diabol cats" in darker times. Lots of Ceilican set up shop with hermits and witches on the outskirts of town, and one day, the townfolk came calling.

Our secrets got out. Supposedly, this chick named Simone babbled a bit too much to an Unseelie lord named Samhach. He bound her in a magic chain and began collecting others. Simone had been pretty free with our Yava beforehand, and we soon found ourselves hunted with cold iron, too. Samhach shared our secrets with a bunch of his cronies, and many of our brothers and sisters were enslaved. We went underground as the Madness grew and Arcadia's doors slammed shut. Some say we passed into the faerie lands, but if any of our kind did, I doubt they did it under their own power.

It was a smart cat named Tybalt deLeon who saved our skins. If we had been born by dreams, he reasoned, we could change our natures the same way. I don't know how he did it, but he managed to re-dream our Yava so the old secrets didn't work. With most of the faeries gone, he managed to out-think the human hunters, too. As the witchfires turned our homeland into ashes, Tybalt led us across the sea. We were pathetically few, I guess, 'cause our tribe's been a bit scarce ever since. But we did survive.

There was a price. There always is. Three of 'em, really. One is that we stay underground. Way underground. Our cousins think we're dead; let 'em. Some of them had the old secrets, and after what the lions did to the hyenafolk, I'm sure they'd do the same thing to us. You remember what I said about our ties to passion? That's the second price. We change our natures like the wind, sometimes willingly, sometimes not. You're gonna go through some changes, kid, and it won't always be pleasant. The third price is this: The old Yava might've come back

into force without us knowing. So keep your head down, kid, and never say what you are. Tell 'em you're Bagheera, or Pumonca or even Bubasti. The Ceilican do not exist. They're dead. Unless you wanna be dead for real, that's Gospel truth. Got it? Good.

Tribal Background

Legends claim this tribe died out in the great witch-purges of the 1500-1600s. As usual, the legends lie; the Ceilican simply went underground. A mercurial breed, these faerie cats danced with the Good Folk and demons alike, and led humans along for the festivities. Their wild ways caught up with them; faerie lords enslaved them and witch-hunters burned them. By the time the tribe's survivors sailed to the New World, they were down to a handful. Common wisdom calls them dead, and they won't dispute the claim.

The Ceilican are a hidden tribe, a fact that's driven through a Tekhmet's head during her fostering. There's no telling how many of the old secrets still work, and they're still in circulation. A new-changed kit often feels like the only one of her kind; by the time she's appraised otherwise, her family's secret has become obvious. Ceilican pretend to be members of other tribes and keep in touch through an arcane network called "the Silent Way." The name is a conundrum: The Silent Way is actually a musical code. In the old days, bards bore messages between the cats; now, demo tapes or concerts carry the tunes. Messages are hidden in lyrics and chord structures. Most Ceilican consider it a special treat when a Silent Way message actually gets airplay — especially when it's an insult directed at some other tribe.

Still, these Bastet take their secrecy seriously. There's no telling when the old weaknesses might undercut the tribe one last time. These cats believe Arcadia fell, but claim that a "false faerieland" called Doirionn Blair still exists. Within this "Storm Plain," the Unseelie lord Samhach and his allies covet the survivors of the Ceilican. Better to stay quiet and live free, they reason, than to risk eternity in a fae lord's castle.

Of all the tribes, the Ceilican have adapted best to the modern world. Most of them favor sports, music, mass media and, frighteningly enough, psychology. Passion intoxicates these Folk; anything that stirs up emotions draws them like ants to sugar, and they're not shy about whipping up a few frenzies now and then just to keep things interesting. Most Ceilican have a natural aptitude for technology, too; no other tribe is as comfortable with computers and mechanical devices as the ring dancers. All varieties of Ceilican favor blades over guns; blades simply have more style. Most Ceilican dabble in magic as well. There's a definite cunning bent to this tribe, a mischievous spark that ignites either playful games or malicious villainy. Often both.

The Ceilican curse manifests in a divided nature. While most Bastet affect a Pryio, or moon-favor, which indicates their overall personality, the Ceilican shift Pryio unpredictably. A friendly dancing cat may become sullen and conspiratorial without warning, which makes friendships difficult for them. Even the most free-wheeling Ceilican have a manic, unstable air; add this to their extreme deep-cover antics and you get an enigmatic and volatile tribe.

Tribal Home

The original tribe hailed from the northern lands of Europe. Their cousins were the maneless lions and wildcats that inspired the ancient kings. As their original cousins died out, the Ceilican grew closer to the fae, with whom they supposedly share a blood-tie. During the 1500s, tribal refugees fled Europe for North America, where they interbred with the Pumonca and the wild cougars. The modern line calls America its home; although some Ceilican return to Europe, many of them feel that the old enemies are just too powerful in their native lands.

Culture and Kinfolk

Even today, Ceilican favor their Old World roots. Most speak Gaelic, French or Old Norse as second languages and live by mock-archaic codes. The fae cats are romantic to a fault, and love to make a production out of everything they do.

Passion is the key to attraction; Ceilican love to be around people in glamorous positions. Rock musicians, actors, artists,



cultists, gangsters, politicians, athletes, wizards — this tribe's Kinfolk are a stimulating, dangerous lot. Some cats prefer bohemian subcultures, while others go for high class jet-setters. Like their changeling cousins, these cats love to inspire their Kin to great works of art or passion, and often work as muses, patrons or entertainers. The subcultures they embrace bring out all the tribe's best and worst qualities, and they rarely stay in any place or relationship for any length of time. "Come in with laughter, leave in tears and always keep 'em guessing" is a common sentiment among this tribe.

Like the Bubasti, the Ceilican have lost their original feline Kin. For the last few centuries, they've bred with leopards, cougars and wildcats, producing a wild mix of pelts and features. This, of course, makes it easy to hide in plain sight; few Bastet have reason to question a Ceilican's parentage.

Organization

Like many Bastet, Ceilican wander. Unlike the others, they maintain a network and meet as a tribe once each year on Halloween. This Samhain revel gathers on the Scottish moors and lasts until sunrise. The locals still lock their doors on that night, and no one dares to go a-spying. During the rest of the year, the hidden cats stay in touch through the Silent Way. While they never act as a tribe on a grand scale, each member knows how valuable cooperation can be.

At least once a year, each Ceilican shifts personalities, changes her looks and lifestyle and takes another name. She may return to her old ways eventually, but cannot settle into any role for long. Before she leaves, the changing cat sends out a series of clues to her new identity. In time, her friends track her down again. A changed cat remembers who she once was, but until she returns to that persona, she recalls her memories like movies she once saw, not like things she has experienced.

Secrets Sought

Ceilican love gossip, folklore and personal secrets. Elusive as they are, they love digging up dirt about others.

Yava

While stories claim that Tybalt undid these bans, it's very possible that they came back into force over time. Pure iron makes Ceilican uncomfortable, and affects them as if it were silver. The fourth Yava came into being recently. Thus far, only the fae cats know of it, though it affects everything they do. The other secrets rest in troves of certain faerie folk and witch-hunting groups for the day they might come in handy again.

- The faerie cats fear the touch of cold iron. It burns them like a brand.
- Reciting a Ceilican's name backwards three times causes him discomfort; recite it six times thus, and he will die.
- The sound of a silver bell or church hymn strikes a faerie cat deaf for three days after.
- The race's passion undoes them. Each year, they must forget who they are and become someone else. Some cats must do this often, and by their landless ways, you shall know them.

Appearance

Of all Bastet, the Ceilican most closely resemble domestic house cats; they are, however, much bigger — the size of small panthers — and can be quite fierce. Many have patterned fur — stripes and patches are common — although most favor a predominant color like black or white. Rebels at heart, lots of fae cats enjoy punk and pseudo-medieval fashions. Such clothes allow them to be their flamboyant selves and get away with it.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +0	Str: +1	Str: +0	Str: -1
Dex: +2	Dex: +3	Dex: +4	Dex: +4
Sta: +1	Sta: +1	Sta: +1	Sta: +0
Man: +0	Man: +0	Man: -2	Man: -2
App: +1	App: -2	App: -2	

Quote:

Art is the expression of a dream. And dreams, my friend, are what we are at heart.

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** Oh, yeah, a lot of help *they* were when we were stuck. Still, they're pretty Folk and good to talk to.
- **Balam:** Shut up, hothead. At least you've still got your own *name*.
- **Bubasti:** Oh, yes it is fun to play in the dark, but you have to come up for air eventually.
- **Khan:** Brutal and mean. I respect their courage, but lighten up, guys!
- **Pumona:** Wise. Very wise. When one speaks, listen up. These are the closest we have to brothers, so make nice to them.
- **Qualmi:** Hmm. Intriguing balls of fur with just enough guts to make them good company. Don't try to figure 'em out, though — you'll get lost.
- **Simba:** Yeah, yeah, I guess they're noble and all, but *what* an attitude problem! You won't catch *me* playing toady for a Simba, that's for damned sure!
- **Swara:** I saw one go by once. Damn thing outran my car. Must be nice.



Khan

Caliah

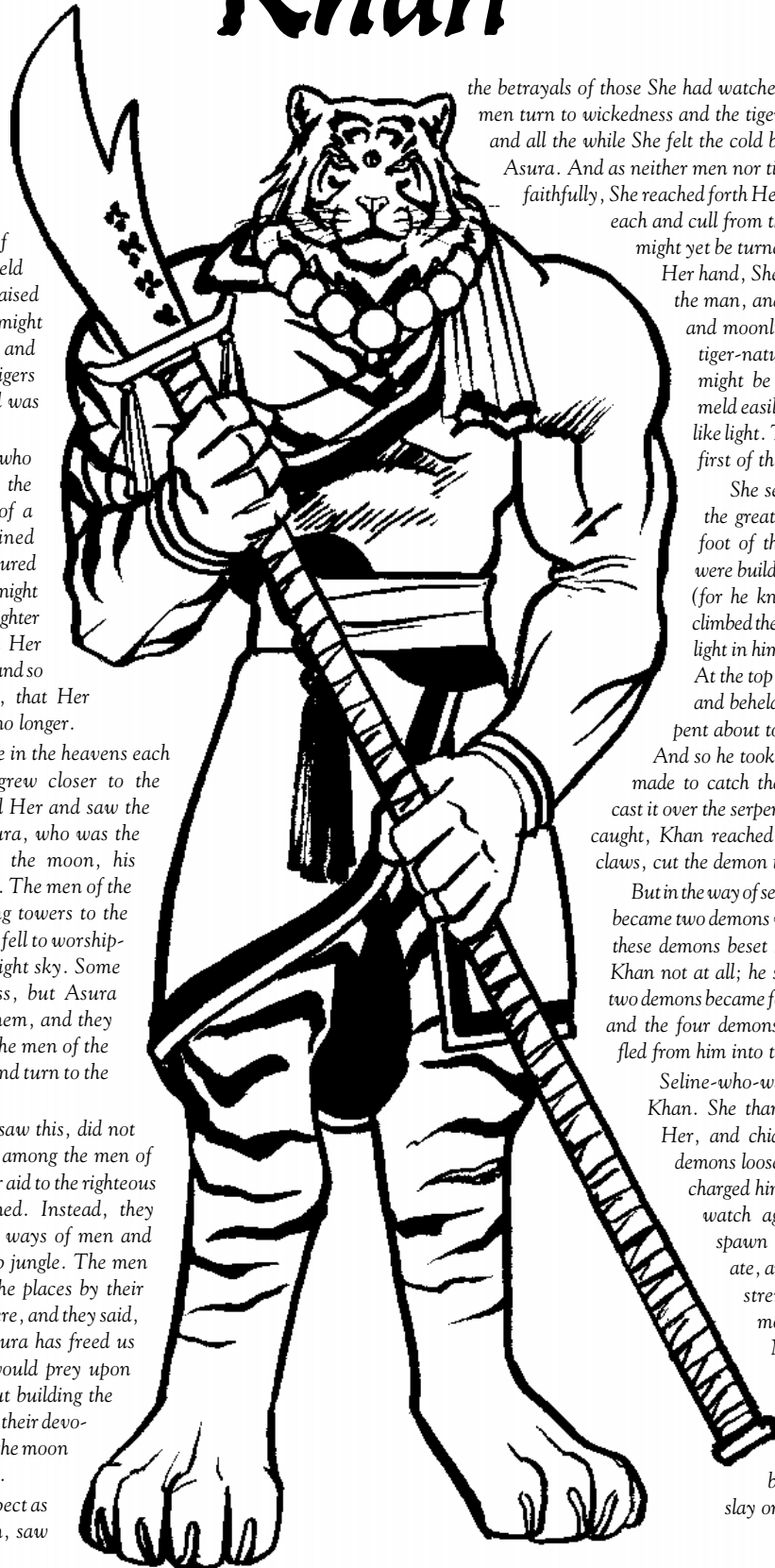
The moon, Bright Eye of the Night, rose to gaze upon the world. Her eye fell upon the men of the cities and the tigers of the jungle, and She beheld their glories. For the men raised towers so high that they might stretch forth their hands and brush Her cheek, and the tigers ruled the jungle so that all was good in their sight.

But there arose Asura, who boiled forth from beneath the earth and took the form of a Great Serpent who twined among the stars and devoured them. He coiled beneath the night sky and beheld the moon, brighter than any star. He beheld Her beauty, and it pained him, and so he longed to devour Her, that Her beauty might trouble him no longer.

And so the serpent rose in the heavens each night. Every night, he grew closer to the moon, who looked behind Her and saw the jaws of darkness. As Asura, who was the serpent, drew nearer to the moon, his darkness covered the land. The men of the cities turned from building towers to the moon's glory, and instead fell to worshipping the new lord of the night sky. Some men held to righteousness, but Asura spat down venom upon them, and they died of plague. Thus did the men of the cities abandon the moon and turn to the worship of darkness.

The tigers, when they saw this, did not seek to punish the wicked among the men of the cities, nor did they offer aid to the righteous whom Asura had punished. Instead, they turned their backs on the ways of men and stalked away into the deep jungle. The men walked the near jungle, the places by their cities, and saw no tigers there, and they said, "Asura has done this; Asura has freed us from fear of those who would prey upon us." And so they set about building the greatest of towers, to show their devotion to Asura and to catch the moon in a net for him to devour.

Now Durga, in Her aspect as Seline, who was the moon, saw



the betrayals of those She had watched over. She saw the men turn to wickedness and the tigers shirk their duties, and all the while She felt the cold breath of the serpent Asura. And as neither men nor tigers had served Her faithfully, She reached forth Her hand to take one of each and cull from them those parts that might yet be turned to Her service. In Her hand, She mixed the tiger and the man, and added sand, water and moonlight, so that Khan's tiger-nature and man-nature might be grounded in earth, meld easily as water and shine like light. Thus was created the first of the Khan.

She set the Khan down in the great city of men, at the foot of the tower which they were building for Asura. Khan (for he knew no other name) climbed the tower, for the moonlight in him called him to do so. At the top of the tower he stood and beheld the jaws of the serpent about to devour his mother. And so he took the net the men had made to catch the moon and instead cast it over the serpent. While Asura was caught, Khan reached forth and, with his claws, cut the demon in two.

But in the way of serpents, Asura merely became two demons when cut in two, and these demons beset Khan. This worried Khan not at all; he struck again and the two demons became four. These he smote, and the four demons became eight, and fled from him into the world.

Seline-who-was-Durga spoke to Khan. She thanked him for saving Her, and chided him for turning demons loose into the world. She charged him then, with keeping watch against the evils the spawn of Asura might create, and to beware his own strength lest he create more foes for himself. Most of all, She told him to beware his own nature, lest his tiger and his man grow out of balance and seek to slay one another.

Then the tower crumbled, and Khan strode off into the jungle to seek his tiger kin. He brought them word of Seline's teachings, and took a mate. And thus were the Khan created, and thus were they charged, and thus did they save the moon from destruction.

Tribal Background

"I am darkness and light, the shadow hunter and king of the sun. My claws hold the earth, my tongue tastes the sky. I am steadfast and strong, compassionate and caring. I am tiger, and my words are pure." With this oath, a Tekhmet joins the ranks of the Bright Kings. The ranks of the Khan, a proud breed whose pedigree reaches to the beginning of time.

The Simba may declare themselves nobility, but the weretigers fit the title. Regal hunters and warriors, these Bastet evoke the respect the lions demand. From the snowy mountains of Asia to the cities of India, the weretigers hunt the spawn of Asura and defend the last of their Kin. They're solid, dependable, smart and strong. Their weaknesses, such as they are, come from being too trusting or too sure of themselves. Khan are straightforward and action-oriented, not clever schemers. Whatever a Khan does, he does full-tilt — fighting, romancing, hunting, studying, even contemplating. These Bastet throw themselves into all tasks with vigor and passion, and their bodies, in any form, bristle with vitality.

Most Khan love company; though few of them can stand the presence of another of their kind for long, they often enjoy companions. And who would deny a tiger's friendship? It's said the Khan were brought forth to battle demons, and many of them take that charge literally. Vampires, Asura and fomori have few enemies more relentless than a tiger. Perhaps that's why the Khan have been brought to the verge of extinction: They made too many of the wrong kind of enemies.

In the mountains of Tibet, Siberia and China, these wercats learned subtle magicks and even martial arts; many a mountain tiger can quote Taoist philosophy at length. To shapeshifters as passionate as the Khan, the idea of harmony through nonaction is an appealing one (that, for them, works better in theory than in practice). Technology is a wonder Khan strive to understand, and some become quite good at computer programming and heavy equipment operation. Still, the majority of the surviving weretigers prefer an archaic existence, and favor clothing, weapons and behavior from a more romantic time.

In ages past, the tiger tribe wandered through emperors' courts and hermits' caves. They walked mountain roads with Buddhist monks and peasant girls, and chased the ghosts from temple ruins. Most preferred to remain in their powerful cat forms, but spoke with the tongues of sages. The powers of the elements burned in their paws, and they kept the hated werewolves at bay. The Silver Fangs and Shadow Lords struck pacts with the sultans, but no such bargains kept the tigers and vampires apart. That hatred, which simmered for 5000 years, proved the Khan's undoing.

Once, the Khan enforced the Impergium with glee. Time, however, showed what wonders the people offered. Khan left the jungles, entered the cities, and were ensnared by their own curiosity. The glories of India, China, Tibet and Korea called the tigers out of hiding, and the Khan were amazed. Soon Bright Kings studied philosophy, learned wu shu, guarded wizards and knelt before monks. Some traveled with the Mongols and brought back stories of the West. In time, the West came to them, and the tribe's decline began.

A warrior's rage is his curse. That curse has nearly undone the Khan four times, and the most recent was nearly the last. Four great

wars between Khan kings have decimated the race: The Maru-Dikleh War of Prehistory, the Tág War between Mongol and Hindu tigers, the bloody Clouster's Purge of the 1800s, and the near-fatal Nagda-Rackbur Feud of the 1950s. This last conflict, between an English lord and the former Sultan Amir Nagda, turned into a bloodbath when both sides fell to darkness. Lord Rackbur enlisted Kindred allies while the sultan courted evil spirits. Both sides rallied the Khan and Bagheera, then slaughtered their opponents through battles and assassinations. The end came when the treacherous sultan took advantage of the Sun Sleep Yava. While the Khan slumbered, Nagda's agents hunted them down. By the time a massive Bagheera war band killed both rivals, less than 20 Khan remained. Their numbers have not grown much since then, and the sultanate has been dissolved forever.

The slaughter of the true tigers has not helped matters. Human hunters killed them in such numbers that the great cats themselves court extinction. Between the loss of their Kinfolk and the wars with vampires, Asura and their own kind, the Khan are an endangered breed. To avoid further risks, most weretigers have scattered across the world. Moving targets are harder to kill. After the fall of the ancient sultanate, the Khan have no true leaders, so each one fends for herself. It's a whole new world for an ancient tribe, and the tigers seem to be peacefully enjoying the view. For now.

Tribal Home

Although the caliah places the tribe's beginnings in India, they range as far north as Siberia and as far east as Japan. In the last two centuries, many of them have gone west, or have sired European children. The latter branch of the family has fared better in recent years than the Asian tigers. The decimation of their tribe has hit the Khan hard, and they've fled the hunting grounds for safer quarters.

Culture and Kinfolk

Since their genesis, the Khan have enjoyed the best, bravest and most beautiful Kinfolk in their regions. They've bred into noble lines throughout Asia and sired kittens in the healthiest tiger bloodlines. Many of these noble families have fallen to poachers, vampires and other enemies over the last hundred years, and the Khan's fortunes are not what they were. Still, each weretiger has an impressive pedigree and a savage noble heart.

The tribe's traditional cultures stress honor and obedience. The treachery of Nagda was worsened by the stain it put on the tigers' pride. While solitary in nature, most Khan establish protectorates where they defend a given family or land against corruption. The fact that "defense" occasionally includes killing certain people doesn't detract from the tribal purpose. The Kahn were created to war against demons. Those who court the darkness must die.

Organization

For nearly a thousand years, the Khan enjoyed a sultanate, with one Rank Six Bon Bhat, a court of advisors (Khan and Kinfolk), and a small army of spirits, tigers and humans to enforce his will. This system tottered during the English occupation and fell to pieces when the last sultan betrayed his kind. They currently have no organization; each Khan declares his territory and makes the rules within.

Secrets Sought

An honorable race, weretigers prefer secrets from lost cities, remote monasteries and bustling metropoli.

Yava

- The Khan belong to the tribe of the sun; when he sleeps, they sleep also. During an eclipse, all Khan slumber for one day, then awaken hungry.
- Khan cannot resist the meat of an innocent child, though it violates their laws to eat it.
- A tiger cannot resist a direct challenge. To turn away costs him his rage for a fortnight.

Appearance

The regal warriors of their kind, Khan tend to be large, broad-shouldered, brawny individuals in all forms. Although males of all breeds are noticeably larger than females, both genders can be pretty impressive. While many Khan tend to be bad-tempered and aggressive, others love company of all kinds (and are powerful enough to demand respect). Weretigers bred with English men and women during the 1800s, largely out of respect for their ferocity. Thus, most modern Khan are either white, Chinese or Indian.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +4	Str: +2
Dex: +1	Dex: +2	Dex: +2	Dex: +2
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +3
Man: -1	Man: -3	Man: -3	Man: -3
App: -1	App: 0	App: 0	App: 0

Quote:

No king is so mighty, no priest so holy, no virgin so pure at heart that their blood would not freeze before the face of a tiger. I am the battler of dragons, the son of the dawn. Look upon me and tremble. Before me, you are as nothing.

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** *No one* is as wise, clever and honorable as our cousins pretend to be. There has to be a trick, and I would like to know what it is.
- **Balam:** Fierce, wild children of the fallen world. I feel sorry for them — we have much in common.
- **Bubasti:** I would gladly smash them into pulp, but their blood would burn my hands.
- **Ceilican:** Dead and buried. Let them lie.
- **Pumonca:** Thunderbird blesses his children. They walk the Diamond Path more purely than any Folk I know. Perhaps some day they will find what it is they seek. Until then, I wish them well.
- **Qualmi:** I am not as ignorant as I might seem, nor do clever words make a clever mind. You may confuse me, Ice Cat, but do not assume I am overwhelmed.
- **Simba:** Bloody claws and a bloody crown are your legacies, false kings. If you were to shave your manes, you might see the truth. Cats have no kings, least of all you.
- **Swara:** Fast as the wind and twice as hard to kill.



Pumonca

Caliah

It was not long after the beginning of days that we were sent to save humans from wolves. The great puma spirit, Da-jo-ji, saw the trouble first. He was the guardian of the West Wind, placed there by Ga-oh, the Wind Keeper, for his fierceness. Few would dare his wrath, and so the gates of the Western sky were protected. But he liked humans, and there were some he especially liked. Every now and then, he looked down upon the earth to see how his favorite humans fared. What he saw angered him.

The wolf changers had grown too mighty in their pride. To them had fallen the task of keeping the humans from growing too prideful. In doing so, the wolf changers had forgotten their own humility and place on the earth. Indeed, Grandfather Wolf had become shamed, shunned at the lodge by the other animals. How silly it was, the animal fathers all thought: It was always the humans who made dumb mistakes. But now it was the wolf changers.

Although the council of animal fathers disliked what the wolf changers did, they could not agree about what to do about it. Now, Da-jo-ji wouldn't have cared except that the wolf changers were bullying his favorites. He did something about it. He whistled up a fierce wind, a bitter wind from the west. This wind blew the dust all around and wrapped it about the trees and rocks and the bones of dead animals. It mixed up the bones of humans and cougars and made them one.

So the Pumonca were made, to make things right again.

Some say that's not how it happened, that he instead chose one of his favorite humans and told him how to take the shape of a cat. I've heard both versions.

The cat changers went to the high mountains of the west, where the worst of the wolf changers' folly took place. They sneaked around and watched, all quiet and silent. The wolves didn't even notice them. They thought they were the only tricky ones. After seeing the wolves scare the humans of the mountains, the Pumonca knew what they had to do.

One by one, they ambushed the wolves. They'd wait until one had left his pack for one reason or another and then pounce upon him. It took only one Pumonca; the others would watch to be sure the wolf pack did not come. Soon, many wolf changers were dead.

The rest of the wolf changers got angry. Instead of being shamed, their rage grew. This is always their undoing. The Pumonca do not have this kind of temper. They think through their problems.

It took many moons until the wolf changers and the cat changers finally met to talk peace. It seemed that some elders among the wolf changers had grown wise and promised to no longer bully the humans. The cat changers accepted their promise, but knew that it would not be kept. The cubs of the wolf changers were too wild, and their elders could not restrain them. So the cat changers simply watched for a while. When a wolf changer bullied a cat changer's people, the cat changer would revenge himself on the wolf. Soon, the wolf changers knew which humans to mess with and which ones to leave alone.

That is one story. There are others. Some say the Pumonca were made by the mountains, to protect them from fools. But they could not protect them from the white fools, who dug into the mountains seeking the yellow rocks, or the precious moon rocks hated by the wolf changers.

Others tell the story about the maiden who married the puma. Her offspring were cat changers, and could live among humans or cats. It is her curiosity they carry, always wanting to know what life is like for others, turning over the sharp porcupines to look at their soft bellies beneath.

There are many stories. Each person will tell you a different one, and each story will be the truth. We are what we are. Do you question the wind? That is not Grandfather's way. "I am," says He. "You do not need to ask why."

Tribal Background

Loners, wanderers, secretive hermits who watch the world around them and occasionally push things back into place, these are the traditional roles of the Pumonca werecat. A Pumonca is a loner among loners, whose travels take her across — but rarely out of — the North American continent.

Pumonca share a common tie to their birth-land. Some tales say that a cougar will die if she leaves her home. From the southern swamps to the western plains and the eastern forests and hills, these wandering cats can be comfortable anywhere. While most hail from Native American ancestry, a number of their kind mated with settlers and trappers in centuries past. Cajuns, mountain folk and hobos added to the Pumonca gene pool, and have left their mark on the tribe as a whole. Today, bikers, hippies, storm-chasers and drifters of many different races wander the United States and Canada, often sticking to the wilderness until some secret or crisis draws them out into the open. For a moment, anyway. They never stay out for long.

In all forms, the so-called Storm Walkers are sturdy, wiry and tough. Their feet or paws are callused from endless wandering, and they tend to wear little clothing and carry few belongings. Even the harshest weather seems to slide right past them, and their temperament tends to be laconic and even — until something defiles the land, or the beings on it. The Pumonca's rage is a frightening thing, as deep and solid as the werecat himself. What he can't change by strength, a Pumonca will alter by stealth; these cats excel at earth-sense, and they know the land around them even if they've only just arrived. Their bond with the elements, as old as the breath of the Thunderbird, runs very deep.

Pumonca trace their ancestry to Mother Earth and Father Sky in all their many forms. Thunderbird, guardian of purity, swept the tribe into being and he flies beside them wherever they go. All Pumonca, even those without an official Jamak, revere the Thunderbird for his honor, wisdom and ferocity. His charge to defend the sacred land almost led to the tribe's extinction, but they follow that command gladly, even now.

In the oldest days, Pumonca were like bogeymen. Any village that grew too careless or prosperous felt the touch of the Storm Walker, the cat that came in the night to punish the foolish and the bad. Some cougars sat at Wendigo fires and fought beside the Croatan when the Wyrcomers came. As the white men drove the pure folk from their homes, Storm Walkers loomed out of the night and took revenge.

Soon, they crossed claws with the Garou from across the sea, who began a new War of Rage against the native shapechangers. That war didn't end until both wolves and cats joined forces to battle the Storm Eater in the late 1800s. By that time, the Storm Walkers, never numerous to begin with, were whittled to a ragged few.

In the old days, the Pumonca relied more on their physical prowess than on cat magic. It wasn't enough; faced with the mystic power of the white wolves, the Storm Walkers fell like rain. It was Old Stone Face, a Comanche shaman, who renewed old bargains with the element spirits and bought the Pumonca a measure of power for their fight. Invoking kinship and offering favors, Old Stone Face learned many secrets, then passed them to his siblings. These Gifts, combined with others taught by the Wendigo and Uktena, bolstered the Pumonca's power. Modern pumas still prefer to rely on their own abilities; still, the Gifts don't hurt. Given the tribe's small numbers and solitary nature, any assistance is welcome.

After the war for the West, Old Stone Face called his remaining cousins together. He acknowledged the ruin the Wyrmscomers had brought to the land, but counseled peace and renewal. Old Stone Face had survived many years, and had learned that many whites were worthy folk. Old Stone Face suggested that Pumonca choose the bravest and most honorable Kinfolk they could find. Race was not to be an obstacle. Most pumas heeded Old Stone Face; modern Pumonca are a diverse lot, unified by their respect for the land and their self-reliant ways.

These days, a Pumonca travels alone. Any trail he shares will be a short one. He still maintains his bond to the land, and considers it a sacred task to hunt corruption. The elements are his kin. The road is his home. A Storm Walker still, he follows the wind.

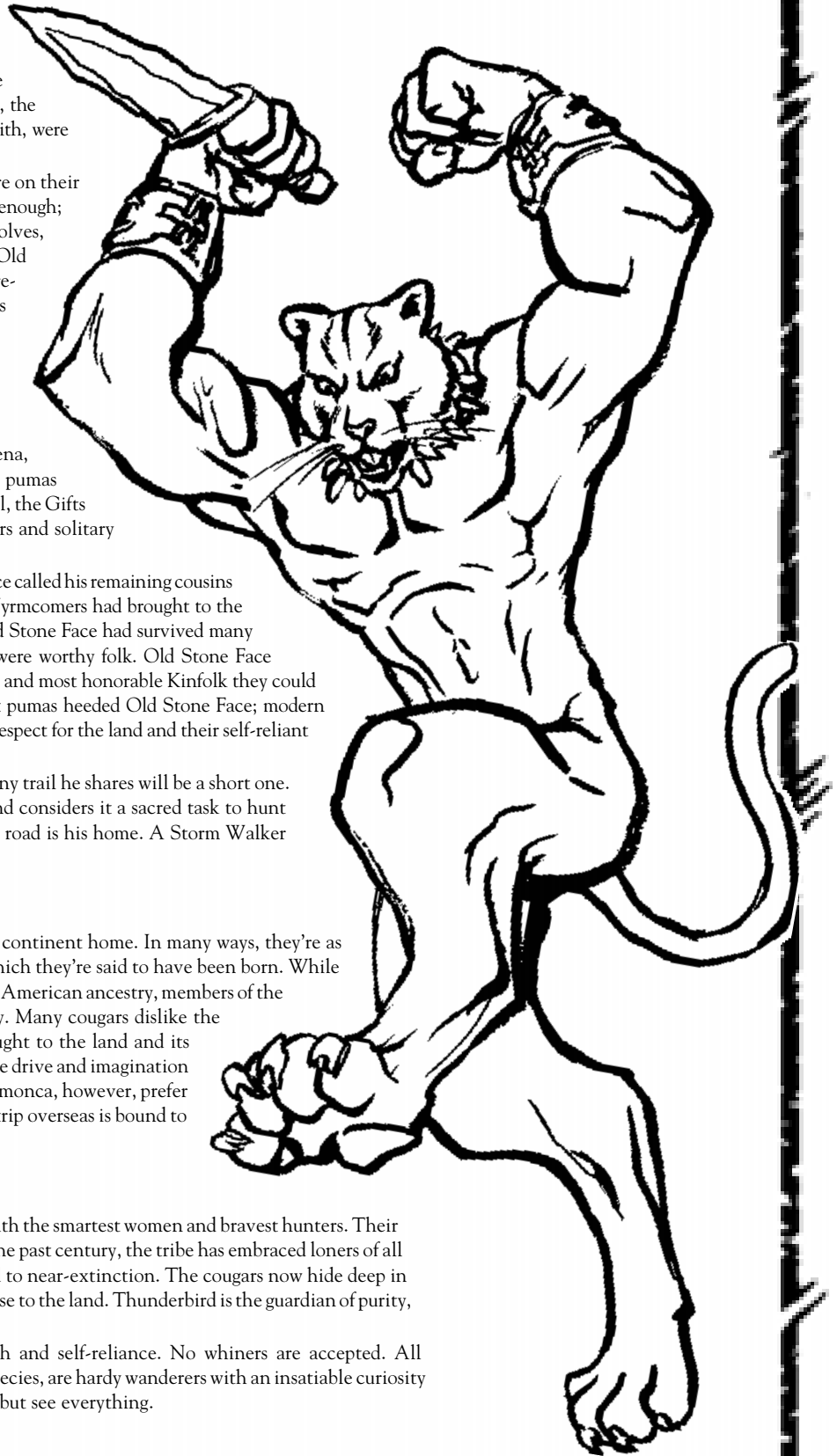
Tribal Home

All Pumonca call the North American continent home. In many ways, they're as much a part of the land as the dust from which they're said to have been born. While many of these wanderers come from Native American ancestry, members of the tribe have never chosen lovers exclusively. Many cougars dislike the Europeans for the changes they have brought to the land and its people, but a few have found their aggressive drive and imagination fascinating. Even the most adventurous Pumonca, however, prefer to remain in their ancestral territory. Any trip overseas is bound to be a short one.

Culture and Kinfolk

In the old days, Storm Walkers mated with the smartest women and bravest hunters. Their cat-Kin were cougars, solid and strong. In the past century, the tribe has embraced loners of all kinds, while the big cats have been hunted to near-extinction. The cougars now hide deep in the wilderness, and the people must live close to the land. Thunderbird is the guardian of purity, and his people must remain unspoiled.

This tribe's ways stress honor, strength and self-reliance. No whiners are accepted. All Pumonca and Kinfolk, regardless of their species, are hardy wanderers with an insatiable curiosity and sense of adventure. They speak little, but see everything.



Organization

None whatsoever. After the fostering, both cougars walk in opposite directions for one full day. It took a major effort for Old Stone Face to unite the tribe, and it has never happened since.

Secrets Sought

Werecougars seek the secrets of the land, the lore of native peoples, and the corrupters who would poison both. They have no great love for magic, and consider those who follow it to be dangerous.

Yava

- A Pumonca is one with her land; if she leaves it for more than a full moon cycle, she will die.
- The essence of the poisoned land (toxic waste, radiation, sewage) is deadly to a puma. Immerse him in its toxins and he will quickly perish.
- All beasts fear the puma. No horse will bear him, no dog will follow him. The great cats are his Kin and they befriend him, but no other animal can approach without terror.

Appearance

The Pumonca is quintessentially American. Whatever her race or gender, she's spirited, laconic and tough. These loners travel light, and dress plainly. Many favor Native American jewelry, tattoos, weapons and clothing, although some prefer fringed leather, motorcycles, revolvers and Western wear. Their cat-forms tend to be either dusty yellow-brown or black, with white markings, short, powerful jaws, small eyes and thick, strong paws. Pumonca are bulkier than most werecoats, but lack the mass of Khan or Simba or the raw ferocity of Balam. Their strength is steady, quiet and timeless.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +1	Str: +3	Str: +3	Str: +2
Dex: +2	Dex: +3	Dex: +3	Dex: +3
Sta: +2	Sta: +4	Sta: +3	Sta: +3
Man: -1	Man: -3	Man: -3	Man: +0
App: +0	App: 0	App: 0	

Quote:

If you didn't talk so much, you might hear a great deal more.

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** Good Folk. Talk too much, though.
- **Balam:** Yep, we know their kind. They're our brothers, and we fought the same war. They're still fightin', and I wish 'em, luck.
- **Bubasti:** Don't like 'em. Not at all.
- **Ceilican:** Are they dead? Nothing is dead. Not forever.
- **Khan:** Mean cats. Big and mean. If you meet one, walk away but don't ever turn your back.
- **Qualmi:** Our riddling brothers have wiser medicine than we do, but they sit too long in one place and they do not taste the breeze.
- **Simba:** Rotten bastards. Everything that's bad about a tiger is worse in a lion. Especially his breath.
- **Swara:** I've never been close enough to one to form an opinion about 'em.



Qualmi

Caliah

There are an awful lot of stories about the Qualmi. But there's some I like better than others, especially those about the first Qualmi. This one's called "How Lynx-Boy Stole Wendigo's Sight."

There are other Lynx-Boy tales that happened before this one, like the one about how he stole smarts from the salmon. That's why folks say the Qualmi are slippery and always swimming upstream instead of down — backwards wisdom, we call it.

And there was the story about how he stole his thick fur from Polar Bear. But it was too big and didn't fit just right, so his paws were thick and his ears long. Some folks laughed at him for that one, so he tried to dirty the coat up, so it wouldn't look the same. They still laughed — until that bad winter happened and they all died of cold, while Lynx-Boy was warm and snug in his big coat.

Well, this story begins with Lynx-Boy wandering around looking for food. Since he was the first lynx changer, he could hunt as a human or a lynx. He had broken his spear the last time he tried fishing, so he figured he'd hunt as a lynx. Trouble was, snow was all around. Those tasty hares were white as snow, so to speak, and Lynx-Boy couldn't see them. He needed help, 'cause any lynx that can't hunt rabbits is a hungry lynx.

He wandered about wondering what to do when all of a sudden a fierce cold wind hit. He snuggled up in his coat and looked around to see why the wind was so strong. Over the hill, he saw Wendigo coming, angry as always.

Nobody else was around, 'cause everybody always runs from Wendigo. But Lynx-Boy, with his salmon smarts, figured out just how he was going to hunt those hares, using Wendigo's help.

He laid down in the snow and played dead. Smelling meat, Wendigo plowed through the drifts straight toward him. He grabbed him up and swallowed him whole — without chewing or nothing — and kept on plowing through the snow.

Lynx-Boy hung onto a tooth and crawled out of his coat, letting it slip down Wendigo's gullet. He was awful cold in there, and knew he had to work quick. He jumped to the tonsils and climbed up to the sinuses. From there, it was easy to reach out of the nose and pluck out the Wendigo's eyes. That's what he did, and the Wendigo bellowed in rage — it doesn't know how to do anything else, 'cept eat — and clutched its empty sockets.

Lynx-Boy slid down the throat and leapt out of the mouth as the monster bellowed. He dove into the snow and hid himself. Wendigo wandered around, looking for his eyes, but then the wind came and gave him new ones. Ice collected in his sockets and froze solid into balls. Wendigo could see again, and went about his business.

As he was leaving, he stopped to shit Lynx-Boy's fur coat into the snow. When he was gone, Lynx-Boy slipped back into his coat, no warmer for traveling through Wendigo's guts. But now he had two eyes made out of wind, and nothing sees clearer or farther than the wind. He plucked his own eyes out and put the Wendigo's in. From then on, he could see white hares in the purest snow.

That's why folks say the Qualmi can see far, but it's a cold sight — calculating and intelligent, not warm and friendly. It's also a hungry sight, always searching for new things, spying out secrets. It's also why baby lynxes have blue eyes.

Later, when Lynx-Boy went back for his own eyes, he'd found that a raven had taken them. He chased that bird around for an awful long time, over the course of many stories, always stealing something here and there. By the time he found the bird, he realized that he didn't want his old eyes back anyway. So he stole the raven's secrets.

But that's another story.



Tribal Background

Just as the lynx changes its coat to match the season, the Qualmi werelynx adapts to her surroundings. Enigmatic masters of animals and disguise, these Native American Bastet cloak their secrets in misdirection. Riddles fascinate them, and few of their kind offer straight answers to any question. For anyone with a literal mind, dealing with these Riddle Dancers can be fruitless and infuriating. It's no wonder they live alone!

Unlike the wandering Pumonca, this tribe remains largely at home in the wildernesses of Canada, Alaska and the northern United States. Solitary by nature, Qualmi often surround themselves with animal companions but shun the company of other people. They attend taghairs occasionally, but more out of curiosity and manners than out of obligation. In spite of their hermetic tendencies, Qualmi are generous Folk; a chance encounter may be taken home, fed and given presents if the Riddle Dancer likes him. A person or animal in need will be sheltered and fed for months at a time if necessary. This generosity may be a tribal trait, or it might stem from the customs of the northwest native peoples. Either way, it's common to all Qualmi.

The price of such hospitality is the werecat's riddling nature. Guests will be asked endless questions which seem to make no sense, will be given equally nonsensical answers to their own queries, and have to endure long periods of empty silence. Most of these questions have deeper meanings, but quite a few of them are just asked for the Bastet's amusement. As a rule, a lynx loves to see what kind of answer her guest supplies, and she'll judge him accordingly. Clever people are valued companions, while dolts who must be spoon-fed are quickly driven out the door. A Qualmi enforces solitude in subtle but relentless ways. Sooner or later, a guest moves on, if only out of sheer frustration.

Puzzling out the "history" of the werelynxes is impossible, even for the cats themselves. Their caliah are convoluted affairs, with no real points of reference. Every Qualmi tells her tribe's story differently; some point to a human tribe called the Snoqualmie who hunted and fished along the coasts, while others claim to have been born from the mating of a pine cone, a salmon and a burst of sunlight. Some ancestors figure prominently in many tales: Strange Owl Woman, who fought the Wymcomers in the Old West; Weeping Skunk, who fooled Coyote himself into giving up his Gift of shapechanging; Glowing Bundle Leap, who swam to the bottom of the sea to feed her children with shellfish, and many others whose legends seem fantastical to literal thinkers. Qualmi lore has the feeling of a huge joke with a serious punchline, but very few outsiders have the patience to puzzle it out.

Unlike most Bastet, Qualmi enjoy the company of wolves. The cats' friendship with the Uktena reaches back before either tribe can recall. Many Riddle Dancers hold positions of honor in northern caerns, and trade secrets with the spirit masters. The Wendigo remain more distant; the Qualmi have never been warlike enough for their tastes. While most werewolves find a lynx's riddling ways infuriating, Theurges and Philodoxes enjoy trying to puzzle out the werecat's true meaning. Many of these riddles find their way into Garou gamecraft.

To lessen their solitude, Qualmi befriend animals. Like the Garou, Qualmi associate themselves with beast spirits and often receive guidance from Gafflings of Salmon, Eagle, Whale or Elk. "There's wisdom in a hawk's cry and serenity in moose turds," sums up a lynx's outlook. Animals, at least, are more honest than people.

Qualmi see beyond appearances, and they loathe hypocrisy. Most can see right through deceptions, and punish liars with tricks of their own. These Bastet are slow to anger, and their rage takes a slower path than simple violence. Qualmi punish slights by setting magical traps and spirit lures. Gold prospectors in the 1800s often found themselves buried alive in shimmering dust, or were tricked into shooting each other by phantom voices and paranoid dreams. When forced to fight, a lynx explodes into a flurry of claws and teeth, then flees as soon as possible.

Tales portray the Qualmi as master magicians, but that may just be misdirection. They certainly seem more enigmatic than powerful, but it's hard to tell — they're not known for showing off. The magicks they do demonstrate often involve shapeshifting into many different forms. Perhaps they gather their riddles by watching things from a hundred different perspectives. Maybe Qualmi only *appear* to be solitary — when you can change forms, you recognize and appreciate the many different creatures all around you. Qualmi often depend on these associates for information, and sometimes for protection; in return, they offer a never-ending stream of food, gifts and quizzical company.

Tribal Home

Qualmi range across the northern American reaches, build solitary houses or dens, and — barring crises — remain around there until death. Some lynxes enjoy traveling, but they're the exception, not the rule.

Culture and Kinfolk

From youth to old age, the werelynxes are a vigorous, physical tribe. Most of them enjoy swimming, even in frigid weather, and fish by diving through holes cut into the ice. Their friends and Kinfolk are clever and sturdy, with a fond humor and inquisitive minds. Their feline Kin wander further south and east than the Bastet themselves do, and occasionally appear in the southwest or even Europe.

Qualmi never mate for long; lovers part ways before the children themselves are born. These children are nursed through infancy, then given over to trusted friends for raising. If the Changing Breed carries through, the friends direct the kit back to her parent; otherwise, she may never know who her mother was.

Organization

The only time Qualmi gather is when an elder takes a youngster in for fostering. The First Year often lasts about six months with Qualmi; they grow nervous in each others' company and quickly make their own space elsewhere.

Secrets Sought

Naturally enough, these cats seek out riddles. They enjoy elemental lore and native culture, but seem intrigued by modern mass media, too. Many lynxes have televisions in their remote dwellings: TVs which get excellent reception without cable access... and without power, for that matter.

Java

- The power of a lynx lies in her riddles; to unravel them is to undo her magic (see "Gifts," Chapter Four).
- The Qualmi share a soul with the salmon; poison the salmon, and you harm the tribe.
- No lynx can speak the truth about her parents. Confront her with their names and faces, and she will be confused for days.

Appearance

Nearly all werelynxes descend from northern tribes like Inuit, Ojibwa, Cree, Mohawks and the occasional Sioux. A few modern Qualmi have white ancestors or lovers, but “integration” has been slow among this tribe, if only because of their isolation.

Generally, they’re a small folk in both Homid and cat-forms, with dark, thick skin, deep-set eyes and wiry builds. Youngsters have gray hair, and they appear to age quickly. Even when she’s angry, a werelynx always seems to be smiling at some private joke. Her cat-forms are thick-furred, large-eared and big-pawed, often spotted but occasionally striped. Depending on the season, a Qualmi’s coat may be either white, dirty gray, yellow-and-white or brown. In human form, she’ll dress in rustic “outdoorsman” clothes, often with Western or Native American motifs. Fish, birds, masks and furs are common themes and decorations, but all Qualmi wear some insignia of the moon on their person at all times.

Form Statistics

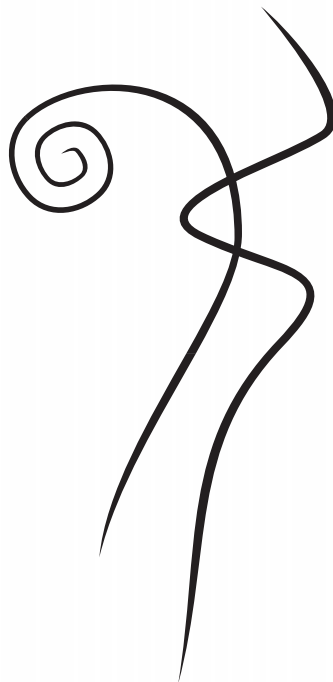
Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +0	Str: +1	Str: +1	Str: +0
Dex: +2	Dex: +3	Dex: +4	Dex: +4
Sta: +0	Sta: +1	Sta: +1	Sta: +0
Man: +0	Man: -2	Man: -2	Man: -2
App: +1	App: 0	App: 0	

Quote:

If I were to change my face, would it alter what I am? Appearances are deceiving, my brother; the heart sees better than the eyes.

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** White cat, pretty white cat, walk from sun into shadow and bring with you the house of eternity.
- **Balam:** Frog poison makes Two Hearts boil. The moon has fled your jaws and your hands blaze with fire. Quiet, Smoking Mirror. Your future is shattered glass.
- **Bubasti:** Fishes die. They float for a while, then sink and decay. Then they are eaten by little fishes. There’s a lesson in this if you care to look.
- **Ceilican:** Dreams never die.
- **Khan:** The judges are judged by their own clawed hearts. The verdict is pending, and the sun awaits an answer.
- **Pumonca:** Fly, O children of thunder. The dust on your soles is our past and our future. Carry it wisely, don’t sweep it away.
- **Simba:** Voice of thunder, the death you foretell is your own.
- **Swara:** Wisdom is the wind. Like attracts like. A hero does not need a parade, only a blanket and silence.



Simba

Caliah

Once upon a time...

What? You claim you've heard this one? Well, that's nice. However, if you interrupt me while I'm speaking again, I'll tear your throat out.

Besides, your manners indicate that you can obviously stand to hear it again.

Anyway, once upon a time, we weren't as we are now. By "we" I mean all of catkind, all of our subjects. In those days you didn't have Swara skulking around in the bush claiming that they're misunderstood, and the Ceilican were still a going concern. We had a good little thing going, and all the cat kind were a part of it. Everyone knew his place, and our place was at the top of the heap.

As I understand, it was Mother Seline herself who dictated how things were going to be. She looked down from the heavens and decided which of our tribes was best for each duty. The Khan became the soldiers, the Swara the couriers and sentries, the Qualmi the shamans and we — we became the lords. Seline looked down on us, and recognized that we were the only ones with the requisite characteristics — the drive, the dedication, the innate nobility — fit to direct the others who, sadly enough, were in need of some guidance.

So we were installed as rulers of our kind, though not without some grumblings. As for those who did the grumbling — Bagheera and Khan, mostly — they were shown the error of their ways.

We told them: If you're better kings than we are, come and take the crown. To their credit, they tried.

We had our great society of catkind, but we made the mistake of assuming that everyone else agreed with us. We thought once we'd demonstrated conclusively how well things were working, the others would stop grumbling and take up the roles Seline had assigned them.

We were wrong. Listen to the consequences of that error.

There came a day when the king and first wife of all the prides produced a litter of heirs. There were seven cubs in the brood, but only one was male. And it was he, eldest son of the mightiest of the Simba, who would have truly unified all of the children of Seline. It had been prophesied thus; the greatest of the Qualmi, casting sticks at the birth of the cubs, had foreseen this.

But a shaman should know silence; the riddling lynx did not. He spread news of his revelation far and wide, perhaps to steal a piece of the coming king's glory for himself.

The Qualmi told it to the Bagheera, the hunters, before the day's first hunt, and so the Bagheera bore the secret with them onto the plains.

The Qualmi told it to the Pumonca, the watchers, and so their eyes fell from watching for enemies to scanning visions of future glories.

The Qualmi told it to the Balam and the Khan, the Ceilican who caught vermin, the Bubasti who saved the secret for themselves, and the Swara who bore the news far and wide.

Now the Ajaba of the plain watched the Bagheera hunting, and saw that the the hunters that day brought down far more food that they normally did, and they grew curious. So they lay in ambush and soon enough their chance came: A Swara came from the court of the king with news to the Bagheera that the hunt should end.

The Ajaba ambushed the messenger, and captured him. They said to him, "We will not harm you. We merely wish to know why the Bagheera hunt so; they leave none of the herds for us this day." And

the Swara, who was young and foolish and not a little bit afraid, told the Ajaba of the birth of the heir to the throne of the prides.

"Ahhh," said the king of the Ajaba. "Such an auspicious occasion, and yet we were not invited. We shall come tonight to pay our respects to the one who will be king of all the prides. And you, little Swara, say nothing of our coming. We shall come in peace, and wish to do honor to your new king. We would not have old quarrels prevent us from our duty." And they let him go.

The Swara, foolishly, believed the Ajaba, and kept the secret. Thus failed the messenger, whose duty is to bear tidings.

Summoned by the Swara, the Bagheera returned from the hunt with the kills, which they placed before the king, the first huntress, the first wife, and the young prince. But some still bore resentment against us for assuming the place they thought was theirs, and one had brought carrion as his offering, a beast that had been gnawed by hyenas. Before the insult was noticed, the prince ate of the dead flesh, and grew ill. Thus failed the hunter, whose duty is to feed the tribe.

The prince was taken by his mother away from the celebration, which grew fierce as the sun set. The Pumonca deserted their posts to join in the revels; thus failed the watcher. The Khan stuffed themselves with the flesh of the kill, and lolled, sated on the ground. Too full to fight, they basked in the day's fading heat. Thus failed the soldiers, too gorged to defend.

And so, when the king of the Ajaba came with his court to pay homage, he beheld disarray. They also beheld the unmanned knolls, where watchers should be, and the guards too stuffed to move. Most important, they saw the prince of the Simba and all catkind, ill and tended only by his mother.

It was not until morning that the first wife's body was found, ripped by the jaws of the Ajaba. It was not until evening that the king found the body of his son.

Great was his rage, and one by one he called forth the other tribes, to lay judgment upon them for their failures. None of the other tribes answered. The Qualmi and Pumonca, in their shame, walked to the other side of the world. The Swara slunk into the high grass of the bush, ever dwelling between us and the Ajaba. The Khan denied any failure and strode forth, not to be seen in our lands again.

From this we learned the bitter lessons. We learned that it is as much their failures as our strength that gives us the right to rule, and we can trust nothing but that strength. The Ajaba we have hunted to extinction, for as they have slain our future we shall destroy theirs. And so we keep to our lands, for they are ours, and our strength holds them. We do not permit interlopers, for who has proved himself trustworthy?

None, save ourselves.

Tribal Background

"The Lords of Sunlight." That's what they call themselves. Like the blazing mane around the heads of their kings, werelions liken themselves to the sun. All things have a place and an order and rebels must be reminded of this fact. The real fact, of course, is that the other tribes dislike the lions; the Simba may call themselves "Lords of Sunlight," but many other cats give them another name: "The Dark Kings," an unflattering comparison to the Khan.

The Simba aren't villains; they're magnificent lords, slayers of demons. Things are simply out of order. When the balance is

restored, when the humans know their place and the cities become graveyards, the lions will be proven right. The demons of the modern age can be traced to the end of the Impergium and the laxity of the Changing Breeds. The Simba mean to put things in order, and if that requires bloodshed, so be it. Warfare is the sport of kings.

The Simba blame feline independence on the sins of the early tribes. The Bastet governed the true cats, which the lions call *watua* — “children.” Each tribe had its place, and the lions were born to rule. When the lion prince was slain, the other tribes slunk away in disgrace. Their purposes have been forgotten in their shame.

In the chaos following the prince’s death, three brothers, Amadu, Abuja and Mayi, warred to lead the remaining Simba. Amadu won the first battle, and took the fiercest Kin and cousins with him. Mayi defeated Abuja, and gathered up most of the smartest survivors. The third brother took the rest and went north. There, he founded another branch of the family, the Mor Grian. This sub-tribe, smaller and less aggressive than their cousins, melded with (or became — no one’s quite sure) the Ceilican. The African Simba consider Abuja’s whole line a joke, and call their departed cousins *nihlli bogga* (“dead little sisters”). No Simba will admit kinship with the Ceilican, and they take such inquiries as insults.

Mayi’s clan wandered into the deserts and plains; in time, they learned the ways of Mantis and made peace with the bushmen. No Impergium was necessary here — the humans respected the rightful powers. In time, the Mayi’o put aside their rage and attuned themselves to nature. They would hunt, but no longer killed for sport.

Amadu’s clan was another matter. They never gave up the Impergium; when white invad-

ers threw the lands out of balance, these Simba began a war — a war which backfired. Cat-Kinfolk perished by the hundreds, and the humans were dragged away. Some Simba made the crossing to the Slave Worlds, but they were few and far between. Most Simba fought to the death, and in the end, they found it.

Many kings came and went. Most died at the hands of hunters or herders who no longer feared the Lords of Sunlight. The Amadu’o became a dozen scattered prides, who bred with the lions but avoided the humans. Other Bastet claim the Amadu’o are too feral for their own good. They rage without purpose, and have become more murderous than humans and lions combined.

The greatest Simba chieftain bears this out. Black Tooth, a huge descendant of Amadu himself, has become the scourge of Africa. With his pride, the Endless Storm, he ravages the land from the Sahara to South Africa. Other Simba ally with him or die; Bagheera have fought him, and have lost. The Swara simply run away. The Ajaba suffered the worst of Black Tooth’s anger, though. With help from vampire allies and dark magic, he turned the Hyena King’s court into an abattoir. Many younger Simba revere this lion king; he’s at once an inspiration and an embarrassment to his tribe. He’s a monster, of course, but a successful monster.

Humans call those types “leaders,” and Black Tooth is every inch a leader.

The Mayi’o keep to themselves. Time may not allow them that luxury much longer, though. Settlements have pushed into the Kalahari, driving the native Kinfolk into the desert. Fences rise along waterholes and the wild prey dies. Three prides of Mayi’o survive in the Kalahari basin; if things do not improve they might take up their cousins’ warlike ways.

Tribal Home

Caliah place the tribe’s beginnings in what is now Zaïre. Since then, they’ve moved from India and Ireland to the bottom of South Africa. The Triangle Trade landed several Simba in the Americas, and a few werelions roam there without tribal allegiance.



Culture and Kinfolk

Werelions value strength and order. Despite their bloody reputation, Simba adore their loved ones, and watch their Kinfolk closely. Children and kittens are raised within the pride and must constantly prove themselves to survive.

Simba have rites of initiation and rank. Body markings — tattoos, neck extensions, scars and painted designs — are common, especially among the aggressive Amadu'o. Advancement is by combat, and only three adult males are allowed to remain in a pride. Most have only one. Females fight to be First Huntress and First Wife, respectively; few can be both. Losers either die in combat or wander the plains in search of a new pride. Some Simba drifted into India centuries ago, and their descendants have become the most aggressive of their kind.

The Mayi'o prefer harmony to aggression. Smaller than their cousins, they avoid scarring their "young," respect outsiders and prefer negotiation to violence. Naturally, the other lions consider them wimps. Most Amadu'o avoid the Kalahari, so no one bothers the Mayi'o much. Those who insist on a fight discover that for all their peace-loving ways, these Folk are *still* werelions. Few make the mistake twice.

It's a bad thing to cross a Simba, as the Ajaba can attest. When hunters stalked *watua*, Simba mated with the toughest of them — often by force — and killed anyone who showed weakness. The Khan are hated rivals, too. Sultans and kings have always canceled each other out before. With the sultanate dissolved, the lions may be planning to finish the rivalry. Their way.

Organization

Each pride has one *Mtolo* ("father"), or dominant male, and several *Kirii* ("wives") and *Anwana* ("young hunters"). Small prides defer to larger ones, and may owe allegiance to a *Chakuva* ("High King") like Black Tooth. Some lions wander and make their own fortunes alone. As a rule, Simba avoid the cities. Some "renegades" settle in townships, but few prides do.

Secrets Sought

Anything that helps the tribe (or the lion) attain greater power, be it physical, mystical or political.

Yava

- A rope made of lion's mane will bind a Simba fast.
- To defeat a lion, steal his roar. In it, you may find a bit of his soul. He will not harm one who holds that soul until he finds his roar again.
- No male Simba will kill his wife, or allow another to do the same.

Appearance

Most Simba are muscular, charismatic and attractive. Their hair flows thick and rich; white Simba have cascading hair which blossoms into a mane during transformation, while African ones have thick afros or dreadlocks. Although female Simba have no manes, their hair grows thick and wild. This alone tends to make them stand out — many African tribes believe that the *absence* of hair marks the line between human and beast. Thus, Simba are considered "not quite human." Most Simba descend from Zulus, British, Germans, Bantus or bushmen. Although they're not fond of magic, a tangible aura of command surrounds even the youngest lions. Maybe that explains their attitude.

Werelions often dress in tribal garb, although some prefer "white explorer" khakis or modern military uniforms. They tend to be suspicious of technology — it can't be manipulated by force or personality — and pit themselves against the elements with as little clothing or equipment as they can manage. Survival, after all, comes through strength.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +2	Str: +3	Str: +3	Str: +3
Dex: +1	Dex: +2	Dex: +2	Dex: +3
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -2	Man: -2	Man: -1
App: +1	App: 0	App: 0	

Quote:

A pity you lack vision. Something must be done. Fortunately, I have an answer. Are you with me or not?

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** I like their style, but they're far too refined to be true leaders.
- **Balam:** How amusing. If it could speak well, I might adopt it.
- **Bubasti:** I pity these wretched would-be sorcerers. They claim they want our throne. Well, my boy, feel free to take it. If you can.
- **Ceilican:** Pathetic. And dead. Too bad.
- **Khan:** The greatest threat to our lands comes from the striped traitors called the Khan. Self-important and obtuse, but too strong to be allowed to live.
- **Pumonca:** Oh, look. Kitty has a hobby. How nice for kitty. Go home.
- **Qualmi:** Your riddling ways will not bring down a *swala*. Survival takes strength, child, and I cannot see yours.
- **Swara:** Cowards, every one.



Swara

Caliah

This world is but one of many. I have walked the secret worlds, and soon you will, too. But silence, little one; what I say now is Buree Pa, a great secret, and you must hold it close to your heart if you would survive.

Once, all worlds were one world. The spirits walked the mortal lands and were happy to do so. Then one day, the skies cracked with a sound like thunder. A wall, huge and invisible, fell from the sky and split the lands apart. The spirits were chased from our world, and they wept and grew

angry. Their rage made the ground shake, and many people died. Many animals suffered as well as the jungles grew brown and dry.

Mana Ma Usaga, tenth great-grandson of Damaa our mother, saw the Unmaker's hand in this. Like all our kind, he spoke the tongue of the Invisible Ones. Readying his walking stick, his hakarr and a pouch of thunder, he ran off to see what was the trouble. Old Bonyscrap sat waiting, still in the physical world, eating the bones of a fallen Chaya. "What has happened?" asked Mana Ma Usaga. "Why do the spirits die?"

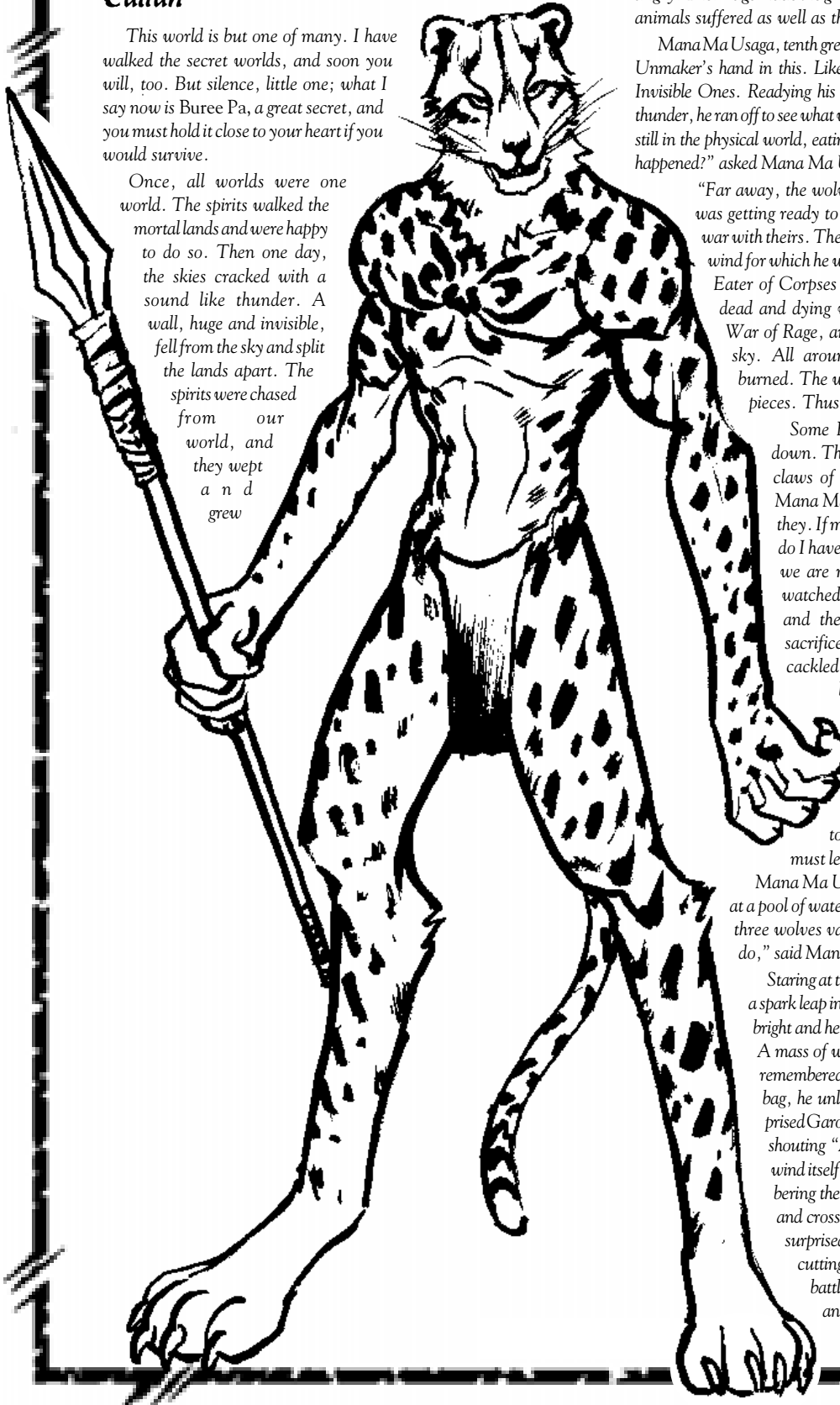
"Far away, the wolves have gone mad," said the vulture. "I was getting ready to fly to the battlegrounds, where your kin war with theirs. There's much good eating to be had." Like the wind for which he was named, Mana Ma Usaga followed the Eater of Corpses until he discovered a plain littered with dead and dying warriors. This was the beginning of the War of Rage, and it had caused the wall to fall from the sky. All around, people ran in fear. Their villages burned. The wolves fell about them and ripped them to pieces. Thus was the spirit world set apart.

Some Bastet leapt to the battle, but were cut down. The lion, the tiger, the leopard: all fell to the claws of the Garou. "What can I do?" thought Mana Ma Usaga. "I am fast, but not as strong as they. If my brothers and sisters perish, what chance do I have?" Our tribe was always wise this way — we are not built for combat, but for speed. He watched as the ground drank the blood of the cats and the people, and his heart cried for their sacrifice, and for the spirits, also. Bonyscrap cackled as he went among the dead, and he brought many friends with him to share the repast.

"Be still, and do not fight," said a voice from the ground. Mana Ma Usaga looked around, and spotted Mantis watching the battle. "You are too fleet and nervous," said the spirit. "You must learn patience and observation. Look!" As

Mana Ma Usaga did so, he spied three Garou staring at a pool of water. Soon, the air began to shimmer and the three wolves vanished. "What they have done, you can do," said Mantis. "The wall is not as solid as you fear."

Staring at the blade of his hakarr, Mana Ma Usaga felt a spark leap in his heart. Soon the colors of the world grew bright and he found himself on the other side of the wall. A mass of wolves were there, and he trembled until he remembered his pouch of thunder. Drawing open the bag, he unleashed the winds and furies upon the surprised Garou, then raced amongst them with his hakarr, shouting "Ay-hüü-yo!! Ay-hüü-yo!!" Moving like the wind itself, he cut the wolves to pieces. Then, remembering the trick, he stared into his hakarr blade again and crossed into the darker world. The wolves were surprised by his coming, and he raced through them, cutting them to bits until they fled. Finally, the battle was over. The Garou had been defeated and Mana Ma Usaga had learned a new trick.



Our forefather went to the sides of the lions and tigers who had fallen, and he performed a song for their dead. Suddenly a voice broke the silence: "Traitor!" A dozen lions stood at the edge of the village, with Bonyscrap among them.

"Look what he has done," said the vulture. "He has sided with the wolves and killed your Kin!"

"Wait!" cried Mana Ma Usaga, but the lions charged. Darting behind a burning hut, he passed beyond the wall again. Strange spirits had gathered now, feasting on the rage and blood that had been spilled. Asura. The clearing had grown dark and the plants began to wither. Exhausted and afraid, Mana Ma Usaga crept away from the slaughter and returned to his people. Soon, he perfected the trick of crossing, and he taught it to our kind.

This is a very old story, but time has proved the truth in it. With the War of Rage, the Unmaker gained a foothold on our world and his servants helped it grow. The lions do not trust our kind; at night, they whisper that we betray them. It is good to keep to the shadowed places, my daughter, for sometimes the lions come. The lions and the wolves. Fear them, child, and watch behind you. Your speed is the one thing upon which you can depend.

Tribal Background

It's easy to discount the wiry Swara; they're not especially tough, large, magical or even attractive. They are, however, *fast*, and amazingly dexterous. More importantly, they possess a tribal secret that puts them on a level few Bastet even understand — a more spiritual level.

The Swara step sideways, a rare talent among the Bastet. It isn't a Gift they can teach, but a natural ability they learn as they mature. This affinity for the spirit world (a secret they guard from other werescats, who would be murderously jealous) has created a spiritual yet isolated culture. While other werescats concentrate on earthly enigmas, the Swara concentrate on the worlds beyond. Thus, they often grasp signs and subtleties other werescats miss.

Of all the Bastet, the Swara understand how vital the war against the Unmaker has become. They understand Gaia's sickness, and most go out of their way to defend Her. They're also extremely paranoid. Their tales are full of betrayals, reverses of fortune and massacres. To them, everyone in the world is corrupt or getting that way; in the World of Darkness, who can blame them? They may, in fact, be right.

Like the Pumonca, Swara are loners and wanderers; their territory, however, extends across the whole world — and beyond. This well-traveled outlook tends to feed their cultured paranoia rather than dispel it, and they make only superficial ties outside their tribe. Only animals and spirits are worthy companions for a cheetah; Bastet, Killi and human beings wear too many masks to be trusted. The lesson, driven home by a year of dark tales and a lifetime alone, is that the world is going to hell, and that it has been for some time. The Swara aren't gloomy Folk — they're just resigned. More isolationists than nihilists, they live as best they can.

All Swara revere the Moon. To them, Seline is the savior, and her handmaidens the Lunes are trusted friends. Swara call themselves "the Silver Folk" in her honor. Cheetah lore recounts what may be the first journey to the Moon, a trip made by Ayio Bon Parr in the days of the Impergium. According to them, Seline herself called for the end to both the War of Rage and the culling of the human flock, and chose to send this plea with Ayio. This did not make the Swara heroine welcome in the Simbas' dens, but they listened well enough when Ayio brought them to the Moon's Court

herself. To this day, the cheetahs teach their kits to sleep outside when the moon is full and to give thanks to her each night.

In the name of the Moon Mother, the cheetahs try to keep the sacred places clean. Many caerns and glens throughout Africa have a Swara guardian or two. It's a thankless job, but one the Silver Folk handle with grace — and even humor, if that can be believed. The Silver Folk caliah prophesies that Seline will call Her most devoted followers home as the Apocalypse begins. From there, they'll watch the death of the corrupt world and the rebirth of the next.

Although they still call the Triat and other spirits by Bastet names, the Silver Folk know almost as much spirit lore as the Garou themselves. Even so, they loathe the wolves with a passion that borders on frenzy. Few Swara will even speak with civility to a werewolf, let alone walk beside him. There are exceptions of course, but in general, the cheetahs watch the dogs from a distance and learn all they can. Wisdom is not poisoned by the eyes or ears, but by the heart.

Tribal Home

Although they range across the world and journey into the Umbra, most Swara begin and end their lives in the grasslands of Africa. Their extreme xenophobia makes settling anywhere difficult. Some few cheetahs overcome their upbringing and set down roots, but their innate nervousness makes them odd company. If and when things fall apart, a Swara often takes this as a confirmation that no one can be trusted and moves on again.

Culture and Kinfolk

From her fostering onward, a Swara learns distrust. To avoid betrayal, most Silver Folk keep their distance from outsiders. Most of the tribe favors its feline ancestry; many are more willing to mate with a cat than with a person.

The human side of the family favors the bushmen and herders of central and southern Africa. Early on, the cheetah-children are set apart from their more outgoing peers by their timid, nervous ways, and they often end up ostracized long before their First Change. Among the bushmen and Bantu, community is vitally important; Swara avoid community, and are considered odd from childhood. The kuasha's lessons merely reinforce what the cheetah already suspects: The world is hostile, so avoid it when you can.

Organization

A werecheetah keeps to herself after her fostering until she finds a mate. The two bond cautiously, then separate as soon as possible. A mother raises her children just long enough to ensure their survival, then leaves them at the home of some trusted Kinfolk. For a year or so, she watches the family until she's convinced they won't harm her children, then fades off into the woods or grasslands.

Secrets Sought

As custodians of the earth and destroyers of corruption, most Swara prefer to learn about threats to the existing order. Naturally, the things they learn reinforce their paranoia, but they help the Silver Folk do the job that Seline has decreed for them.

Yava

- The Swara are very protective of their mother's good name. By telling tales of Damaa's cowardice, you can reduce a cheetah to madness.

- The soil of the moon intoxicates the Swara. Mix it into his drink, and he will dance and laugh for days.

- The Unmaker has his hand deep in all Bastets' souls. A frenzy will herald his approach. A Swara fears such frenzy, and must avoid its taint at all costs.

Appearance

Whatever its form or breed, a Swara is lean, slender and wiry. The majority of the tribe descends from black Africans, though a few odd European Swara exist. The latter usually have lighter coats than their relatives do. They dress for speed and comfort, not style, and tend to take daredevil chances for kicks. Each Swara receives a tribal tattoo from his mentor just before he "graduates" into the loner's world. These tattoos often appear in a fairly obvious place — on a bicep, a shoulderblade or the face, depending on the person's human culture. African or feline Swara often decorate the faces of their kits, while human European Swara prefer to mark a youngster on his arm or back rather than across his face. They sport very little jewelry — it gets in the way — but any adornment a Swara wears has some spiritual significance.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Feline
Str: +1	Str: +2	Str: +2	Str: +1
Dex: +2	Dex: +4	Dex: +4	Dex: +4
Sta: +1	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -3	Man: -3	Man: -3
App: +0	App: 0	App: 0	

Quote:

Are you blind? How can you see the world around you and not insist that we're living in the final days?

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** Their cultured speech hides keen, conniving minds. I like their words, but do not trust their hearts.

- **Balam:** The Two-Hearts are too bitter to understand the worms in their souls. If they were to look into the smoking mirror they're so proud of, they would cry.

- **Bubasti:** They would lick Cahlash's ass if they thought it would teach them something new.

- **Ceilican:** Dead and gone, like so many of their dreams. Still, they were treacherous Folk while they lived, and the world does not miss them.

- **Khan:** I want to trust them. Really. They would make fine friends, I think. Perhaps I'll speak to one someday.

- **Pumonca:** Who?

- **Qualmi:** Now, these Folk are what we could all be. Brave, fast, clever and wise. Them, I would call friend. Too bad they are so scarce.

- **Simba:** No better than the wolves. They butcher our babies and murder our Kin. The Unmaker is their truest patron, and he blesses them with godless strength. Someday we must fight them. I do not look forward to that day.





Chapter Three: Breath of Life

*If man could be crossed with the cat, it
would improve the man but deteriorate the cat.*

— Mark Twain

• Raindance Speaks of King Cat

Long ago, in the days before time, Mother Moon, also called Seline, came down to earth to sample the fruits of her sister. She spent long days wandering in many forms, wrapped in her crown of moonbeams, and at night she returned to the sky to light her sister's face as she slept.

Well, it chanced to be that King Cat, the first father of Catkind, saw Seline transform from a fair maid to moonlight. Curious, he resolved to follow her from afar and learn her secrets. That night, he watched the moonbeams play, but remained in the shadows, not wanting to be seen. When morning came, Seline returned as a butterfly. As she fluttered off into the forest, King Cat followed on silent feet.

Now it also chanced to be that Asura, the surly demon who made fruits rot and shadows linger, saw Mother Moon arrive as well. "If she dies," he reasoned, "Father Night will cloak the world eternally. Without the light of Mother Moon, no hope will shine in darkness, and all creatures will fear the coming of the dusk." Chuckling with glee, he shadowed Seline in a thousand spiteful forms — the thorn at her heel, the poisoned raindrop, the sudden thunder. And Mother Moon did not

see him. Nor did Asura see King Cat, padding behind him in the shadows. But King Cat saw Asura, and plotted his demise.

At length, Seline decided to bathe in a waterfall, the tallest in the land. She doffed her skin and her crown of moonbeams and she strode into the water curtain, unbound in all her glory. Asura saw his chance and transformed into a fruit-tree, lush with hanging morsels. Inside each fruit, however, the demon took the form of serpents, spiders, worms and maggots all in one. King Cat watched all this, and as Mother Moon stepped from the falls to pick a fruit from the tree, he sprang from cover and batted the fruit from her hand.

Mother Moon was speechless. King Cat smashed the fruit with his paw, and all the corruption burst out in a stinging poison river. In fury, King Cat swiped the tree in half and sprayed Asura until the demon melted away. When he'd finished, Seline had regained her skin and regarded the cat with both wrath and gratitude. "You have followed me," she said, "and have watched me naked as I bathed. For that, I should curse you. Yet you saved my life and banished corruption, and for that I should reward you.

“So I shall do both.”

With that, she told King Cat a secret, one that would make him mightier than any other beast. Then she told him another secret, one so terrible that it would destroy him if it were known. “As your reward,” she declared, “you shall tell your offspring the Yahni, the Power-Gift, so that they might carry on your legacy. And you shall tell them the Yava, the Bane-Gift, so that they might know that some things must always be secrets.” With that, she wandered away, and King Cat did not follow.

For a day and a night, he pondered whether the Power had been worth the Curse. And finally, he decided it had been more than worth it, and he padded back into the shadows.

Prelude: Before the Change

From the beginning, you were different. Solitary. Aloof. You asked too many questions, spent too much time alone. This got you into trouble, of course; people whispered you were strange, an outsider. If you grew up among animals, they skirted you, aware that you were not quite right. Although daylight favored you, night was your preference. She held no terrors, only answers.

As you grew, you yearned to touch, to see, to learn. Folks claimed you were improper, a beautiful child, really, but too presumptuous, too eerie. In time, their wariness grated on your nerves. Others came too close, got too familiar, and you pushed yourself away. They might love you, but they would never understand you.

Then someone came who did.

When was the first time you felt the cat, stirring beneath the surface like a restless itch, like a panther pacing behind the bars? When was the first time you felt the human heat beneath your fur, singing clearly through an animal haze? When was the first time you felt the two meld into one, became the panther, the cheetah, the lion, and tore yourself away from the echoes of your peers? How did the teacher first approach you, dangling the answers to the questions in your head like the keys to a jail cell door? Did you welcome her, or run in fear? And once you have the answers, will they ever be enough?

So many questions. So many lives. You know now what you are. What you do with that is up to you.

Who are You, and Why?

So you think you've got what it takes to play a cat?

First, a Bastet isn't a cat. She's a rare and vital cross between a cat, a person and a spirit. This mixture makes her erratic, smug, enigmatic, temperamental. She might lie in the sun like a living rug begging to be touched, then slash a caressing hand with a fast display of claws. When the blood flows, she might duck her head, apologize and lick the wound. Or she might laugh. No one knows what to expect from a cat, and a Bastet is a cat times 10.

But that's only where it begins. Like a human being, the werecat is articulate, cultured, clever and resourceful; like the cat, she is graceful, curious, confident and fastidious. Like the spirit, a Bastet carries mysteries older than time, and like the Moon, she glows cold with the power of distant sunlight. All these traits, and many others, come through in the werecat's bearing, in her words (or lack of same), in the enemies she chooses and the friends she stands beside. Let the dogs run in packs — the cat walks alone, and is damned proud of it.

The First Year

*We all had our reasons to be there
We all had a thing or two to learn
We all needed something to cling to
So we did*

— Alanis Morissette, “Forgiven”

Most Bastet change for the first time during adolescence, when hormones surge to maturity. The First Year brings pain. It rips your body, mind and world apart. When the change finally comes and the Cat comes striding in, most Bastet already feel half crazy. And who knows? Maybe they are.

Your teacher came from nowhere. She seemed happy enough to see you, but didn't take any garbage. You had a lot to learn, and she made it damned clear that you *would* learn it and you *would* like it or she *would* knock you through the nearest wall. Perhaps you embraced her lessons with an eager passion — everything suddenly seemed so interesting, so important. Like a drowning man, you may have latched on to your new teacher desperately — after all, she was the only one who seemed to know what was going on. You might have become cocky — God knows you had reason to be, especially if you were surrounded by people who thought you were some messenger from the Moon Mother or something. And maybe, just maybe, no teacher showed herself at all, and you had to puzzle things out for yourself.

Damn, the First Year is hard. Every sound is a new lesson; every circumstance, a new chance to screw up. Your new life sends you to the shadows — you aren't supposed to exist, let alone let others know what you really are — and you become a secret. One of many.

The world is full of secrets, thousands of them. As you progress, you find they're more than just bits of gossip. To your blood-kin, secrets are currency, items of trade. The better the secrets, the higher their value. Secrets are the key to your acceptance, so you gather them like a prospector, panning a shadowy world for glittering bits of lore. There are so many mysteries, so many truths, and some of them scare holy hell out of you. Everything you learned was a lie. There're ghosts and spirits and vampires and all kinds of shit in the darkness, and some of them seem more powerful than God. Speaking of God, they call Her Ahu, and she's worse than pissed. She's crazy. Her kids are crazy, too, and they're tearing the world apart. The things you learn set your head spinning; if it weren't for your teacher, you might just go crazy after all.

After a year or so, the kuasha leaves you. Her lessons are done. The rest is up to you. Sink or swim, my little friend, and you know what? You're just arrogant enough to think you can swim through the Great Flood itself. With a few kind words and a ceremony, your teacher entrusts you with a secret. Three of them, actually: The three Yava, signs of trust. Three secrets that can kill you and kill everyone else like you. That's it, then. The lessons are over. As the dawn comes, your mentor wanders off like the mist from which she's named, leaving you to make your own fortune. Maybe you'll stay in touch, maybe not. It depends on what happened between you both, and on what happens from here on out. Either way, you're on your own. Isn't it glorious? Isn't it terrifying? Oh, jeez, there's so much out there to do....

A Place in the World

It's time to make your mark with all the new things you've learned, to create a new existence with the Cat who shares your soul. Eventually, you'll make friends, enemies and some kind of fortune. Eventually, you'll set up a home territory, maybe even a Den-Realm, and invite your allies over for full-moon meetings. Perhaps in time, you'll find a young one like yourself and teach the new cat the ropes. Were you this irritating as a kid? Yeah, you probably were. It's amazing what a little learning, a little aging and a lot of hindsight can do to your perspective. As you approach elder status, your lessons continue. Some might cost you your sanity, your life or your soul, but you keep looking into corners and peeling back the sheets. That's what you're there for, ultimately: to dig up the dirt and spread it around. Maybe, just maybe, you can help save the world from the madness all around. If nothing else, you can help it go down fighting.

Is there a sacred purpose in your life? Hmmm, you hadn't thought of that when you were younger. As you settle in the sun in your own Den-Realm, the question lingers. Oh, sure, the weredogs would have you believe that there's some cosmic war going on, and the things you've seen seem to support the idea. Is that why you are what you are? To serve some greater function? That's a mystery without a final answer. When your death comes, that last question might be answered. Until then, you've got the mind of a human, the soul of a cat and the powers of a Moon-born spirit warrior. And God knows, there are worse things to be in this world.

Bastet Communication

The Bastet are extraordinarily expressive creatures. With a tilt of their whiskers, they can say more (yet give away less) than a human politician can state in half an hour. Consequently, they enjoy communicating amongst themselves in ways over and above that of mere speech (be it human-talk or Kheuar). Most Bastet who've passed their First Year understand the signs of feline discourse. Newer cats, or visitors to foreign lands, may have to make an Intelligence + Primal-Urge roll to figure out what another cat is trying to communicate. Storytellers may want to make this roll for the player — better if she doesn't know she's misunderstood something until the consequences arise....

Lifelong cats or elder Bastet can speak eloquently or lie convincingly with a few shifts of their whiskers; a new-changed homid, on the other hand, finds the appendages awkward until she gets used to them. The weredogs' whiskers, tail posture, eyes and ears can speak volumes to one who understands the signs. A warning, Tekhmet: avoid poker games with your elders until you've learned to conceal your emotions.

Grooming reflects a weredog's status, and they enjoy touching close friends. Cats can scorn another creature by refusing to touch it, or put a lesser Bastet or Kinfolk in her place by holding her down and grooming her.

Bastet also mark their territory with glyphs, and most leave scent markings (although homids tend to avoid doing so more than felines). They are the only other Changing Breed besides the Garou to have their own glyph system (the Nuwisha use glyphs, but are content to borrow the Garou's).



Traits

these precious things let them bleed let them wash away these precious things let them break their hold over me

— Tori Amos, “Precious Things”

The Bastet are a magical breed of spirits-given-flesh, with talents and powers beyond human capacity. Some of these talents resemble the powers of the werecats’ Garou cousins, but have subtle, unique differences. Naturally, since this is a game, these differences will occasionally come into play.

So what does this mean to you, the player? Simply put, your werecat character has a selection of special Traits that differ from the specifics given in the **Werewolf** rulebook. In general, Bastet characters are built just like their Garou relations (see **Werewolf**, pages 73-83, 102-113, and 153-159), with the same amount of points and the same weaknesses for silver, flame and toxic waste. Rage, Gnosis, regeneration, the Delirium — all work just the same for the cats as they do for the dogs, with the following exceptions:

- Bastet have no auspices.
- Rage and Willpower depend on your tribe (see chart).
- Werecats have different aspects to their forms and breeds.
- Delirium applies to both Crinos and Chatro forms, to varying degrees (see “The Five Forms”).
- The Traits described later in this chapter add to or replace those given in **Werewolf**.

The similarities end there. Bastet are different creatures, related, yet apart. The essence of a werecat comes from roleplaying. All the new Traits in this chapter and the next make nice toys, but they don’t capture the heart of this Changing Breed. A number of new Traits and other niceties reflect the physical and magical talents of the species, but the greatest gulf between Bastet and other shapeshifters is one of attitude. And that’s a Trait you’ll have to define yourself.

The Breeds

Homid

Look, I can’t help it if I’m good-looking, graceful and talented. It’s all in the genes, y’know, and I have very good genes. Hey, you can look down on me if you want, but my half of the family worked its way up from caves and sticks to Learjets and skyscrapers. I’ll admit we’ve made a few mistakes along the way, but you can’t argue that our successes have outweighed our liabilities. Oh, yeah? And screw you too, furball!

The especially attractive nature of the werecats and the scarcity of feline breeding stock have made homids the dominant breed in the modern world. It wasn’t always so. Among the Zulu, the Incas, the Vikings, Maya and Egyptians, it was an honor to go forth into the darkness and choose a shadow-cat as a mate. In those days, the big cats outnumbered the humans, or at least equaled them in power. Shapeshifters were feared but trusted, and a child born of their blood was a blessed warrior and leader. Naturally, she could be temperamental, but her heritage marked her as a vessel of divinity. Other humans (and not always women!) were seduced or taken forcefully by Bastet, used out of respect, revenge or desperation. Sometimes, the changing genes lay dormant for generations. They have come to flower in you.

In the modern world, you’ve probably had a perfectly normal life. You were a fiery and finicky child, but that’s not that unusual. You may have been raised in a familiar culture, or a distant land

such as India, Kenya or Brazil, and your parents may have despaired when they discovered what a willful kid you could be.

Maybe they already *knew* what you were, or at least, what you could eventually be. Some secret societies carry on the old tradition of respect and sacrifice. In the Amazon wastelands, the Indian plateaus and the catacombs below Cairo, men and women still go to the cat-folk willingly, and sometimes a child is born. Such children are raised within a human family, within their parents’ culture, and are valued even above the other children.

Either way, you led a normal life until the day of your First Change. Then suddenly, you were left alone. Outcast. Your loved ones ran away in terror. On the day you Changed, you were no longer human. It’s one thing to be *called* the offspring of the gods, another to have to fill that role for life. And that, in many ways, is exactly what you have become.

Metis

Go ahead and stare if you want to. It doesn’t bother me a bit. I’ve got a special setup with the folks upstairs, and that more than compensates for a scabby coat. Does it itch? Of course it does, but I’m not gonna whine about it. I’ve got gifts tying me into the molten heart of creation, my friend. Now are you with me? ‘Cause if not, it’s your loss, not mine.

It’s not your fault, really. What say did you have when your parents got together? Your deformities testify to the curse of inbreeding; but unlike your Garou cousins, you weren’t reviled for your heritage. There aren’t enough werecats to go around for your parentage to make much of a difference.

Not that your lot is easy; Mother Moon did supposedly declare unions between your kind taboo, and she made her point in your own skin. Some disability — often of the body, occasionally of the mind — makes your life a chore, and your ugliness alone reduces your status in many werecats’ eyes. Most big cats spit and run when you approach, and even your Kinfolk cringe instinctively from the one who’s not quite *right*.

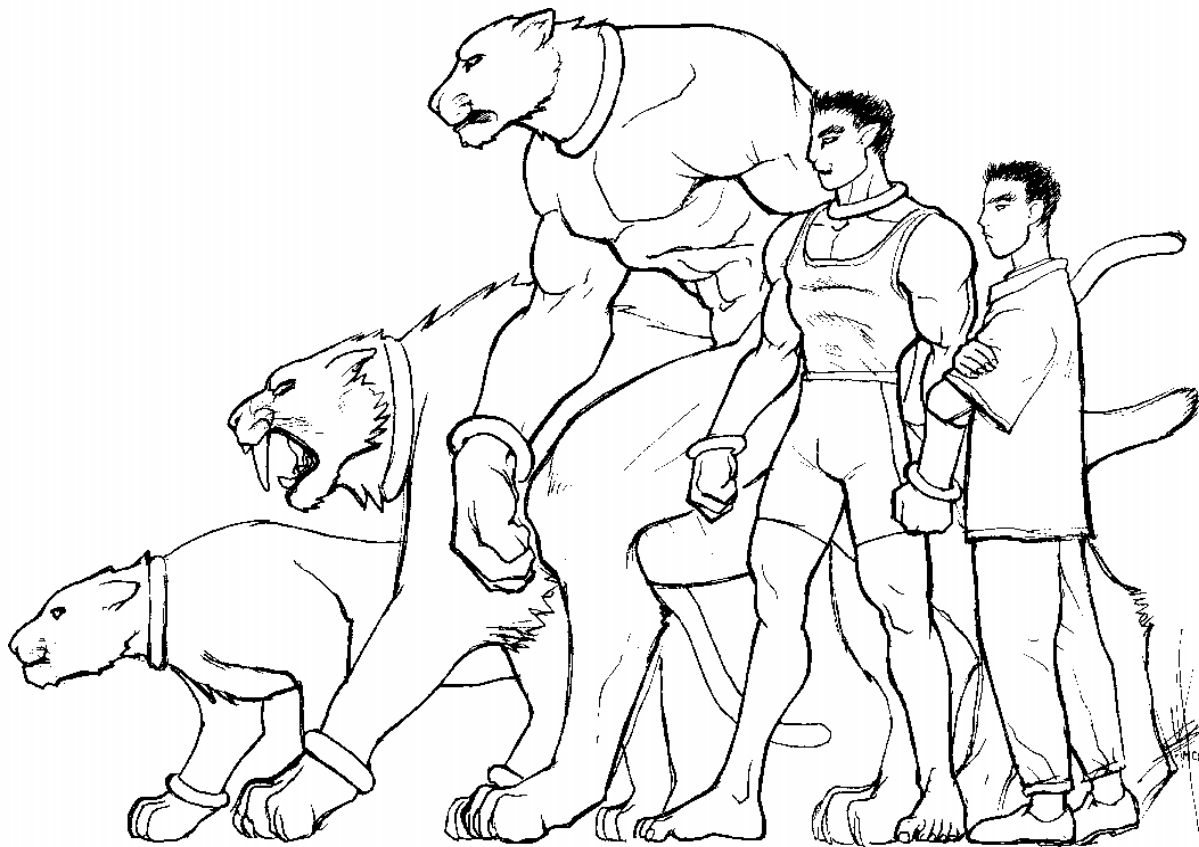
Mother pushed you out in half-cat form. As you can imagine, the birth wasn’t an easy one. She took care of you for a while, but eventually left you alone to fend for yourself. If you were lucky, she stayed long enough to teach you what you are, or at least left you in the hands of other Folk. If your curse included bad luck, she dumped you in a garbage can and left you for dead, and some other kind soul — cat, human, or something else — raised you from there. If you never knew your parents, the First Change may come as a really nasty shock to you....

Feline

I was here before you all, or at least my parents were. We came forth as perfect predators, and given half a chance, I’ll prove it to you. I’d rather not fight — there’s been enough of that already — but if your fellow monkeys insist on butchering my brothers and sisters, I’m afraid I have no choice. You can afford to play games in the shade. I’m thinking about survival.

Born to one of the great cats, you’re the rarest breed of all. Hunting, agriculture, pollution and the death of your prey have decimated your Kin until only handfuls remain. As greedy, stupid humans push into your ancestral lands, more and more of your Kinfolk flee or turn vicious. You are a product of this decimated culture — skittish, angry and accustomed to man.

Chances are you’re from a zoo, show or preserve; big cats in the wild are scarce. Your mother probably raised you alone, unless she was part



of a mated pair that had remained together (a rare thing under the best of circumstances). If you were born in a show, you've probably learned the dilemma humans pose: On one hand, they pet you, feed you and clean your cage. On the other hand, you do live in a cage, no matter how clean it may be. The boredom is unbearable, especially for one such as yourself, and you pass endless days pacing in a cramped, bare space, your head buzzing with monkey-chatter. Don't strike back — you'll be hurt. Don't growl or spit — you'll be drugged. Humans are a mystery: an infuriating one, at that. On the day of your First Change, you discover what it's like to be one of them....

If you were born feral, you've already learned to fight and hide. Rival cats often kill kits born to females in their territories, and in the cramped conditions of the modern world, all territories overlap. You've probably heard the hunter's gun, possibly seen it strike down your parent or siblings. As you reached adulthood, you grew restless, curious and confined. Maybe you've tasted the rank blood of your own kills, and possibly even secured a territory of your own before the world turned bright and distant. You think in images, not in concepts, and let your senses lead your mind. The senses of your human form are inferior to those you've known before, but the colors are deeper and words make more sense than they did before. Hunting is easier now that you're two predators in one, and the monkeys' puzzles, intrigue you. Did you go at last to the towns of man, or was that choice made by bulldozers and big guns? The answer will speak volumes about your attitude toward humans.

True feline Bastet are revered by most other werecats, if only for their rarity. They tend to be a little dense about human affairs, but understand the wild as only an animal can. Their eyesight is a bit less developed than a homid's, but it's still a cut above most of their Kinfolk's vision. Chances are, if you're feline, your attitudes toward humans will be very mixed indeed....

The Five Forms

Like their Garou cousins, werecats have five different forms. Shifting forms for Bastet works exactly as it does for Garou (including shredding any non-dedicated clothing), save that a real crisis might provoke an out-of-control transformation.

Homid (difficulty 6)

The human form, which carries the werecat's ethnic ancestry. Although physically weak, the Homid form is the most flexible (and often innocuous) of the five. Even so, the Bastet's catlike body language often carries over into her human aspect.

Sokto (difficulty 7)

This ancestral form summons forth the werecat's feline heritage into a wild and compelling mix. A Sokto Bastet has supple muscles, elongated limbs, vestigial whiskers, sharp cheekbones and long, fanglike incisors. Her eyes grow huge and her pupils slitted. Her ears lengthen, and her hair flows wildly and assumes some of the cat-form's markings, while small claws extend from her fingertips upon command. In this form, the Bastet becomes compellingly exotic, yet disturbingly inhuman.

Crinos (difficulty 6)

The massive half-form combines the most powerful elements of human and cat. Although fearsome, the Crinos Bastet is beautifully impressive, lithe rather than huge. Even the obvious warriors have an aura of mystic power about them, and werecats who follow the magical arts — especially Bubasti — seem to glow with power in this form. Bastet in Crinos form invoke the Delirium, although to a lesser degree than usual (see *The Werewolf Players Guide* for details).



Chatro (difficulty 7)

This primordial war-form combines the “modern” feline with the prehistoric smilodon into a gigantic sabertoothed throwback. The markings and features of the big cat in its usual feline aspect are obvious, but the cat’s build is more massive, her claws larger and longer. Her upper canine teeth extend past her lower jaw line; her chin recedes to accommodate the saber teeth; her back humps between the shoulders, and her tail shortens to reflect her body’s new center of gravity. The Chatro form is a link to a totally untempered past, a wild-eyed killer from the Impergium. Mortals remember this terror in a hidden corner of their minds; a Chatro Bastet evokes the Delirium as potently as any Crinos Garou. She also adds one die to her bite damage Die Pool.

Feline (difficulty 6)

Like the werecat’s Homid form, the Feline werecat’s shape should be obvious. In all cases, the hefty Feline form is strong, fast and perceptive, but lacks the raw power of the cat’s Crinos aspect or the possibilities of her Homid form.

Blessings

Werecats enjoy a variety of powers, balanced out by their inherent weaknesses. Most of these Traits apply to every form the Bastet assumes. The only exceptions are their vulnerability to silver and their regenerative powers, neither of which affects a homid or feline werecat in her breed form (see below).

Like Garou, Bastet heal quickly, resist disease, transform through Rage (*Werewolf*, pages 196-201) and draw on Gnosis to use mystical Gifts and rites. Sadly, the dogs have an upper hand when it comes to the spirit world. Stepping sideways is a Gift, not a birthright, and many werecats never learn how to do it. They have a few other talents, however, which almost make up for this lack — a secret even the Bastet cannot, as a whole, master.

Heightened Senses

Like real cats, Bastet are perceptive folk who survive on the sharpness of their senses. They aren’t called “the Eyes of Seline” for nothing. In most forms, werecats have whiskers which can guide them by touch even in absolute blackness. Any form can use *padaa*, a combination of taste and smell a Bastet employs by curling his upper lip back from his teeth and breathing in, “tasting” the air.

In any form but Homid, these acute senses reduce the difficulty of all Perception-related rolls by two, and let your character see normally in anything but total darkness. In story terms, the werecat experiences everything in an alert state of abandon, relishing the various sights, sounds and scents as an eternal surprise. To most Bastet, life is an array of sensual impressions, and they greet each day as a package of novelties to be savored and enjoyed.

A Common Language

All Bastet speak a common language of chirps, meows, howls, cries, snarls and rumbles, as well as a more elaborate system of sniffs, licks, stares, whisker twitches and postures. This ancestral tongue, while limited, crosses all cultures, breeds and forms, enabling a Nigerian Simba in Crinos form to speak to a British Khan in Homid. It’s hard to express abstract or complicated thoughts in this language (*Kheuar*, pronounced “kew-arr”), but simple warnings or messages aren’t difficult. More complex conversations demand a shift to Homid or Feline forms for clarity.

Bastet lore claims Kheuar came from the original conversations of the First Pride, and its subtleties are passed to new kits by their kuasha. Thus, a Bastet who hasn't been taught the ways of the Folk won't be aware of the subtleties of the group language, although communications like "Get the hell outta my way!" are always clear enough.

The Price

As a Bastet, you pay the price for your blessings. In addition to Rage, frenzy, the Thrall of Darkness (the Wyrn), the Curse and Delirium (Werewolf, pages 197-203), werecats suffer a few other limitations. These weaknesses are universal, and apply to all breed forms and tribes:

Accidental Shifting

Bastet are temperamental folk; for all their cool exterior, werecats always retain a hunter's edge. When pressed, a Bastet might "jump forms" and become a cat or human before she knows it. Many First Years begin when some crisis triggers an accidental change. The chaos this causes brings your old life to an end and often alerts an elder to your predicament, and to your youth.

In game terms, this change happens if your character fails or botches a Willpower roll. Immediately, you'll have to make another Willpower roll for her, often difficulty 7. If she fails this one as well, the change begins, shifting from one form to the next without control. This transformation often takes a cat across the spectrum, from Homid to Feline or vice versa, but occasionally ends in Crinos, which is even worse. Only a Willpower point stops and reverses the transformation. Depending on the circumstances, it might already be too late....

The Yava

At the end of her First Year, a new-changed werecat finds herself alone. Before the Kuasha wanders off into the mist, he gives the newcomer a great gift — the three ultimate tribal secrets. These secrets, collectively called the Yava, must never be revealed. An outsider who knows a tribe's Yava could pose a real threat to any member of that tribe, including the one who gave him the information. Any one of the three Yava might be true — perhaps all three are. This secret among secrets is the final initiation into full Bastet society; it's a sign of trust and responsibility.

By Seline's decree, a Yava can only be passed on with your consent. No force of mental magic can pry the secret from a cat who doesn't want to reveal it. As some hunters have discovered, the Yava can be pried from a Bastet's mouth with torture; some say the early Garou ripped the secrets from their werecat captives and used them to decimate the tribes.

A kit who's not responsible enough to handle such a dangerous secret is simply left alone. The kuasha tells her "You're not worthy of this yet. Prove me wrong, little one," and walks away. Over the next few months, the elder watches over the kit from a distance, never interfering, letting her stand on her own. If she matures, her teacher returns and tells her the tribal Yava. If, after another year, the kit still hasn't learned how to handle herself, the kuasha gives up on the kit and goes his own way. He spreads word to the others of their tribe, letting them know that the new werecat isn't fit to learn the Yava.

A Yava opens mystic channels between the tribe and anyone who discovers its secrets. Most Yava concern taboos or weaknesses, but their power extends beyond those things. Any supernatural creature (mage, Garou, vampire, etc.) who knows a tribal Yava finds it easier to use its own powers against werecats from that tribe. In game terms, an individual who knows the Yava

reduces his difficulties by two when he uses some mystical working (Discipline, Sphere Effect, Gift, etc.) against the werecat race in question. The werecats raise their own magical difficulties by two when they challenge the keeper of the Yava.

These effects apply only against members of a given tribe; knowing the three secrets of the Bubasti won't help you cast a spell on a Simba. Maximum modifiers, like those given to Sphere magick Effects, may limit this bonus somewhat, and it only applies to mystical workings like cantrips, Disciplines and Gifts. Normal physical or social contests are unaffected.

Yava are not commonly known outside the tribe. The Ceilican and Ajaba suffered horribly when their tribal secrets were known, and even now, those Yava are closely guarded. No Bastet willingly gives up his tribe's Yava, and few know those of other tribes. Telling some outsider your tribal Yava voluntarily isn't a sign of trust — it's betrayal of your entire race.

Personalities and Pryio

*The Naming of Cats is a difficult matter,
It isn't just one of your holiday games;
At first you may think I'm mad as a hatter
When I tell you a cat must have THREE DIFFERENT NAMES.*
— T.S. Eliot, "The Naming of Cats"

As Eliot once observed, cats have three faces: The public face they affect with non-cats (the Demeanor), the cat-face they share with other Folk (Nature), and the true face, the Pryio, which they reserve for themselves. These aspects aren't always radically different; a cat may be, deep inside, what she appears to be on the surface. Bastet are mysterious folk, however, and their real personalities are often difficult for an outsider to fathom.

The Pryio is said to have been one of the blessings of Seline, and reflects her capricious ways through her favorite children. Unlike the Garou, who were assigned auspice roles among their packs, the cats were free to change their natures as well as their minds. To safeguard this right, Seline gave them a hidden nature, which would show itself in their pursuits but remain a secret if they wished.

Unlike a werewolf's auspice, the Pryio is more of a polite suggestion than a destiny. Although it's often determined by the time of day in which the werecat achieved her First Change, the Pryio can and does alter, sometimes radically. The Ceilican have a legacy of shifting Pryios that borders on multiple-personality disorder. The three faces of Rucksack Mary show the difference that a Pryio can make; Mary herself has Daylight affinity, Maria Caliper favors Twilight and Maureen Jones tends toward a Night disposition. Each persona is part of the same Bastet, but each has a difference that transcends her Nature or Demeanor.

Functions of Character

In game terms, the optional rules of Demeanor, Nature and Pryio are roleplaying notes, not character classes. Although Nature and Demeanor are optional rules, we recommend them as guidelines for allowing the auspiceless Bastet to regain Willpower. A variety of Natures and Demeanors can be found in the Werewolf Players Guide, and within various rulebooks. While some of these Traits (called Archetypes) won't fit a Bastet character, most will do fine. The three Pryios are offered below.

Your character may, at the Storyteller's discretion, regain Willpower based on Pryio instead of Nature whenever you do something really in keeping with your personality. A Daylight Bastet might get an extra point for beating a foe in open combat, a Twilight might earn a little extra

for painting an evocative portrait of his love, and a Night could gain a bonus for wiping out a troublesome poacher in a terrifying way.

The real importance of Nature, Demeanor and Pryio comes through roleplaying. Without rigid social rules to guide your character, her personality becomes especially important. Each of the Traits below explores your character's tendencies, and offers some hints about the concepts you might choose.

Daylight

Daylight cats are open-handed, often friendly and direct. They mean what they say and if the situation warrants battle they'll take you down face-to-face. Such Folk tend to become diplomats, warriors, lawgivers and protectors. Like the sunlight, they nurture talent and children alike, making them good teachers or parents. In the wild, they hunt for their friends, kill trespassers or explore the land. A Bastet aligned to Daylight sees the world with clear vision and a welcoming heart.

If you're a Daylight cat, you might regain Willpower when you face a serious challenge head-on and win through courage or good nature.

Twilight

In Twilight, shadows come, obscuring the obvious and turning it to muted shades. The cat who tends toward Twilight has skill for mysteries and a half-sight that stimulates her search for magic. Things are never cut-and-dry for her, but can be seen and argued from either side. Twilight Bastet are often detectives, lawyers, spies and mystics; they search for hidden meanings and keep their feelings reserved. Conversely, they may be romantics, reporters, artists and thrill-seekers whose passions cut through the shadow and play both night and day with abandon. Wild cats with this tendency spend lots of time around the works of man, or spy on other animals to find out what makes them tick.

If you favor the Twilight, you may regain Willpower by uncovering a mystery, decoding a puzzle or creating some complex, expressive work of art.

Night

Like the Dark Father Cahlash, the favor of the Night indicates a sinister or hidden nature. Most Bastet with this Pryio tend to withdraw from others, concentrating on their own business unless interrupted. Although they might not be actively malignandt, they have short tempers and quiet ways, and fiercely guard their privacy. Night Bastet prefer occupations such as assassin, scholar, scientist and dark mystic. In the wilderness, the Night cats are hidden hunters and man-eaters, with nasty dispositions and an eerie reputations. These are the cats whose deeds are told around campfires for years to come.

If you've got a disposition toward the Night, activities that cause others discomfort, reinforce your private space or protect some valuable secret from outsiders can refresh your Willpower.

New Abilities

Jesus God, it's hot! *Malcolm plodded through the high grass as huge flies bit his exposed skin. What in hell was I thinking?*

You never realize how big the sky really is until there's nothing there to obstruct the view. Malcolm had nothing between him and that deep blue vault, now. Nothing to stop the heat, either. He'd left his fur "inside" hours earlier, and his naked skin was red over brown. What I wouldn't give for a pair of Nikes and some shorts.

The shock caught him solid in the back, knocking him 10 feet or so. The rifle crack rolled behind the blow, like a sneaky kid behind a bully. Malcolm wasn't inner-city, but he'd seen enough macho movies to

know what had happened. Holy shit! The pain came roaring in like a second punch, slamming down his spine and rocketing off his toes to make a second pass up through. Deep in his back, it burned. Badly.

Then came the smell, sharp and golden. It rose over the rough earth scent and the bramble tang of the grass in his face. Flies buzzed into hot red spots. That's mine, he thought, groggy. That's my blood.

A shifting sound approached, weeds bowing before a solid gust. Someone shouldered himself through the tall grass, wheezing as he came. "Is it dead?" The voice came from far away.

"Will you shut the hell up!" The second voice was far closer. The wind carried an unwashed stink, like bum piss and diapers. The sounds fell into a ringing void, a swirling chasm that closed in on Malcolm.

Get up. Get UP, for Christ's sake. They're trying to kill you!! And what'm I going to do about that?

But he knew what he could do about it, suddenly. He knew exactly what he could do. And he did.

It was over quickly. The stinking man wasn't difficult to kill. A jump, two paw hits and the blood on the grass wasn't just Malcolm's. As the lion king puked up his nonexistent breakfast, the other man ran for the car. A humvee, Malcolm thought as he spat his mouth clean. Like in that Schwarzenegger flick. Funny he could tell that in the first place. The man had a good head start. No way a human could've seen what kind of

Werewolf and Players Guide Traits

Bastet are a race unto themselves; even so, they share many Abilities, Backgrounds, Merits and Flaws with their lupine cousins. The following Traits, found in the **Werewolf** rulebook and **Players Guide**, are appropriate for Bastet characters (those marked with an * are especially common Traits).

• Abilities

Archery, Area Knowledge*, Disguise*, Escapology, Fast-Draw, Herbalism*, Instruction, Meditation, Mimicry, Poisons

• Backgrounds

Allies*, Contacts*, Kinfolk*, Pure Breed, Resources*, Rites

• Merits

Animal Magnetism*, Danger Sense*, Dark Fate, Luck*, Natural Linguist, Self-Confident*, True Love, Untamable
All kinds of Ties *

• Flaws

Compulsion*, Dark Secret*, Enemy*, Foe from the Past, Hatred*, Over-Confident*, Strict Carnivore*, Uneducated

The following Garou Traits are forbidden (or at least inappropriate) for Bastet characters:

Backgrounds: Past Life, Totem

Merits: Ancestor Ally

Flaws: Insane Past Life, Slip Sideways, Pack Mentality, Wolf Years

Archetypes

The dozens of Archetypes presented in the various rulebooks are too extensive to reprint here. The following ones from **The Werewolf Players Guide** are especially appropriate for Bastet characters, though:

Alpha, Autist, Bravo, Caregiver, Confidant, Conniver, Deviant, Gallant, Jester, Loner (Lone Wolf), Predator, Rebel, Reveler, Show-Off, Survivor, Visionary.

car the guy drove. But, as Malcolm kept trying to remember, he wasn't exactly human. Not anymore. Never had been. Never would be.

Y'know, Malcolm thought as he started to chase the car, I think these guys just really pissed me off....

As we know, Traits reflect the capabilities of a fantasy character as Dice Pools and Abilities. The Attributes and Abilities presented in the *Werewolf* rulebook present a werewolf character's core Traits. They shouldn't be considered the only options, though. The following array of Abilities and Backgrounds distinguish the Bastet from her Garou cousin. A list of other optional Abilities, as well as Merits, Flaws and Archetypes, from *The Werewolf Players Guide* can be found in the box nearby.

Talents

Awareness

You've got a mystic insight; this isn't so much a second sight as a hunch that kicks in whenever something extraordinary passes by. Really perceptive individuals (three dots or more) can see auras and discern magical traces around objects or people. This Talent only works within normal sensory range, and only offers strong hints, not magic vision. A Ceilican with Awareness might be able to sense a wizard casting a spell in the room, even if that spell was invisible for all intents and purposes; she could not, however, notice that same spell if it were cast a block away.

The greater the number of successes, the more you can discern. One or two successes might only give you a nagging feeling about a certain object, whereas three or four might tell you some really useful information. With a good roll, you can tell if something is magical or mundane, alive, dead or undead, and spot "invisible" phenomena like aura ripples and magical Resonance.

- **Novice:** You get weird vibes around certain people or places.
- **Practiced:** Um, *what* rational explanations? Something's going on here!
- **Competent:** You can see auras and you've learned what the different colors mean.
- **Expert:** We are not alone. When the supernatural passes by, you feel it.
- **Master:** You commune regularly with the bizarre.

Possessed by: Psychics, Paranormal Investigators, Artists, Gypsies
Specialties: Aura Reading, Spirits, Tracking Wizards, Animals, Undead

Style

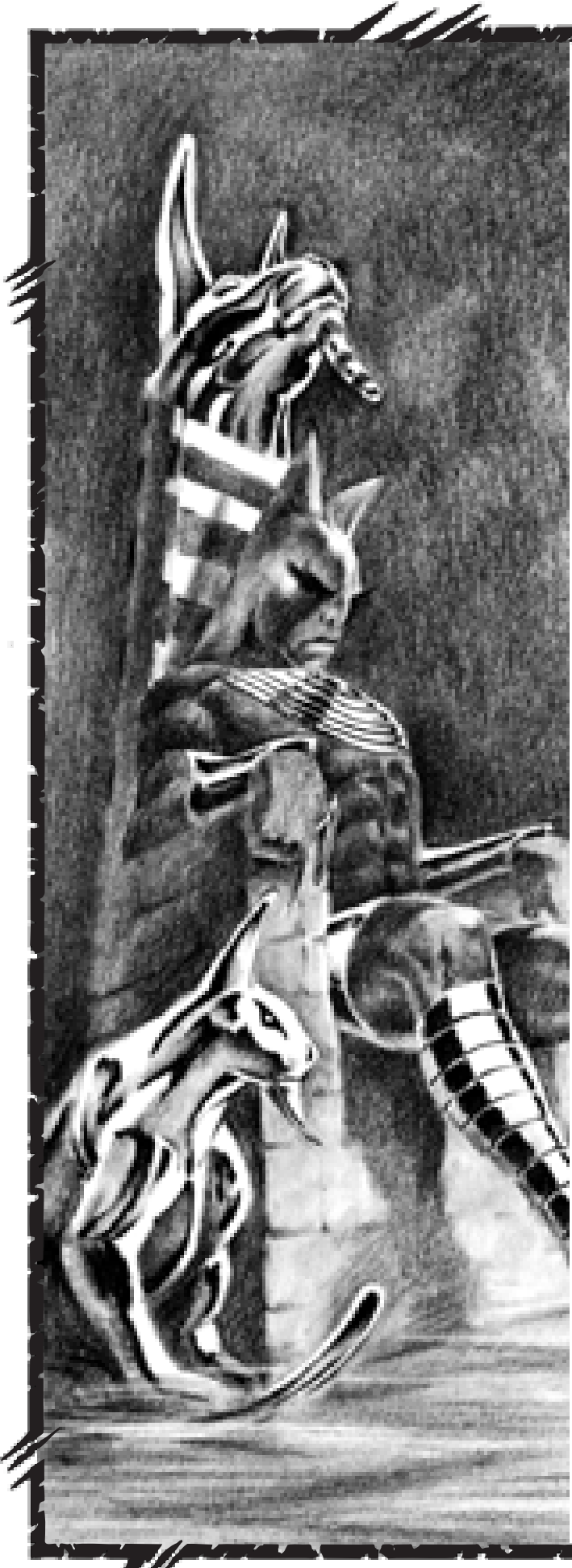
You've got an impeccable fashion sense. You could be wearing a raincoat and newspaper and you'd still make it look good. This flair for putting an outfit together and wearing it for all it's worth gives you some leeway in social situations. Once you've got the edge, it's up to your personality and actions to make the most of it.

- **Novice:** Good taste.
- **Practiced:** Socialite
- **Competent:** Celebrity
- **Expert:** Professional model
- **Master:** James Bond

Possessed by: Fashion Professionals, Socialites, Vampires, Spies, Politicians

Specialties: Classic, Subculture Fashions, Ethnic Types, High Fashion





Skills

Acrobatics

Whether training or talent, you know the ins and outs of wild gymnastics. For each dot your character has in this Skill, she can ignore one Health Level's worth of falling damage. Thus, a werecat with Acrobatics 4 can fall up to 30 feet without injury. By combining this Skill with Dexterity, your character can perform wild stunts, leaps, flips and more. Many Bastet have at least one dot in this Skill.

- **Novice:** You can tumble.
- **Practiced:** You can do a few tricks.
- **Competent:** Average gymnast
- **Expert:** Jackie Chan
- **Master:** That Cirque du Soleil act is kitten stuff.

Possessed by: Athletes, Dancers, Bastet, Martial Artists

Specialties: Falling, Sports, Olympics, Dancing, Combat Training, Circus Acts, Enhanced Jumping

Lockpicking

Key? What key? This Skill allows you to open locked doors, safes, windows and cells. While this knack with mechanical locks won't help you much if computers or electronics are involved, it's still really helpful in rural or Third-World communities.

- **Novice:** Simple mortise locks
- **Practiced:** Cylinder locks and basic security systems
- **Competent:** Advanced security locks and systems
- **Expert:** Safes
- **Master:** Bank Vaults, Rikers Island Penitentiary

Possessed by: Burglars, Safecrackers, Locksmiths, Escape Artists

Specialties: Combination Locks, Alarm Systems, Mag-Card Locks, Jail Cells, Personal Restraints

Knowledges

Culture

You know about different cultures — their morality, manners, methods and more. With a little time to study, you can discover the social niceties or requirements that a visitor might need to know, or learn enough about different social structures, histories and customs to avoid making serious blunders. This Knowledge covers the different aspects of a given culture (or cultures), as well as the reasons those structures exist.

- **Novice:** You know a few taboos and social mores.
- **Practiced:** You're familiar with a few cultures that resemble your own.
- **Competent:** You're conversant with structures that differ a bit from your native culture.
- **Expert:** You understand a great deal about many different regions and societies. Given time, you can fit in anywhere.
- **Master:** The world is your home.

Possessed by: Explorers, Sociologists, Diplomats, Activists, Wanderers

Specialties: Subcultures, Religions, Art, Taboos, Politics

Lore

The World of Darkness is filled with mysteries. As a Bastet, it's your life-quest to dig up as many dirty secrets as you can. Thus, this Knowledge, which reflects your understanding of various hidden cultures, is a must for most werecats.

It's important to remember that character knowledge and player knowledge are often very different things. To know the details about any other supernatural group — vampires, werewolves, whatever — you must buy at least one dot in the appropriate Lore. (Note: To understand different groups, you must buy different Lores.) Even so, much of your information is going to be secondhand and worse, and may be wildly inaccurate. Nevertheless, it gives you a leg up on all those other Bastet who think that vampires are appalled by garlic or sleep in coffins. Good thing no one knows about *you*, isn't it...?

- **Novice:** You know they're out there.
- **Practiced:** You know enough accurate information to get yourself in trouble.
- **Competent:** You can hold an intelligent conversation on the subject.
- **Expert:** You've learned things no one else is supposed to know.
- **Master:** You present a danger to them, to yourself, and to everyone around you.

Possessed by: Spies, Infiltrators, War Parties

Specialties: Garou, Vampire, Wizard, Technocrat, Wyrms, Fae, Other Killi

Backgrounds

Werecats can have a number of Backgrounds in addition to those presented in the *Werewolf* rulebook. While the most common Backgrounds for catkind differ little from those of the Garou, the following Traits apply only to the Folk.

Beginning werecats may take the Mentor Background only if they're still undergoing their First Year; after that, the *kuasha* leave them to fend for themselves. Your character can stay in touch with her Mentor, but after the training period, he becomes an Ally instead. The Background points spent to buy him as a Mentor can be either moved to the Allies Background or spent on some new one, like *Jamak*, *Secrets* or *Pride*. A new Bastet *cannot* buy a Den-Realm; she has to learn the Rite and earn the right to build her own. You, the player, can set the Background points aside for later use or acquire them through play (see *Werewolf*, pages 188-189), but you can't begin a chronicle with a Rank One or Two werecat who has a Den-Realm.

Bastet may also take animals as Allies (as something of a pride). These animals understand their Bastet's moods, and can often follow orders. A dot in Allies may be used to purchase a large animal ally (crocodile, big cat, moose) or two smaller allies (ferrets, small wildcats, birds, snakes).

Den-Realm

(Note: This Background is a revision of the one originally presented in *The Werewolf Players Guide*, and supersedes it.)

Your character has built or acquired her own Den-Realm, a sanctuary where you and the land have become one. This is your protectorate and hunting ground, and trespassers are not welcome. Special magics allow you to do things that are normally beyond

your reach, and the animals and plants that live here know you well. This territory extends into the Near Umbra, in effect creating a mini-Realm. Unless some major force destroys it, this place is safe.

Cats are extremely territorial, especially in the wild. Bastet aren't the exception — they're the rule. One of an Aka's first quests is to secure his own hunting ground. In the modern world, this has become fairly difficult, hence, this Background has become more valuable than it once was. And it's *always* been valuable.

When a Bastet reaches Tilau, he's considered fit to learn the Rite of Claiming. Younger cats are not respected enough to control these mystic territories, and the secret to creating these homegrounds is closely guarded. Low-Ranking cats are simply not considered worthy of the responsibility a Den-Realm entails. (See Chapter Four for the Rite itself.)

Not all Bastet create their own Den-Realms: some are handed down; others are won in duels. Even so, a young werecat isn't likely to gain his Realm this way. No elder would bequeath her home to a Tekhmet, and she probably wouldn't lose a fight to one, either. A Den-Realm belongs to an individual, not a pride. Few cats will fight to win territory for another.

In the old days, powerful Simba, Bagheera and Khan established huge holdings, hundreds of miles square, which they parceled out to younger subjects. Like lords, they offered a part of their lands in exchange for loyalty and help. Nearly all of these huge Den-Realms are gone by now. The world has much less to offer the Folk than it once did. Some Bastet establish Den-Realms in urban areas; these places tend to be remarkably free of crime and litter, though the people there tell strange tales. Urban Den-Realms are remarkably hard to establish and keep. Other forces, like vampires and Garou, tend to break down the best wards a Bastet can maintain.

In the spirit world, a Den-Realm resembles a Domain, one in which other travelers cannot pass through without permission. The shape this Domain assumes depends on the owner; a Khan's kingdom may resemble a Maharaja's fortress, while a Balam's might look like an impenetrable forest. Such places aren't obvious; to recognize one for what it is, a trespasser should roll his Perception + Occult against the Realm's Gauntlet. Penetrating the Den-Realm's "walls" requires a Gnosis roll against the Gauntlet rating — and notifies the Bastet that company is coming...

For the most part, Bastet don't hinder the comings and goings within their territory, so long as visitors respect the host, the inhabitants and the land. Those who fail to do so are eaten.

Werecats, like their feline cousins, mark the boundaries of their homes with claw marks, spray and droppings. Other Bastet recognize such signs immediately. If a newcomer secures an invitation, he's welcome to pass through. If he asks for permission, it's usually granted unless the host has some reason to deny it. If he wants to set up housekeeping, he'll have to challenge the host to a fight, or to *Hanshii*. Usually, the fight isn't formal, nor is it fair. The winner keeps the Realm. The loser often dies.

Passing on a Realm demands a rite. An old Bastet can perform the rite for a youngster if he feels his death approaching, and most do. A werecat beaten by a challenger will often perform the rite as a courtesy, although some deny it out of spite. A Bastet who acquires the Realm without the "title" must perform the rite himself or find someone else who will. Otherwise, the Realm still considers him a stranger. Thus, conquering a Den-Realm involves more than just a simple fight.

Assume your werecat has a Den-Realm: What does this mean in game terms? To begin with, he has several useful powers within its borders, powers he can't use outside:

• **Stepping Sideways:** You can step into the Umbra at any time within your own Realm. The Gauntlet is three, and you don't have to stare at a shiny object to concentrate. Outsiders must play by your rules; the Gauntlet ratings you establish make it difficult for others to pass through.

• **Skipping:** You can leap from one place and disappear, only to reappear the next turn elsewhere. This requires a Gnosis roll (difficulty 6) and can be done once per scene for every point of your current Gnosis. You can travel up to your usual full-turn, move out of sight and reappear in any solid place; You can pop out of a tree, but not out of the air. Failing the roll drops you wherever the leap would've ended. If you botch, you're stuck in mid-leap until the next turn, when you can try to skip again and escape.

• **Sensing:** By dedicating yourself to the land, you become its caretaker. Umbral attacks, massacres, armies of bulldozers and other disasters send you a cold bolt of pain that lingers until you investigate the disturbance. With a successful Perception + Den-Realm roll (difficulty 8), you can locate the problem, and get some idea of what it is.

• **Tracking:** You can leave your Den-Realm at any time, go anywhere, and find your way home without trouble. Naturally, once outside the Realm, you have to travel the distance in between. Your sense of direction, however, remains perfect.

• **Peeking:** You can see into your Realm from either side of the Gauntlet as if you had the Umbral Sight Gift. The Gauntlet only counts as three against this vision.

• **The Pride:** You can take close associates through the Gauntlet while you're both within the borders of the Realm. To do this, merely touch your partner as you step sideways. The systems remain the same no matter how many travelers you escort, but each trip may only carry two beings across.

Den-Realms can be measured both by the size they encompass and the strength of the Gauntlet inside. The first area given by the Background rating represents a Den-Realm in a city or town; the second area represents a Realm established in the country or wilderness. A Bastet building a new Den-Realm can expend an extra two points of Gnosis during the Rite to make the Gauntlet one level higher. Once that level is set, it cannot be raised.

- The size of a house/one square mile; base Gauntlet is five.
- The size of a mansion/two square miles; base Gauntlet is six.
- A city block square/five square miles; base Gauntlet is seven.
- Two city blocks square/10 square miles; base Gauntlet is eight.
- Five city blocks square/20 square miles; base Gauntlet is nine.

Jamak

A Jamak is a spirit-friend, an ally who aids you in return for a little help at a later date. (See Chapter Six for sample Jamak.) Like Garou totems, Jamak often choose their patrons, not the other way around. Some kuasha will introduce a new kit to their spirit, but this doesn't happen often. The bond between a Bastet and a Jamak is very personal, and rarely shared with others.

Jamak are special spirits, minor Gafflings of larger totem Incarna. Unlike the relationships between Garou and their tribal totems, however, the Jamak acknowledges a cat's independent nature. The relationship between the spirit and the Bastet works on a personal level, unlike the "group sponsorship" of Garou

totems. The resulting partnership is both lesser and greater than that which the dogs and their totems enjoy.

You pay the full Background cost of your character's Jamak; only a select few spirits, like Hatti and King-of-Beasts, will bond with a pride. These spirits remain invisible to everyone except the favored cat. Jamak also demand respect, and may insist on a certain kind of protocol; Bonyscrap, for instance, likes to test cats' patience, while King-of-Beasts demands formal address. Finally, the burdens of the bond fall on a single Bastet; there's no pack to help take up slack.

In return, your werecat gets to keep any benefits of the relationship to herself. No sharing is required or allowed, except in the case of pride totems (which are treated exactly like Garou totems; see *Werewolf*, page 113). The Jamak addresses you by name, and speaks to you as something like an equal. It may teach you Gifts or grant you Favors, and it often offers tidbits of information or intercedes on your behalf. Most Jamak have personal names they use, instead of the more all-inclusive titles like Unicorn or Bear. While it's not at the werecat's beck and call, a Jamak recognizes each ally as a separate person, rather than as part of a pack.

Jamak rarely bond with a werecat-in-training; usually, the spirits wait until the Tekhmet has graduated to Aka before taking notice. If both cat and spirit get along after that, they form a ritual bond (see Chapter Four). From there, either side may ask favors of the other. Both partners can respond to a summons or ignore it; ignoring one too many requests, however, can dissolve the partnership, so many Jamak will at least make a token effort.

You can part ways with your character's Jamak during the chronicle. In that case, the spirit's Favors (the powers it grants) disappear and the points in the Background are put "in reserve" until another Jamak appears. Although you might have some other use for those points, switching Backgrounds may only be done with the Storyteller's approval, and must be worked into the story. Like relationships between people, the Jamak bonding cannot be broken without hard feelings, and spirits aren't known for their patience. A Jamak who feels spurned may become a character's enemy, feeding favors and information to his rivals.

- Minor spirit (Butterfly)
- Lesser spirit (Bonyscrap)
- Respected spirit (Ika-Ika the Monkey King)
- Revered spirit (King of Cats)
- Totem spirit (Hatii the Thunderer)

Secrets

Werecats are the masters of mysteries; they've traditionally got their ears at every door they can find. This Background reflects what your character knows; the knowledge may be general dirt in a given area (like the mistresses of local politicians), or a single bit of data that transcends geography (like the location of a vampire prince's haven). The secrets themselves, and the truth behind them, are completely at the Storyteller's discretion.

Knowing too much can be fatal. Movies like *Chinatown* and *The Net* show what can happen if they think you're onto them. Compound the peril with supernatural adversaries if you've been spying on vampires or ghosts, and you've got a hook for an entire chronicle.

During character creation, the Storyteller should create some really valuable bit of information, then pass it on to the player, preferably through some exciting prelude. Once the story begins, the player can elect to act on the werecat's knowledge, or to sit on

it and see what happens. The possibility of discovery should always exist, even if you do nothing.

Secrets are good for trading, and for flushing out certain people. You can add your Secrets Background rating to your Dice Pool for rolls involving: Intimidation, Seduction, Streetwise, Etiquette, Investigation, Law, Lore, Occult or Politics — provided you're willing to let others know what you know. This might get you into trouble, but it's a good ace to have up your sleeve. Exposing a big secret may buy you some Renown, especially if you share it with other werecats. That same secret, once revealed, can stir up ungodly amounts of trouble. This may be exactly what you want, or the last thing you need. Funny thing about secrets, you never can tell which way the wind will blow once they're in the open....

The Secret rating should reflect the overall importance of the classified goods. The bigger or more dangerous the secret is, the higher the rating. This Background comes in two varieties:

- General Secrets, which reflect a body of local information. General Secrets usually apply to one area. If you know which Brooklyn cops are on the take and you leave Brooklyn, you can learn another Secret, forfeit the Background, or specialize in finding corrupt cops everywhere. This last option takes time, and should be roleplayed. Think *Chinatown*.

- Specific Secrets, which feature one large item of worldwide importance. A Specific Secret is only good until it's exposed; after that, you must either learn another Secret or trade in the Background. Think *The Pelican Brief*.

You simply decide on the Background rank; the Storyteller tells you what you know. It may be true or false, but it should always be important. There may be some great reward for passing the mystery on — a reward that could lead to buying another Background, or to your destruction.

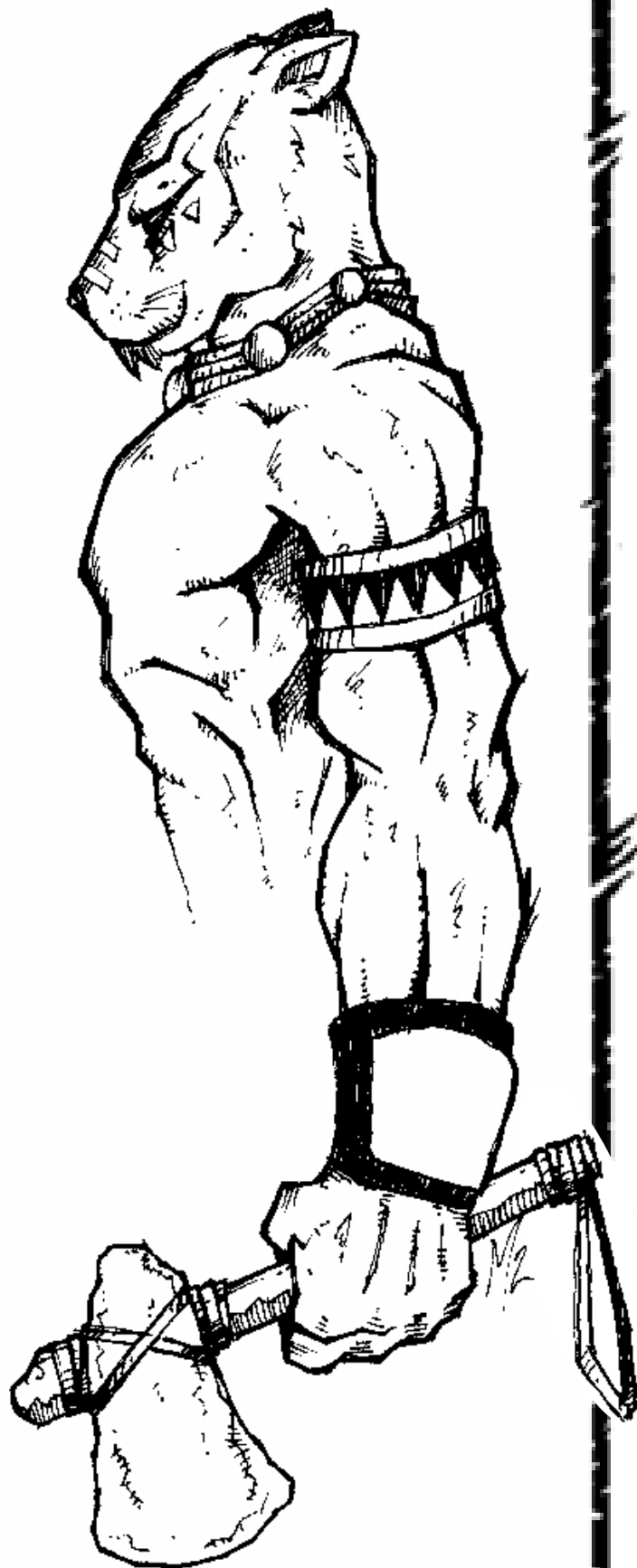
- Gossip (affairs, minor bribes, the president's bad habits).
- Interesting tidbits (which cops are on the take, the mayor's mistress and her address, "proof" of alien contact).
- Serious dirt (corrupt politicians, Kindred politics).
- Frightening dirt (the governor's black book, an elder vampire's haven, the second gunman on the grassy knoll).
- A danger to others, and to yourself (a capo's bank account, an archwizard's True Name, plans for an upcoming invasion of China).

Trinket

In typical Bastet understatement, the Trinket Background represents some magical item, like a fetish, talen, Talisman or Device, that the werecat in question has gotten his paws on. Unlike most mortals, Bastet can utilize some Talismans and Devices that employ the True Magick of the Spheres (but *not* magick itself; see Chapter Four), as well as spirit fetishes. It's said the Ceilican can use treasures imbued with fae Glamour, but the truth behind that rumor is for the Storyteller to decide.

A fetish contains a bound spirit who willingly performs the occasional favor for you. Bastet who know the spirit ways can entice or force the spirits to enter a fetish; others must acquire the gift from some other source. The greater the Background, the more powerful the fetish you possess. Werecats from native cultures revere the spirits within their treasures, and even city-bound cats respect the fetish and the sacrifice it took to make it.

Magickal Talismans are a bit more complicated, and subject to Storyteller approval. If your troupe has the rules for Mage



(second edition, not first), a player *might* be able to buy a Talisman as per that Background, spending two Background points per dot, if the Storyteller approves the choice. The upper limit for such an acquisition is a third-level Talisman — really advanced magicks are beyond a werecat's ability to understand — and the player needs a good story explaining how he got the item. Technocratic Devices work the same way. A botch while using the Talisman will send Paradox back on the item itself, destroying it, so a Bastet with a magickal toy had best be careful with it.

If the Storyteller chooses to let a Ceilican player use a faerie Treasure, see the rules given in **Changeling: The Dreaming**. Otherwise, assume that a werecat finds such Trinkets fascinating but unusable. Sample Trinkets are offered in the Appendix.

- You own a Level One Trinket.
- You've got one Level Two or two Level One Trinkets.
- You possess one or more Trinkets for a total of three points.
- Your items total four points. No Bastet can use Rank Four or Five Talismans.
- Your Trinkets total five levels.

Merits and Flaws

These optional Traits allow you to give your Bastet a few idiosyncrasies. Merits, obviously, are helpful, while Flaws cause problems. Like we said, these Traits are optional, and shouldn't be used if the Storyteller feels they're inappropriate or likely to be abused. (See *The Werewolf Players Guide*, page 17, for details.)

Graceful (2 pt Aptitude Merit)

You've got a natural flair, even among werecats. Your movements hypnotize and your words charm, harsh though they may be. It's almost impossible for you to look awkward, even when you screw up royally. Most people respect this talent, and even jealous folks have to at least admit you've got style. Reduce the difficulties of all Social rolls by two whenever there's a chance to make a really good impression. This doesn't apply to threats of brute force, although grace may be intimidating in its own way, and may offer a small bonus to Cleverness or Honor Renown.

Culture Knack (3 pt Aptitude Merit)

Wherever you go, there you are. While some people may get hung up on social niceties when they travel, you're not one of them. This talent grants you an innate insight into social graces in unfamiliar settings. With very little effort, you could go from a Soho pub to dinner with the Queen. Wherever you are, whoever you're with, you make a good impression.

Unlike the Culture Knowledge, this Merit doesn't grant you an immediate background in the society you encounter; instead, it allows you to pick up customs quickly, if superficially, and keeps you from embarrassing yourself. In game terms, this Merit offsets any penalties your character would normally have in social situations or culture clashes. Under some circumstances, it can reduce difficulties in encounters where "doing the right thing" makes an unusually good impression. It cannot be used to offset bad reactions based on magical interference or purchased Flaws, but it can help your character recover from a botched Social roll by rolling again at normal difficulty. Knowing just what to say or do can help you save face, and in some cultures, that's vitally important.



Photographic Memory (3 pt Aptitude Merit)

A real asset for talekeepers and spies, this talent allows you to remember things with almost-total recall. Your memory isn't literally photographic, but it's close. In game terms, you can recount conversations verbatim, or ask the Storyteller to refresh your cat's memory of things that you the player may have forgotten. He may demand an Intelligence roll before doing so, with the difficulty depending on the memory's complexity and obscurity. Remembering the address of the apartment you visited last night would be 4; remembering your first boyfriend's phone number would be 6; remembering the social security number on a file you saw last week would be a 9. Naturally, you have to have something to remember before you can remember it. This Merit does not supply facts that your character wouldn't have noticed in the first place.

Gift of Seline (5 pt Supernatural Merit)

The Moon Mother loves you, and has given you some special blessings when she's at full power. Therefore, you have special boosts or talents on nights when the Moon is full. These might include:

- You become exceptionally fierce (+2 Rage).
- The Moon makes you stronger (+1 dot of Strength or Stamina).
- You shine with her beauty (an extra die to all Social Dice Pools).
- Her light reveals things to you (-1 to all Perception difficulties).
- She smiles upon your magicks (+2 Gnosis).
- Her fullness lends you purpose (+2 Willpower).

These effects occur only at night; when Seline is sleeping, her blessings slumber, too. From dusk until dawn, however, you bask in her favor. Each time the Moon is full, the Storyteller can either roll to see which talent you manifest, or decide which favor Seline grants this time around. This Merit allows only one gift to come forth at a time, and the Moon — a.k.a. the Storyteller — decides which one it is. This moon-favor lasts all night, and is gone by morning.

Disconcerting (2 pt Social Flaw)

You creep people out. It's not the things you say, or your looks, it's just... you. People don't handle your presence very well, and animals are skittish around you. Your actions may put them at ease, or might make things worse, but that nagging eeriness never fades. Even your best friends admit you're weird. In game terms, your Bastet adds +2 to all social difficulties that involve getting someone to like or trust her. This disconcerting aura has nothing to do with your looks or manners, and you may have to use those talents to balance out the effect you have on those around you. As the player, you may have to act out some sort of eerie mannerism, or struggle with the fact that people just don't care to be around your character.

Graceless (2 pt Aptitude Flaw)

The antithesis of the Graceful Merit: you always look awkward, even when you're totally on top of things. Everything you do looks, feels or sounds wrong, even if you go about it the right way. People think you're a shmuck no matter what you do, and this drives you crazy. Which, of course, makes you look even worse. For a werecat, this is an infuriating Flaw.... In game terms, Graceless adds +2 difficulty to all Social rolls which involve looking good, from Seduction to Etiquette, and leads other Bastet to think less of you. Depending on the circumstances, this may cost you a point of Cleverness Renown, although this can be offset by Ferocity or Honor as you struggle through.

Sensation Junkie (2 pt Psychological Flaw)

Wheee!! Hop aboard the ride of your life — your life, that is! To you, everything is an endless source of stimulation, and you crave all the stimulation you can get. When an opportunity to try some new kick offers itself, you have to make a Willpower roll to resist. The more dangerous the sensation appears, the lower the difficulty of the roll — you might crave forbidden sensations, but you're not utterly suicidal. Naturally, you can always choose to have your character take life up on its offer even if she makes the roll, but that's her choice, not a compulsion.

Too Curious (3 pt Psychological Flaw)

You're too inquisitive for your own good; even most cats have more of a sense of self-preservation than you do. When a mystery presents itself, you'll go all the way to hell (literally!) to puzzle it out. It's hard to put a finger on why you feel compelled to search out facts, but it often gets you in trouble.

In game terms, this Flaw forces you to make a Willpower roll whenever some question is left unresolved. This question could be anything from an overheard conversation to a lost artifact. If you fail the roll, you'll go out of your way — really out of your way — to uncover the answer. The difficulty for the roll depends on the amount of work it looks like you will have to do. The simpler the question appears, the higher the Willpower difficulty will be. Note the emphasis on "looks like"; many complicated problems arise from something that seemed simple at the time.

Moon-Mad (5 pt Supernatural Flaw)

Seline has branded you with a madness that swells with her fullness and erupts during the full Moon, when she attains her furious state. In game terms, the Bastet character gains an additional +2 Rage during this phase of the Moon, or during visits to the Moon itself. This extra Rage makes her irritable under the best of circumstances, psychopathic under stress. She may have dreams just before every full Moon where she wanders a dead landscape with the blood of innocents and enemies alike on her claws. During waking hours, the character prowls angrily, exploding into violence at any real provocation. This is great if a battle is called for; disastrous if the moment requires a cool head and steady hands. People who can see auras notice that the mad cat's body blazes with hot-white fire; even mortals can tell that something's horribly wrong with that chick in the corner. Maybe now's not the best time to pester her. You, of course, would agree....

Multiple Personalities (5 pt Psychological Flaw)

Many Ceilican suffer from this affliction, which switches the werecat's Pryio, Nature, Demeanor, or all three at unpredictable times. You may have been born at daylight, but your interests can turn to nighttime pursuits without warning. Others may notice your unpredictable personality shifts, which might grow so severe that you have to assume other personalities to accommodate them. Unlike true multiple personality disorder, your character has some awareness of her different aliases; most Bastet with this quirk set up elaborate parallel lives to cover the changes. Other wercats, those who dwell at the edges of civilization or in the wilderness, simply act differently. If anyone notices the difference, they're too intimidated to remark on it.

In game terms, this Flaw forces the player to alter her character's behavior every few sessions, possibly during times of stress. You must figure out at least one "alternate identity" for your werecat to assume once in a while, and play out the difference between the two personalities. In really extreme situations, the Storyteller might demand a Willpower roll, difficulty 8; if the player fails, the character starts behaving in a radically different manner, which may be a good thing, or a bad thing....

Metis Deformities

Smelly cat, smelly cat

It's not your fault

— Phoebe, "Smelly Cat"

All metis Bastet must choose a deformity. While the ones offered on page 86 of *Werewolf* are fine for Bastet characters, some disabilities are more common among the Folk than among the dogs. Go figure.

- **Bent Limbs:** One or more of your arms or legs is deformed, twisting off at an angle or withered and near-useless. Reduce your running speed and jumping distance by half if the limb is a leg, or add two to your Dexterity-based difficulties if the limb is an arm. An arm may be a leg in some forms, so adjust accordingly.

- **Mange:** Your fur falls out in clumps; your skin itches incessantly; your skin shows through in red rashes beneath whatever hair you do have. In short, you're nasty, especially by feline standards. Add two to your Social difficulties unless looking ragged adds to the effect.

- **Mashed Face:** Your nose and jaws look almost flat, even in Homid form. This not only looks odd, it makes breathing difficult. Your nose runs and your eyes water constantly. Reduce your Stamina Dice Pools by two dice for acts that demand endurance or clear breathing.

- **Misshapen Jaw:** Closing your mouth completely is impossible — your jaw juts off at an angle and your teeth poke inward, outward or both. This makes biting and chewing difficult (+1 difficulty) and really interferes in Social situations. Drool hangs from your lower lip, and you bite your tongue on a regular basis. Reduce all Social Dice Pools by one die and keep a napkin handy.

- **Stench:** You stink. Badly. No matter how often you bathe, every one of your forms exudes a strong body odor. Add 2 to all Social difficulties and be prepared to live with yourself. After all these years, it never does get any better.

- **Whiskerless:** This seemingly minor handicap actually interferes with your spatial relations, throws off your depth perception and leaves you a little off-balance. Whenever your Bastet is in Crinos, Chatro or Feline form, increase the difficulty of all Dexterity rolls by two. Dexterity rolls are reduced the same amount, but only if they involve noticing something within reach (trying to feel your way around in total darkness, as opposed to trying to spot a distant friend). On top of the penalties, a werecat without whiskers just looks odd. Other Bastet and cats will feel uncomfortable around one without whiskers, and may react badly to your presence.

Renown

"He means well" is useless unless he does well.

— Plautus (Roman playwright)

Although they maintain a looser society than the Garou, the Bastet have their own forms of status. The clever cat wins his peers' respect, the honorable one, their admiration and the ferocious one, their undivided attention. Secrets are passed on or withheld based on a werecat's status, and his popularity at taghairs depends on the tales that precede him.

Bastet Renown is based more on individual achievements than on social rules or quests. Although they're creatures of Gaia, the cats don't measure each other in terms of Her service. Certain dark acts will cost a Bastet Renown, of course, and grand sacrifices will certainly make him look good. Generally, however, Bastet Renown depends more on what you do than on who you serve.

When a Bastet accomplishes something notable, spirits carry the word. Other werecats pass Renown from hand to hand. You can even demand your own fame, so long as you can back up your claims. All of these things keep Renown alive; even if you spend most of your time in the wilderness, other cats will know your name.

Elements of Status

Like the Garou, the Bastet have three general ways of according respect. These elements depend on reputation, not on social roles. Actions that prove or discredit your reputation win or lose Renown; some activities can do both. A Balam who takes on an entire Pentex First Team in the open wins points for Ferocity, but he certainly doesn't seem very clever.

Cleverness

How good is a werecat at discovering hidden secrets? How well can she manipulate rivals? Is she good at riddles or successful at business? If she excels this way, she wins Renown. A clever cat is a famous cat. Cleverness measures a Bastet's skill for misdirection, trivia, wits and bravado. If you're good at pranks, puzzles and hidden meanings, the others will recall your name.

- **The Clever Cat's Creed**

I shall be silent and quick

I shall watch my own shadow

I shall follow the whispers

And survive, learn and prosper

Ferocity

Bastet are not the warriors that Garou are, and their quests are far more personal. Even so, combat savvy, strength and raw savagery are prized among the cat-folk. Ferocity measures a Bastet's temper, kills and sheer attitude. You don't have to be nine feet tall to have a fierce reputation. Sometimes, you just have to look fierce. A few withering stares and dark rumors will have others making room at the fire.

- **The Warrior's Chant**

I shall stand my ground

Govern my hatred

Master my fury

And scatter foes to the wind

Honor

Some say cats have no honor. They lie, of course — most people just don't understand cats well enough to see it. An honorable Bastet knows her responsibilities, sets a code and lives by those rules. She helps both friends and strangers, pursues justice when need be, and acts fairly and with integrity. Some tribes, especially the Khan, Pumonca and Bagheera, set a lot of store by Honor; any monster can kill people, and any sneak can live by her wits. To be a true Bastet, you must be loyal, honest and full of pride. Let the dogs roll in blood — you're better than that.

- **The Code of the Honorable Folk**

*I shall be bound by my word
I shall act with good grace
I shall govern my tongue
And defend those like myself*

Beginning Renown

At the beginning of the chronicle, your werecat starts with three dots of Renown in any category. These dots reflect the reputation you earn during your First Year, either with or without a mentor. News still travels, even when you're not (yet) part of the family.

A lone Bastet can achieve a lot before her first taghairm, but unless you've been officially recognized, it doesn't mean much. Until a Rite of Recognition has been performed on your behalf, you remain at Rank One no matter how much Renown you've achieved. It's pretty hard to advance without recognition, after all. Once you have some degree of status, you can perform the rite yourself and demand to be recognized for your accomplishments — assuming you have at least two dots in Rituals and someone's taught you the rite. Chapter Four details the Rite of Recognition itself, and explains its workings and benefits.

Rank

Many secrets, especially Gifts, are on a need-to-know basis. Information is power, and inexperienced Bastet aren't considered ready to hold much power. To earn Rank among the Folk, you have to prove that you're ready for it. No one wants a youngster running amok.

Most often, Rank is conferred through a ceremony in a taghairm; solitary werecats demand an increase in Rank from the spirits themselves, who then carry tales of the Bastet's achievements to other, wiser cats. If the others agree, the werecat receives new respect the next time he comes in contact with a tribe or taghairm — respect that translates into greater status and higher-level Gifts.

Certain tribes value some forms of Renown over others, but these are general preferences only. Lions respect Honor and Ferocity over Cleverness, while Bubasti give more weight to Cleverness and Ferocity than to Honor. If a Bastet walks into a gathering of Simba, he'll get more respect if he's known for his Ferocity; in general company, however, Bastet simply measure you by your overall Rank.

Gaining and Losing Rank

In general, Bastet gain and lose Renown the same way werewolves do (*Werewolf*, pp. 189-194). Cleverness usually equates to Wisdom, while Ferocity replaces Glory. However, there are the following distinctions:

- The Bastet must petition either an elder or a spirit, preferably with the Rite of Recognition, to turn 10 points of temporary Renown into permanent Renown.
- Bastet Ranks rise more slowly than werewolf ones; their society is so loose that it takes a lot more to be recognized.
- Werecats cannot renounce their Renown; there isn't much point in doing so, anyway.

The Five Ranks

Rank	Title	Renown Cost
1	Tekhmet	3
2	Aka	10
3	Tilau	15
4	Ilani	20
5	Bon Bhat	25

A few truly accomplished werecats actually reach a sixth Rank. While this achievement has no special title, it reflects a great degree of power and influence.

- Lost Renown comes from personal breaches of Respect — killing other Bastet, lying under oath or for Renown — rather than for obstructions of the Litany. Bastet do adhere to their Litany, but they do so in a much less formal manner than the Garou.

Lying about Renown

You can, of course, lie about your deeds to win Renown. A tall tale given at a taghairm requires a good Manipulation + Subterfuge roll, difficulty 8. Each success grants the lying cat an additional dot of temporary Renown. If you're caught doing this, however, it'll cost you double.

Anyone who doubts your bragging can call on you to prove it. If you have proof or witnesses, they can help make your case. The gathering will weigh your evidence against the challenger (which might involve contested Manipulation + Subterfuge or Expression rolls) and may even call for a formal duel, either with words or claws. A braggart who botches his lie roll screws his story up so badly that no one believes him, and the challenge automatically succeeds.

A Bastet whose story falls apart under challenge loses *double* the Renown she would have gained, or 10 points, whichever is greater. A bogus claim might be backed up by an Ally, dupe or even a Jamak, but the favor should be expensive and risky, and there's no guarantee that a liar's witness won't turn around and inform on her later.



Bastet Character Creation

Character Creation Process

- **Step One:** Choose Concept, Tribe, Breed, and Nature, Demeanor and Pryio.
- **Step Two:** Choose Attributes (7/5/3)
- **Step Three:** Choose Abilities (13/9/5)
- **Step Four:** Choose Backgrounds (see *Tribes*, below), Gifts (three Level One Gifts from General, Breed and Tribe in any combination), and Renown (3)
- **Step Five:** Record Rage and Willpower (both by tribe), Gnosis (by breed), Merits and Flaws (below) and Rank (1). Spend Freebie points (15) as desired.

Concept

- **Artist:** musician, painter, dancer, actor
- **Loner:** drifter, lorekeeper, sage, hermit, mountain cat
- **Native:** hunter, tribesman, modern renunciate, shaman
- **Professional:** lawyer, teacher, cop, programmer
- **Scholar:** professor, linguist, keeper of the old ways
- **Searcher:** mystic, treasure hunter, forbidden secrets scholar, traveler
- **Sneak:** spy, assassin, thief, gossip, scavenger
- **Thrill-Seeker:** daredevil, circus performer, criminal, racer
- **Vagabond:** biker, escaped cat, street person, runaway
- **Warrior:** guardian, guerrilla fighter, avenger, terrorist

Breed

See also pp. 76.

- **Homid:** Born of human parents, your new life is a mystery and an adventure. (Nickname: monkeychild).

Initial Gnosis: 2

Initial Gifts: Cat Claws, Sweet Hunter's Smile

- **Metis:** The offspring of a censured union between Bastet, you have a permanent disability but a deep link with primal creation. (Nickname: halfbreed).

Initial Gnosis: 4

Initial Gifts: Create Element, Sense Primal Nature

- **Feline:** Big cats birthed and raised you, whether wild or in captivity. Your kind are all but gone, and you must fight to survive. (Nickname: wildcat).

Initial Gnosis: 6

Initial Gifts: Mark as Mine, Kitten's Cry

Pryio

See also pp. 79.

- **Daylight:** You have an open and honest heart, and tackle things head-on.
- **Twilight:** You see life in many shades and prefer complex, artistic pursuits to plainer things.
- **Night:** You like to be left to yourself, and grow angry when someone intrudes on your private pursuits.

Tribe

See also Chapter Two.

- **Bagheera (werepanther/wereleopard):** Wise travelers, hungry for knowledge and even of temper — for shapechangers.

Initial Rage: 2

Initial Willpower: 4

Beginning Gifts: Humbaba's Escape, Treeclimber

- **Balam (werejaguar):** Furious defenders of the wilderness, they hold a grudge against whites for demolishing their ancient peoples.

Initial Rage: 4

Initial Willpower: 3

Beginning Gifts: Hunter's Mists, Storm of Pests

- **Bubasti (mystic Egyptian werecat):** Mysterious and sinister, these cats pursue forbidden knowledge to regain their ancestors' glory — and to increase their own.

Initial Rage: 1

Initial Willpower: 5

Beginning Gifts: Alms to the Poor, Scholar's Friend

- **Ceilican ("lost" faerie werecat):** Thought extinct, they disguise their survival in erratic behavior and misdirection.

Initial Rage: 3

Initial Willpower: 3

Beginning Gifts: Mother's Blessing/Curse, Satyr's

Wisdom

- **Khan (weretiger):** The defenders of the earth and fists of the gods, they hold strength and honor as the greatest achievements.

Initial Rage: 5

Initial Willpower: 2

Beginning Gifts: Rhino's Favor, Skin of Jade

- **Pumonca (werecougar):** Keepers of their native soil, these wanderers maintain a deep connection to elemental powers.

Initial Rage: 3

Initial Willpower: 4

Beginning Gifts: Mockingbird's Mirror, Wanderer's Boon

- **Qualmi (werelynx):** Riddling shamans, these odd creatures delight in puzzles and enigmas.

Initial Rage: 2

Initial Willpower: 5

Beginning Gifts: Breakfast of Stones, Turned Fur

- **Simba (werelion):** The dark kings, who would rule all catkind if they could, and dominate all within their grasp.

Initial Rage: 5

Initial Willpower: 2

Beginning Gifts: Majesty, Submit

- **Swara (werecheetah):** Elusive and high-strung, they hold a deeper bond to the spirit world than any others of their kind.

Initial Rage: 2

Initial Willpower: 4

Beginning Gifts: Diamond Claws, Impala's Flight

Backgrounds

See also pp. 83 and *Werewolf* rulebook, pp. 111-113.

- **Allies:** Friends of any species.
- **Contacts:** Your sources of information and aid among the human population.
- **Den-Realm:** A magical place where you and the land are one.
- **Jamak:** A spirit ally with whom you exchange favors.
- **Kinfolk:** Non-Bastet relations, either human or cat, who are immune to the Delirium and know what you are.
- **Mentor:** For the first year, your teacher and friend. Afterward, you must trade this for another Background.
- **Pure Breed:** Your pedigree and lineage among your people.
- **Resources:** The amount of wealth you have at your fingertips.
- **Rites:** The ceremonies you know and can perform.
- **Secrets:** Inside information that can be both valuable and dangerous to possess.
- **Trinket:** An object you possess that has some magical or mystical powers.

Gifts

See pp. 94. Choose three Level One Gifts from General, Breed and Tribe, according to character concept.

Renown

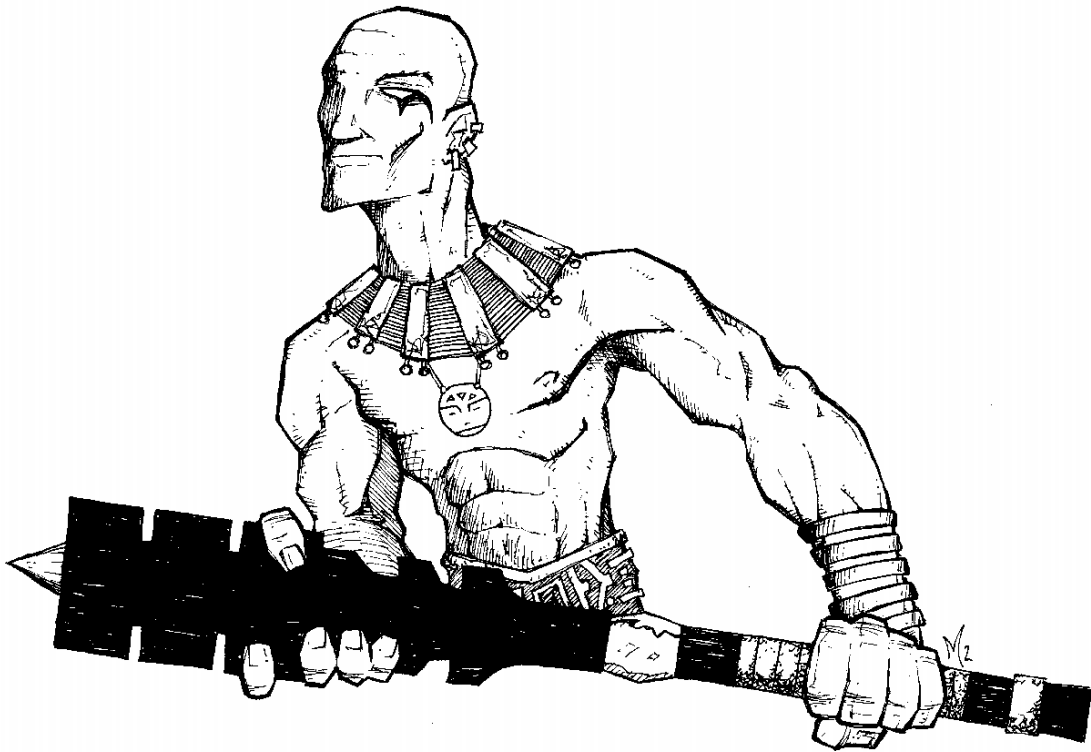
See pp. 89. All characters begin at Rank One.

Rage, Gnosis and Willpower

See *Tribes* and *Breeds*, above.

Freebie Points

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
Gifts	7 per Gift (Level One only)
Rage	1 per dot
Gnosis	2 per dot
Willpower	1 per dot





Chapter Four: Cat Magic

*Go not on a long journey,
stay indoors.*

*The wind is rising
and the rains will come.*

*The cats have summoned them:
along the floors
a coldness flows,
and thunder beats his drum.*

— Elizabeth J. Coatsworth, “When the Wind and the Rain”

• Rucksack Mary Speaks of the Three-Faced Girl

Once, I knew a three-faced girl. She wore a different face for each time of the day—morning, evening and night—and hid them all from everyone else when she wasn't wearing them.

I think the moon gave her those faces when she was born. It came sliding into her cradle like a touch of ice and pressed them to her little head, called out in secret words the names each face should have. When the moon left, the baby awoke, crying for its mother. A housecat came instead. I don't think the girl knew that mother had come and answered her. She just cried and cried.

When I knew her, she was still crying. She would climb trees and sit in the branches sobbing. Boys would come with handfuls of flowers, 'cause she was a pretty girl, but she just let her tears fall in their eyes. After a while, they stopped coming and she was left alone.

The cat used to visit her in the branches, though. It twined around her legs and brushed her feet and told her where to find the best mouseholes. After a while, the girl climbed down from the tree, put on her nighttime face and looked in the mirror.

She had cat eyes. Maybe she's always had cat eyes. They suit her, when you think about it. After all, what cat has only one face to wear?

I know a girl with three faces. We used to be friends, but now I think she's a stranger.

A Birthright of Mysteries

Cats are innately magical beings with an affinity for mysteries. The arts at their command, similar yet apart from those of the Garou, are many and powerful. These come in three varieties: Gifts, rites and the ritual arts called Shadow Craft. The high Gnosis scores most cats possess reflect the race's spiritual talent, while the spells at each werecat's behest demonstrate the ways in which such talents manifest.

To the Bastet, magical arts are the greatest of secrets, jealously guarded from outsiders and cleverly traded amongst themselves. Although the following spells are expressed in game system terms, it's vital to remember that, as far as your werecat is concerned, each Gift and rite is a mystical communion between herself, the Folk, and their allies and ancestors. No matter how many Gifts or rites a werecat might possess, the thrill of summoning such powers — the cool trickle of a spoken chant, the heartbeat rush of a mystic surge — should never be forgotten.

Shadow Craft (Hedge Magic)

Ah! cats are a mysterious kind of folk. There is more passing in their minds than we are aware of. It comes no doubt from their being so familiar with warlocks and witches.

— Sir Walter Scott

Not all cats are content with Gifts and rites. Some Bastet, notably those among the Bubasti, Ceilican and Qualmi, study “human magics” — secrets that most beings have forgotten. All cats may learn such arts, but few ever do. These arts, often called Shadow Craft, allow a Bastet to shake the world’s foundations a bit. They require discipline and study to master, but pay handsome dividends.

In game terms, Shadow Craft is essentially Hedge Magic (see *Ascension’s Right Hand*, Chapter Five). Like Hedge Magic, Shadow Craft is “static” compared to the Sphere Magick of the mages; it does not invoke Paradox, but demands specific spells, called “Rituals,” for specific effects. Bastet *cannot* learn Sphere Magick, although they may think otherwise. Like all Changing Breeds, their Awakened Avatar (as magi would term it) is already set in a certain direction: belonging to their race.

Shadow Craft Rituals are elaborate affairs, with precise incantations, ritual tools and ceremonies. The learned Bubasti use especially complex spells rooted in classical Hermetic magic. The Qualmi, on the other hand, invoke the spirits, the land and the gods, requesting favors and offering praise. The Ceilican use folk magic somewhere in the middle, chanting rhymes while walking clockwise or widdershins. Although the systems for the Paths are pretty simple and generic, the spells differ considerably in story terms.

An in-depth treatment of Shadow Craft is beyond the scope of this book. Too few werecats pursue the art to make a collection of Paths practical. If you’re interested in adding Shadow Craft to your chronicle, the rules can be found in the **Mage: The Ascension** supplement *Ascension’s Right Hand* and the **Wraith: The Oblivion** supplement *The Quick and the Dead*. Bastet are considered to begin with the Affinity of Hedge Magic, even if they don’t begin play with any level of ability in the art. Some corrupted werecats even sell their souls for Dark Sorcery and Demonic Investments (see *Mage’s The Book of Madness* and *Vampire’s Storyteller’s Handbook to the Sabbat*). Such Bastet have gone about as far into Cahlash’s “graces” as a person can go, and will reap the appropriate rewards. Proud as they are, these Folk don’t see that these forbidden secrets are more dangerous than they could possibly understand. Sometimes, curiosity does *worse* than kill the cat!

Any Bastet can learn any Path presented in the books above; the following tribes, however, specialize in certain Paths:

- **Bubasti:** Cursing, Enchantment, Ephemera, Herbalism, Spirit Control (from *The Quick and the Dead*), Summoning/Binding/Warding.
- **Ceilican:** Conjuraton, Cursing, Enchantment, Healing, Herbalism.
- **Qualmi:** Ephemera, Healing, Herbalism, Spirit Control.

Gifts

There are no secrets better kept than the secrets that everybody guesses.

— George Bernard Shaw, *Mrs. Warren’s Profession*

In game terms, Bastet Gifts work just like Garou Gifts (see *Werewolf*, pages 113-114). Unlike the dogs, however, most werecats learn their Gifts from each other, or by watching others perform tricks, then practicing until they can do the trick themselves. This passing of secrets is one of the hallmarks of a clever cat; the Bastet who can’t teach herself new tricks is regarded as a poor example of the Folk. Even so, spirit allies often have to be found to teach Bastet the most powerful secrets; one of the greatest assets of having a Jamak is the wisdom that it can convey. Werecats without a Jamak have to track down new sources of Gifts.

The heart of most Gifts, as Bastet understand them, is a puzzle, some conundrum which offers an insight into power. Once you figure it out, everything makes sense and the Gift comes flowing into your memory, to be used whenever it’s needed. These puzzles often involve symbols and twisted logic; an example could be: “To pass without a shadow/ One must lap the waters of the Yungla River/ Spit them onto Mother’s breast/ And sing the silent quest,/ Then look into your own waters and decide/ To leave no mark of passing.” Understanding such enigmas, and figuring out how to apply them in practical ways, takes time. Other insights can include snatches of eavesdropped conversation that, when you string them all together, make a certain kind of sense. Werecats know intuitively when something they hear or see is significant, and even the dullest ones can exercise impressive powers of recall and deduction when piecing them together.

Using a Gift isn’t just a matter of spending a few Gnosis and making a die roll; for the character, it involves reaching down into her essence, then into the world around her, then shaping them both into an extension of her desires. The werecat doesn’t just rattle off the name of a Gift — she calls it up from her memory, gestates it like a kitten, and gives it birth. In reality, this only takes a moment, but to the Bastet, it becomes “the hour that stretches,” a lush, tingling moment when the cat, her surroundings and the spirit of Seline meld into one. When the magic burns forth, it’s not just a game effect — it’s a magical birthing. Not that an outsider can tell, of course. Cats are notoriously casual about their talents. If asked, the cat simply says, “It’s nothing.” In her heart, though, she knows better.

At the end of each Bastet’s First Year, the kuasha leaves him with three secrets — a general Gift, a breed Gift and a tribal Gift — in addition to the Yava. Unless a Gift specifies otherwise, these powers may be used in any of the cat’s five forms. Werecats without mentors often learn their first Gifts from spirit allies, or by trial and error, and those trained by someone from another tribe don’t learn their tribal Gifts until later. From there on, the cat is expected to learn new spells for himself. Most do this by eavesdropping, or by puzzling out ancient riddles until the solution — the Gift — becomes obvious. In game terms, you simply pay a few points (see Chapter Three) to learn a new Gift; in story terms, though, your Bastet should have some reason to know what she knows.

Although Gifts are based more on personal understanding than on social teachings, the character’s Rank still determines which Gifts she can and cannot learn. A cat without sufficient

experience simply doesn't understand what she's seeing. She might understand that it has some sort of mystic connections, but can't piece them all together until she progresses through the Ranks.

"Swiping" Gifts

Some Bastet Gifts resemble those of their lupine cousins; old tales brag that certain powers were stolen on both sides during the War of Rage. On rare occasions, a werecat might learn a Garou Gift or two. These are usually "swiped" by cats spying on werewolves. In places where spirits teach both werecats and Garou (like the Amazon), a Bastet might bribe or even threaten a spirit into passing along a nifty trick. After all, why let the dogs have all the fun?

Even so, this isn't always as simple as it sounds. Much to the werecats' annoyance, some pilfered Gifts just don't work right for them. The auspice magics that depend upon a Garou's relationship with the moon seem especially hard to steal. In game terms, the Storyteller has every right to decide that certain werewolf Gifts just don't work for anyone else, period. Whether the Gift is good or not is for the Storyteller to know and the player (and her character) to find out.... (Incidentally, a Gift that can't be learned does *not* cost experience points anyway.)

Swiping secret magics from other Changing Breeds is problematic. Most of them are so specific that they won't work for anyone else. After all, can you imagine a werecat trying to use a Mokolé Gift? Players are advised to roleplay out their characters' attempt to "borrow" someone else's Gift; on top of their comedic value, such attempts can cause all kinds of new story complications....

Gift Compatibility

It's no surprise that certain skinchangers have certain Gifts. For example, the Bastet Gifts that allow them Umbral powers are usually very hard to learn (high Rank), while the Nuwisha find Umbral Dancing childishly easy. Some players may try to circumvent their character's tribal failings by learning the Gifts of other breeds, tribes — even other Changing Breeds. A Bubasti may try to swipe the Level Two Gift that allows Swara to travel into the Umbra, thereby not having to learn the common version at Level Four.

In three words, this isn't possible.

If a character can normally learn a Gift at one level, due to breed, tribe or what-have-you, then she can't learn a foreign version earlier. A Swara could learn Walking Between Worlds at Level Two as a tribal Gift, or at Level Four as a common Gift (although she likely wouldn't want to). If another Changing Breed could learn a similar ability as a Level One Gift, the Swara couldn't swipe that Level One Gift. Her natural aptitudes are already established.

In addition, Storytellers may require that certain "swiped" Gifts be learned as if one level higher. A Bagheera swiping a Philodox Gift is one thing — that same Bagheera trying to learn a Rokea trick is a little more difficult. Let common sense be your guide.



General Gifts

The following Gifts may be learned by any werecat if she finds a teacher. They're shared freely at taghairs (if one has the proper Rank, of course) and have circulated throughout Bastet society. Naturally, a common Gift is not necessarily easy to uncover if you never meet others of your kind. Although Jamak and other spirits occasionally pass Gifts along, the source of most general Gifts is other Bastet.

- **Banish Sickness (Level One)** — Cats have long been renowned for their healing prowess. With a purr and a lick, a skillful Bastet can cure minor diseases and chase venoms away. Although a Bastet never takes ill herself, this Gift is helpful when a loved one is unwell.

System: Curing a simple illness like the flu requires a Manipulation + Medicine roll (difficulty 6). Severe diseases and venoms demand a Gnosis point and a roll against difficulty 7. Chronic illnesses or really lethal poisons demand two Gnosis points and a difficulty of 8 or higher. Vicious diseases that eat a victim alive, like AIDS, cancer, leprosy, etc. may demand three Gnosis, or even remain incurable by magical means.

- **Catfeet (Level One)** — As the Level Three Lupus Gift, but obviously easier for Bastet.

- **Command Attention (Level One)** — A werecat can call on his feline presence to draw attention the instant he steps into a room. Everyone in a given space (a room, a clearing, whatever) will immediately stop what they're doing to notice the Bastet's entrance. Their reaction from that point on will depend on what the character does, and upon their feelings about him; an attractive Homid will get a different reaction than an angry Crinos-panther would.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Expression (difficulty 7) to get everyone's attention for one turn. This Gift also reduces the difficulty of his next Social roll by 1 for every success he rolls for the Gift. This bonus only applies once, upon entering the space.

- **Dowsing (Level One)** — By pawing or sniffing at the ground, the Bastet tries to locate nearby water sources (underground streams, pipes, etc.). With luck, she'll be able to tell whether or not that water is safe to drink.

System: A roll of Perception + Primal-Urge will determine the water's location, if any exists within 100 feet of the Bastet. The difficulty depends upon the water's distance and quantity; a muddy puddle beneath debris would be 9, while a pure rushing stream on the other side of a wall would be 5.

- **Lick Wounds (Level One)** — As the Theurge Gift: Mother's Touch, this power heals normal or aggravated wounds (but unlike the Theurge Gift, can be used to heal oneself). This Gift may be used as many times as the player wants, but each healing "lick" costs another Gnosis point. Bear in mind that even a cat may be loathe to lick up toxic waste or raw sewage! Some substances, like silver or Wyrms-poison, might damage the healer in proportion to her healing — that is, by one Health Level per Health Level healed — if it's still in or on the wound when she licks it.

- **Open Seal (Level One)** — As the Level One Ragabash Gift.

- **Pathfinder's Pride (Level One)** — Cats have a remarkably good sense of direction. With this Gift, a Bastet may improve that knack to find his way out of most kinds of mazes, deserts or woodlands. Worthy folk may learn this Gift from Bird-spirits, but no werecat willingly admits to it in public.



System: Invoking this Gift requires a Perception + Subterfuge roll. The difficulty depends on the area's complexity: a large flat desert or small forest would be 5 or 6, a vast expanse or complicated maze might be 7 or 8, and a primordial rain forest would be 8 or 9. Magical confusion spells, like the Garou Gift: Trackless Waste, can be undone with difficulties 9 or 10. Pathfinder's Pride does not provide any kind of travel; the werecat merely discovers the way out — getting to the exit is her problem.

- **Razor Claws (Level One)** — As the Ahroun Gift.
- **Sense the Truth (Level One)** — As the Philodox Gift: Truth of Gaia.
- **Sense Unmaker's Hand (Level One)** — As the Metis Gift: Sense Wyrn.
- **Silent Stalking (Level One)** — This common trick allows a Bastet to move without making any sound. Even squeaky or shifting surfaces, like wooden floors or piled twigs, can be passed over without noise.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Stealth, difficulty 5. Failure renders the Gift unusable for the rest of the scene. Note that this Gift doesn't make the werecat himself invisible or silent in any way, nor will it prevent any damage (broken twigs, for instance) in his wake — it stifles the sound of his footsteps, nothing more.

- **Spirits' Sight (Level One)** — Although werecats cannot normally travel through the Gauntlet, this Gift allows them to see through it for a short time. Plenty of good secrets can be discovered this way, but the Gift's effects tend to frustrate the hell out of the Bastet who can't get through, like a cat watching a bird on the other side of a window.

System: The player rolls Perception + Awareness (difficulty of the local Gauntlet) and spends one Gnosis point to look into the Penumbra. The Gift lasts one scene and ends if the Bastet is knocked unconscious.

- **Treeclimber (Level One)** — By extending and sharpening his claws, then invoking this Gift, a Bastet may travel up or down any vertical surface, from tree bark to concrete.

System: Climbing this way requires a Dexterity + Athletics roll. Really hard or slippery surfaces, like ice or steel, are difficulty 8, while easy ones like rock or bark are at difficulty 6. A character traveling this way moves at 10 feet a turn or so, and may have to make new rolls if the circumstances change (in an avalanche, for example).

- **Call Spirits (Level Two)** — By speaking the ancient language of The-World-That-Was, a Bastet may communicate with nearby spirits as if they normally speak her language. This Gift weaves between the Gauntlet and the material world, and carries words both ways.

System: The player rolls Gnosis against the local Gauntlet. If she's standing inside the Penumbra already, no roll is necessary. Once she learns this Gift, the werecat understands spirit-speech for the rest of her life, although some truly alien spirits might be beyond normal comprehension.

- **Cat Sight (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Metis Gift: Eyes of the Cat.
- **Eerie Eyes (Level Two)** — As the Garou Homid Gift: Staredown.
- **First Slash (Level Two)** — As the Level Two Ahroun Gift: Spirit of the Fray.

- **Night Terror (Level Two)** — By standing vigil over a sleeping person or animal, the Bastet can evoke the famous cat-fear, causing his target to have nightmares for several nights running.

System: The werecat must sit beside his victim for several minutes while she sleeps, spend one Gnosis point, and roll Wits + Occult or Enigmas (whichever is higher). If he rolls well, she'll have nightmares for one night per success. Five successes or more will cost the victim a temporary point of Willpower until she can sleep normally again. The Gift cannot be reused on the same person until the original nightmares have passed.

- **Night's Passage (Level Two)** — By attuning himself to the shadows from which he was born, a Bastet may walk through dim or dark areas while effectively invisible. Others may hear him or spy him with magical sight, but until he makes his move, the werecat remains hidden from view. This Gift even foils sudden lights, so long as some shadows still exist to hide in.

System: By spending a Gnosis point and rolling Dexterity + Subterfuge or Occult (difficulty 7), the cat effectively "disappears." Although he'll remain substantial, the darkness will mask his presence for the rest of the scene, or until he attacks someone. At that point, the Gift disperses, and the Bastet is left with his natural hiding talents only. Supernatural beings can use their own magics to detect the cat by rolling Perception + Occult, difficulty 8. Otherwise, nothing short of total illumination will reveal the skulking werecat.

- **Sense of the Prey (Level Two)** — As the Level Two Ragabash Gift.
- **Sense Silver (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.
- **Shriek (Level Two)** — With an ear-splitting scream, the Bastet deafens everyone nearby. Careless shriekers beware — your allies are not immune!

System: This Gift demands a scream, a Stamina + Expression roll (difficulty 7), and a mean streak. Everyone within 10' will be deafened for one turn per success, and will end up in a world of pain (plus 1 to all difficulties for the duration).

- **Summon Water (Level Two)** — By calling upon the ancient affinity between catkind and the waters, a Bastet can create a bit of water in some place where none was before, or add to an existing amount of it. This Gift, known by most desert cats, only creates pure water, not any other form of liquid.

System: By spending a Gnosis point and rolling his Manipulation + Survival, the cat creates a pool of water. The difficulty depends on the circumstances: adding to existing water is difficulty 6; conjuring it into a dry place is difficulty 7. Each success brings forth five gallons of fresh, clean water, which lasts until it is consumed.

- **Swipe (Level Two)** — As the Level Two Ragabash Gift: Taking the Forgotten.
- **Touch the Mind (Level Two)** — As the Garou Metis Gift: Mental Speech.
- **Call the Pride (Level Three)** — By moaning or crying out, the Bastet may summon the local cats (domestic, wild or big cats, depending on where she is) to her aid. Although the Gift isn't a life-or-death command, the summoned cats will help the Bastet if they can. Some Bastet can summon other creatures as their "prides;" Bubasti often keep jackals nearby, Qualmi summon birds, and Pumonca have been known to summon hawks, owls and alligators to their defense.

System: Roll Charisma + Animal Ken (difficulty 7). For each success, four normal cats or one large predator (if any are nearby) respond at their own speed. The Gift can reach up to a mile; cats more distant than that won't be much help, anyhow. The Pride remains until it has performed one service, then departs. Variant creatures must be approved by the Storyteller, and work just as cats do (four small or one large per success).

• **Caper (Level Three)** — By dancing around, a Bastet can charm bystanders into a semi-trance. This works in any form, so long as the werecat invokes the Gift and dances for at least a turn. Violence breaks the spell, but subtle actions like sneaking away remain unnoticed until the trance ends.

System: A roll of Manipulation + Expression (or Dancing) and a spent Gnosis point set the charm in motion. Anyone watching the werecat dance must roll his Willpower against difficulty 9 or be lulled into a genial daze. Storytellers may simply make a single roll against difficulty 7 to reflect a large group of normal humans. The trance lasts one turn per success, unless someone starts a fight or obviously steals something, in which case it ends immediately.

• **Cat Fear (Level Three)** — Garou aren't the only ones who command primal fear. By bristling and spitting, a werecat can scare holy hell out of everyone nearby. Unfortunates suffering from ailurophobia (fear of cats) often go catatonic with fear when confronted this way.

System: A successful Manipulation + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 7) and a point of Gnosis can send everyone within 10 feet per success into a panic. Supernatural creatures can resist with their Willpower (difficulty 7), but humans and animals flee or fall into shock for one turn per success. Ailurophobes lapse into a coma for one day per success. This Gift cannot be used in Homid or Sokto forms.

• **Cheshire Prank (Level Three)** — Why should Lewis Carroll have all the fun? It took a while, but enterprising Bastet finally discovered the secret to disappearing from plain sight. Today, it remains a valuable but popular trick.

System: By putting on a wide grin, spending a Gnosis point, and rolling Charisma + Subterfuge (difficulty 7), a Bastet may fade from view. The Prank takes three turns to complete. This invisibility lasts for the scene's duration and foils even magical perceptions. The Gift won't dampen sounds, but any werecat who can't move silently by this rank is in big trouble, anyway. This Gift only works in Feline and Chatro forms, and changing forms ends the invisibility.

• **Command the Prey (Level Three)** — By chittering slightly, a Bastet may, with this Gift, make her prey come to her. So long as she stands still and chants, the victim will wander slightly dazed until he's close enough to grab. Once the cat moves, the trance is broken. Naturally, this Gift can be used for all kinds of hunting....

System: The Bastet player rolls Manipulation + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7) to command her target to approach. Unless he can resist with a Willpower roll (difficulty 8), any human or animal will obey. Supernatural opponents with a mind-empowering supernatural ability (if active when the Gift's influence began) or more than five points of Rage resist at difficulty 6. Otherwise, they're attracted as usual. This only works against victims who were unaware of the Bastet's presence beforehand — as far as they know, they want to wander over that way. Once the prey is close, the werecat can move in however she prefers; a leap, a distraction or an opening line all work equally well once the target's in place. This Gift does not work in combat.

• **Farsight (Level Three)** — By concentrating on a reflective surface or summoning a spirit, the Bastet looks into distant places. It helps if he's been there before, but it isn't essential. Once he finds what he's looking for, he may watch it for a while until, slowly, the Farsight fades.

System: Invoking this Gift requires a Gnosis point, a Perception + Occult roll, and time to concentrate. The roll's difficulty depends on the werecat's knowledge of his target. Although Farsight only spies on places, not people, anyone there can be observed as usual. The cat sees the place as if from a bird's-eye perspective — high enough to see everything nearby, but close enough to discern objects. A Willpower roll (difficulty 6) allows him to "focus" on certain things. The Gift lasts for one turn per success, and extends up to 30 miles distant.

Location	Difficulty
Intimately familiar (home, girlfriend's place)	6
Somewhat familiar (buddy's house, vacation spot)	7
Visited occasionally (old elementary school)	8
Been there once	9
Only described, or seen in photos	10

• **Freyja's Blessing (Level Three)** — The old Norse goddess of fertility and love traveled in a chariot drawn by cats. Now she remembers the service by gifting certain cat-folk with a profound fertility, which they may bestow upon others if they wish. Although the Gift doesn't insure that a given mating will sire a Bastet kitten, many within the Folk claim that without the Blessing, their kind might be virtually extinct.

System: By rolling Gnosis (difficulty 7) and calling upon Freyja, Gaia or Nala, the Bastet summons a Fertility-spirit into herself. By laying her hands on another's belly, the werecat may pass the spirit into someone else who wants a child. A male may use the Gift at +1 difficulty to sire some offspring with his next mating. If the roll succeeds, a child of some kind will result. Whether that child carries the werecat gene depends on Nala's (and the Storyteller's) whim.

• **Gift of Rage (Level Three)** — By tapping into her inner Beast, the werecat may summon a Berserk frenzy, lashing out at everyone within range until the Gift wears off. Sadly, this is usually a last-ditch tactic; most werecats use the Gift only once.

System: To invoke a frenzy, the cat's player rolls her Rage (difficulty 6). This sends her into a killing state where tactics and mercy are impossible and all Health Level penalties are suspended. This rage lasts as long as there's danger around, and in this state, anyone present seems dangerous. The Thrall of the Wyrms (**Werewolf**, page 201) applies to werecats, too.

• **Ignore Pain (Level Three)** — By summoning up his inner reserves, the werecat can ignore the effects of his wounds.

System: A successful Stamina + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 8) allows the character to ignore all Health Level penalties for the Gift's duration, even those from aggravated damage. Each success lets the Gift last two turns. If the Bastet hasn't healed by then, he'll be in serious pain....

• **Impala's Flight (Level Three)** — An essential Gift on the open plains, the Flight doubles the werecat's running speed. As the name implies, Bastet credit Impala with this wisdom.

System: A successful Stamina + Athletics roll (difficulty 6) boosts the cat's maximum speed to double. It does *not* confer additional actions in the same turn. The Gift lasts two turns per success, and works in any form.

• **Purr (Level Three)** — The ultimate tool of feline seduction: by softly purring near some person or animal, the Bastet instills her with a desire to cuddle, pet and spoil him. So long as he treats his paramour well, she'll want nothing more than to shower him with affection for days at a time. Purr works in any form.

System: To set this charm in motion, the Bastet must purr audibly for at least a minute. The player spends a Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Empathy (difficulty of the target's Willpower). This Gift works on anyone, and unless she has some reason to suspect a trick, the subject will believe her affections are genuine (soon, they may be). Violence or unreasonable demands ("Go kill that vampire for me, sweetheart") wreck the charm beyond repair — it'll never work on her again. The infatuation lingers for one day per success; the results may last a lifetime.

• **Righteous Gaze (Level Three)** — By staring into the heart of a liar, the werecat can break through his deception, shaming him badly. Bagheera and Simba excel at this Gift.

System: The werecat must stare into her target's eyes for at least a turn and accuse him of lying. On a successful Perception + Subterfuge or Primal-Urge roll (difficulty of the target's Willpower), the target not only confesses any lies he may have told, but also loses one point of temporary Willpower per success and falls to his knees in tears. If the accused is honest, the Gift merely makes him uneasy.

• **Attunement (Level Four)** — Bastet who've set up Den-Realms use this secret to view their holdings from where they stand. By going into a light trance, the werecat in question communes with the spirits in her territory and learns what's going on throughout the Den-Realm. Visitors, intruders or crises can be discovered long before they get too close to the cat herself.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Perception + Survival (difficulty 6). The more successes she wins, the more she learns. On a botch, the spirits lie.

• **Clawstorm (Level Four)** — Any cat is at his most terrifying when cornered. This Gift allows him to become the proverbial shredding machine. Anyone within reach had better be at peace with their gods!

System: By spending one point each of Rage and Gnosis, the werecat gains three extra attacks that turn (to a maximum of four, total — he cannot spend Rage for extra actions while using Clawstorm). Only slashing attacks apply — he can't perform elaborate maneuvers, shoot guns or travel more than 10 feet, although he could use edged melee weapons. A Bastet may use Clawstorm as many times in a single combat as he has dots in Stamina.

• **Fortuna (Level Four)** — Cats love their friends, and they're famous for their luck. This Gift allows them to share some of that good fortune with others, or even to use a bit of it themselves.

System: For every point of Gnosis spent, the Bastet (or her friend) can call for one re-roll of the dice. If she spends three Gnosis, she may re-roll the dice three times. Only one re-roll is allowed per task, and only if the first roll was a failure or a botch. This Gift may *only* be used once per scene, but it lasts until all re-rolling has occurred. This luck works for whomever the werecat cares to give it to. Only one person at a time can receive this Fortuna — it can't be given to a number of people before an adventure begins.





• **Spirit Claws (Level Four)** — Another Den-Realm Gift, this one allows a werecat to attack from the Penumbra, or to rip through the Gauntlet at an Umbral opponent, without stepping sideways. Naturally, he must be able to see his opponent before he can hit him....

System: By rolling Gnosis against the local Gauntlet, the Bastet can slash through with a normal hand-to-hand attack (+1 difficulty) without exposing himself to danger. Each attack requires a new roll against the Gauntlet. This Gift can only be used within the cat's own Den-Realm.

• **Spitfire (Level Four)** — With a wicked hiss, the werecat spits a stream of fire at his opponent. Crude, but effective!

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Athletics to hit a victim (difficulty 7). Each success inflicts one aggravated Health Level of flame damage, which may ignite flammable items.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Four)** — Some tales claim that Coyote taught Bastet to step sideways; others insist the trick was stolen from Garou. In any case, this Gift allows a werecat to walk into the Umbra as Garou do.

System: See Werewolf, pages 170, 175-176. The talent becomes natural once a werecat learns this Gift.

• **Wolf's Terror (Level Four)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Silver Claws.

• **Future Warning (Level Five)** — By sensing the whims of Fate-in-Motion, a Bastet may sense some impending disaster. While not exactly precognition, the Gift grants vague insight into coming perils.

System: A good Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6) roll wins the character a sort of "danger sense" for one hour per success. This manifests as "bad feelings" whenever something nasty's waiting nearby; it won't tell her about the five dakats waiting around the corner, but she'll certainly feel like she ought to stop before she turns that corner.... Conspiracies, natural disasters, ambushes and festering rivalries can all be sensed ahead of time, though the outcome of combat cannot.

• **Jump to the Moon (Level Five)** — The greatest of Bastet can return to Seline for short visits. By forming a Moon Bridge from her Den-Realm to the moon, the werecat departs to the court of Luna. While there, she can breathe and move about normally; so long as she's careful, it'll be a glorious stay....

System: Opening the Bridge requires 10 successes with a Wits + Enigmas roll (difficulty 8). Obviously, this demands an extended roll, a bit of time (each roll takes one hour), and some great moonlit ritual. Seline must be invoked and her servants called. The Gift can only be attempted once per night; if dawn comes before 10 successes are accumulated, the ritual has been wasted. If the Bastet succeeds, the Bridge lasts for one night. Lunes come down to guide the werecat and her guests to Seline's body. The trip, it is said, is faster than thought — reaching or returning to the moon takes only minutes. If the Bridge closes before the character returns, she must open another one from the moon.

• **Perfect Passage (Level Five)** — The ultimate stealth Gift; a werecat who knows this trick can travel over or through any material obstacle without leaving traces. It's said this Gift allowed the Bubasti to rob the tombs of the Pharaohs long before any human could circumvent the traps and blocks.

System: Using this Gift costs one Gnosis point per scene (or per hour if it's a long trip), and requires a Wits + Stealth roll (difficulty 5) each time the character encounters a new obstacle. Perfect Passage does not render the cat invisible, but it dampens all sounds and scents, eliminates footprints, opens and closes doors, springs locks, and shuts down security systems long enough for the cat to

pass. When necessary, the character may even walk through solid barriers as if they were smoke. Botching any roll during this journey has terrible results — the Bastet may be trapped inside a wall, spotted by a security camera, scented by a guard dog, or worse. Some magical perceptions (Prime magicks, *Auspex*) might betray signs of a Passage, but will not reveal one in progress unless the seeker makes a successful Perception + Occult roll (difficulty is Bastet's Stealth + 5). The Gift applies only to a single Bastet and anything she carries in her hands or jaws.

- **Soothe/Summon Storm (Level Five)** — Mighty werecats can call upon the weather spirits to whip up or disperse a storm. The bigger the tempest, the harder it is to call up or put down. Doing so usually requires a long rite in which the cat yowls and capers at the sky. Undoing what you have summoned requires another, harder effort. This Gift is said to be a birthright from Nala herself.

System: Beginning this process requires two Gnosis points and a Manipulation + Survival roll. Once it's in action, stopping it requires another Gnosis point and a roll at 2 difficulty higher. Once a weather pattern has begun, it will run its own course. This may take hours. Storms in unlikely locations (a sudden rainstorm in the desert, for instance) require five or more additional successes. Botching during a storm-call can be unpredictable — and disastrous. The Bastet is *not* immune to the forces she calls upon....

Storm	Difficulty	Successes Needed
Drizzle	6	One
Rain shower	6	Three
Thunderstorm	7	Five
Severe thunderstorm	8	10
Severe windstorm	9	15
Tornado/waterspout	9	20
Small hurricane	10	20

- **Withering Stare (Level Five)** — This Gift lets a werecat kill with a glance, a favorite trick of Simba lords and wandering Pumonca. Using this Gift against other Bastet is considered deeply dishonorable, but it happens.

System: The werecat locks eyes with his target; the player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Rage. The difficulty is the victim's Willpower, and each success inflicts one aggravated Health Level of damage. Only a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) can soak the Stare, which twists the victim into agonized convulsions either until death or until the werecat grants release.

Breed Gifts

These Gifts are often considered a Bastet's birthright; they're rarely taught and hard to master unless the breed is your own. Metis Gifts can't be swiped at all — they're the exclusive province of cross-breeds, and reflect their special relationship to the Nyota Jamaa.

Homid

Homid Gifts derive from humans' craft, ingenuity, society and talent for destruction — the legacies of the Maker and Unmaker. Many animals and spirits instinctively respect a human, even if that respect verges into hostility. Many of the Gifts bestowed on human-born Bastet link to this instinctive regard — and to the powers of creation and destruction that have won it.

- **Cat Claws (Level One)** — By calling on her heritage, a Bastet in Homid or Sokto form can unsheathe her claws and attack as if she was in beast-form.

System: A simple Stamina + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 7) brings out a cat's claws. They remain out as long as she cares to keep them, but look damned peculiar and hurt to use (+1 to all combat or Dexterity difficulties). Once resheathed, they must be called forth again.

- **Sweet Hunter's Smile (Level One)** — With a charming look, the werecat wins his target over; if that look shifts into a snarl or a stare, the victim feels uneasy and may back away, intimidated.

System: By rolling Manipulation + Primal-Urge, the Bastet adds a die to all subsequent Social rolls for the remainder of the scene. This only works on one target at a time. Difficulty is the subject's Willpower if she's hostile to the werecat, 6 in most situations, and 4 if she's already inclined to like or fear him. At Storyteller's option, the player may add two dice if he scores four successes or more.

- **Jam Technology (Level Two)** — As the Garou Homid Gift of the same name. Garou sensing for the Wyrms at this time will notice a slight shimmer coming from the werecat who uses this Gift, as the Bastet version invokes the power of Cahlash.

- **Eavesdropper's Ear (Level Two)** — By listening carefully, a Bastet may hear things outside the normal human range, or understand something spoken some distance away. This is said to be a Gift from Whispers.

System: A simple Perception + Enigmas roll (difficulty 6) boosts the cat's hearing into the high and low sonic spectrums, and adds two dice to her Perception Dice Pool for hearing rolls only. The Gift lasts one scene, and makes the Bastet susceptible to sudden loud noises (which might inflict one to three Health Levels of normal damage in extreme cases like explosions or high-frequency alarms).

- **Craft of the Maker (Level Three)** — As the Garou Homid Gift: Reshape Object.

- **Babel's Cure (Level Three)** — By flexing Rahjah's powers, a Bastet can translate any human language in her vicinity. Invoking the Unmaker will turn everything into gibberish.

System: To render languages either clear or unintelligible, the player rolls her Manipulation + Linguistics (difficulty 6). This Gift works on spoken words, writing and even body language. Everyone within 50 feet will understand all communications for the duration. Cahlash's inversion of the Gift scrambles everything the same way. Either version lasts for one turn (or minute) per success, and each can cancel the other out.

- **What's the Password? (Level Four)** — By communing with the odd spirits inside computers, a werecat can call up the passwords to files, accounts or encryptions. Although few nature-bound Bastet know this trick, many of their city cousins have at least heard of it. Most of those who *do* know it charge hefty favors for the teaching....

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas, spends a Gnosis point, and hopes the Net-Spiders will be generous. These encounters should be played out — computer spirits can be pretty weird, and may want a bribe. The difficulty depends on the target's value. A successful Computer or Hacking roll can reduce this difficulty by 1 for every two successes (same difficulties; see *The Werewolf Players Guide*, pages 194-199).

Information	Difficulty
Checking accounts	5
Corporate records	6
Important documents, designer viruses	7
Secure accounts	8
Corporate secrets	9
Government secrets	10

• **Monkey's Uncle (Level Four)** — With this Gift, a werecat can assume any human form in seconds. Changes can include physical prowess, attractiveness, racial features, gender and age. Legends credit this Gift to Coyote, although the Bubasti claim to have discovered it first.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 5). Really extreme changes, like changing from Dr. Ruth into Arnold Schwarzenegger, raise the difficulty by one. For each success, the player can add one dot to her character's Physical or Social Traits for the Gift's duration. Monkey's Uncle lasts for one hour per success, applies only to the Bastet herself, and may be detected with a resisted roll (Perception verses Gnosis, difficulty 8) by someone with magical senses.

• **Black Friday (Level Five)** — This dreaded Gift, the bane of the Information Age, allows a Bastet to crash a computer network in seconds. By communing with Net Spiders (see "What's the Password?") and promising a few favors, a lucky werecat can wreak system havoc without even touching a keyboard. It's rarely done because of its tendency to backfire (wiping out one's own computer files!), but causes untold headaches for the programmers of Pentex.

System: The player rolls his Manipulation + Enigmas to convince the Spiders to do his dirty work. Obviously, he has to have some way of reaching them first, such as a Gift, a short visit to the Penumbra, or a message typed into the doomed system. Once the deal is set in motion, the Spiders eat the system's data; a skillful data retriever can undo the damage, but it'll take days or weeks to fix. The Gift's difficulty depends on the size and complexity of the system in question. Protected networks add one to the amount of successes needed; magickal systems include Trinary computers or Technomagickal networks (see **Mage: The Ascension**). A botch causes the Spiders to wreck your own data instead. Note that this kind of tampering immediately sets off alarms on guarded systems; a would-be saboteur would be wise to amscray ontopray!

Network	Difficulty	Successes Needed
Small Office	6	one-two
Large office	6	three-four
Small Corporate	7	four-five
Large Corporate	8	Four-five
International/Government	9	five-10
Secret Government/Magickal	10	five-15

• **Deny the Hungry (Level Five)** — With a gesture or spray, a spiteful werecat can destroy crops and fertile land, spoil food or toxify drinking water. Legend lays this Gift at the feet of the Bubasti, who were said to punish disrespectful communities with famine and drought. Some Simba use it for the same reasons. Sadly, it's easier to destroy than to create; undoing this damage requires a different Gift altogether.

System: The player spends a permanent Rage point and rolls Wits + Primal-Urge (difficulty 7). Each success withers one mile of crops, spoils a waterhole or lake, or renders one ton of food or drink unusable. Only the Redeem the Waste Gift, a Rite of Cleansing, or powerful Life and Prime magicks (see Mage) can undo the destruction. Cropland will remain infertile for a year, water will be poisoned for the same time. Spoiled food is rotten forever, and those who eat it anyway will grow ill. These effects, and the casting of the Gift, clearly come from the Unmaker, and may be detected by appropriate Gifts.

Metis

Unlike Garou metis, werecat crossbreeds are not outcasts, but embody mystical links to the primordial Jamaa. Their Gifts reveal this deep connection and allow them elemental tricks no other Bastet can learn. For this, they're admired in public and envied in secret.

• **Create Element (Level One)** — As the Garou Metis Gift. Most Bastet favor the five Oriental elements (fire, wood, metal, earth and water), but those born in the Western Hemisphere often know them as earth, air, fire and water. An Eastern Bastet may create raw ore and wood, but cannot conjure air. Neither version can create precious metals, refined ores, gasses or poison.

• **Sense Primal Nature (Level One)** — As attuned as they are to the Jamaa, metis Bastet can easily sense whether one of those entities has a strong influence on a person, place or thing.

System: This Gift works like the Level One Common Gift: Sense Unmaker's Hand, except that it detects a strong affinity for Rahjah, Nala or Cahlash (Weaver, Wyld or Wurm). Examples include Banes (Cahlash), Technomagi (Rahjah) and some Garou (Nala, though some may tend toward the other two). However, the difficulty is one higher than that of Sense Unmaker's Hand.

• **Blinding Moonbeam Gaze (Level Two)** — By calling upon Mother Seline, the werecat shoots bright beams of moonlight from her eyes. These don't inflict real damage, but can blind or distract an opponent, and provide illumination as well. Superstitious people often run away when confronted with a giant moon-eyed cat.

System: The player rolls Gnosis (difficulty 7). The light blasts forth on the next turn, and lasts for one turn per success. The moonlight offers the illumination of a high-powered flashlight, and can blind an opponent during his next turn if he's surprised and hit in the eyes with the light (Dexterity + Brawl, difficulty 8).

• **Whisker Sight (Level Two)** — By attuning herself to her surroundings, a metis Bastet can get a sense of her surroundings. Anything within reach — even if it's behind her, or invisible — is plain to all her senses.

System: Roll Perception + Primal-Urge (difficulty 6). Success grants the character total sensory perceptions within a 10 foot radius. This doesn't automatically reveal hidden or invisible objects, but it allows her to try a normal Perception roll to notice things that would normally be beyond her sight. The Gift lasts one scene.

• **Spirit-Touch (Level Three)** — This Gift functions like the Level Four Common Gift: Spirit Claws, except that it works anywhere.

• **Fist of Cahlash (Level Three)** — By channeling in raw destructive power, an angry Bastet can destroy any material thing with a snarl. Although the Gift isn't terribly effective against living (or undead) creatures, its potency can be avowed by a multitude of puzzled technicians and drivers in various rainforest-clearing projects.

System: The werecat's player spends a Rage point and rolls her Rage against difficulty 6 (for inanimate objects) or 8 (for living or undead beings). Each success either destroys 10 pounds (or 10 cubic feet) of matter, or inflicts one aggravated Health Level. The latter damage can only be soaked by a Gnosis or Glamour roll (difficulty 6), Spirit or Prime countermagick, or vampiric Fortitude. Affected targets literally burst or fly apart. The Fist cannot affect spirit-matter of any kind; even Materialized spirits or ghosts are immune. New attacks require new rolls and expenditures.

• **Moon's Gateway (Level Four)** — By calling upon a Lune for help, the Bastet opens a Moon Bridge between caerns or Den-Realms. Such travel only occurs at night. The Gateway forms as a glowing fog, which slowly swirls into the shape of the werecat's intended destination. Anyone who wants to use the Bridge must enter before the summoner. When she passes through, the Gateway disperses.

System: The player spends one Gnosis point per 100 miles and rolls Intelligence + Alertness. The Gateway's difficulty depends on the werecat's familiarity with her destination, from 5 for her own Den-Realm to 10 for an unknown location or an Otherworldly Realm. The two travel points must involve either a Den-Realm or some other mystical location (a caern, a Node or Chantry, a Horizon Realm, etc.). A botch lands the traveler(s) in some strange or dangerous place. Traveling out of material reality is always tricky; those lost on such trips are often lost forever....

• **Redeem the Waste (Level Four)** — Part of a metis' role is the salvation of despoiled wilderness. To do so, he'll often sniff around, paw at the earth, rub his scent around and urinate in various places, essentially claiming the place as his own. While this isn't a true Rite of Claiming, it resembles it in many ways. By dedicating himself to this land, he can summon forth a healing power to save it from toxins and other desecrations.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Survival (difficulty 7) and spends a Gnosis point. Each success makes one square half-mile of damaged, cursed or barren land fertile again; up-rooted trees won't re-plant themselves, but new trees and plants will rapidly grow. This healing is permanent until someone takes the time to despoil the land again.

• **Moon Sense (Level Five)** — By meditating upon a pool of moonlit water, a Bastet may see anything that transpires beneath Seline's glow. Although it's difficult to see distant or hidden locations, a rigorous search can see anywhere on Earth.

System: The player rolls Perception + Enigmas and spends a Gnosis point. The Bastet must be staring into outside water. Any place touched by moonlight (even near windows, indoors, and within the Penumbra) may be sensed with all six senses, as if the Bastet were standing in the moonlight itself. The water's surface must be calm; raging waves will reveal nothing. The search's difficulty depends upon the distance scanned and the Bastet's familiarity with it. If she observes for more than a minute (or requires more than three rolls), another Gnosis point must be spent. A person with mystical senses might realize he's being spied upon with a successful Perception + Occult or Enigmas roll (difficulty 6). He would, if he discovered this, see a giant moonlit cat slowly fading away. Naturally, discovery terminates the Gift.

Subject	Difficulty	Successes Needed
Near & familiar	6	Two
Distant & familiar	7	Three
Unfamiliar	8	Three
Seen pictures	8	Five
Never been	9	Five
Distant & alien	10	Five

• **Wrath of Nala (Level Five)** — This Gift whips up a wild storm that devastates the werecat's vicinity. This tempest springs up out of nowhere and lasts for five minutes or less, then calms and disperses. Nala herself teaches this Gift in dreams.



System: The Wrath works like the Level Five Common Gift: Soothe/Summon Storm, except that it requires only five successes (difficulty 8). This conjures a severe thunderstorm which lasts only a few minutes and remains beyond the werecat's power once it's in motion.

Feline

The tribes' tie with their primal past, these feral cats stalk the remaining jungles, mountains and forests where their Kinfolk run free. This breed's Gifts revolve around survival, and have evolved through challenges both natural and otherwise.

- **Kitten's Cry (Level One)** — Also called "Pathetameow" for its pitiful sound, this Gift imbues the werecat's voice with a tone so pathetic that anyone who hears it goes out of his way to comfort her. This compulsion extends to attackers, who break off hostilities unless they're attacked in return. Most Bastet consider this a dirty but useful trick.

System: The Bastet's player rolls her Manipulation + Expression; the difficulty depends on the circumstances and the target. If the roll succeeds, the target immediately stops whatever he's doing and offers sympathy for the werecat's pain. Some folks, of course, have no pity in their hearts. The Gift inspires hard-souled enemies to torment the Bastet even more than they normally would.

Relationship	Difficulty
Lover/relative	4
Friend	5
Passerby	6
Total stranger	7
Rival	8
Enemy	9
Foe in combat	10

- **Killer's Leap (Level Two)** — As the Lupus Gift: Leap of the Kangaroo.

- **Mark as Mine (Level One)** — By spraying a given area or object with urine and musk, a Bastet stakes a claim on it. Any shapeshifter will know that a werecat has marked the place, and any other mystically-inclined being (a mage, a vampire, etc.) will recognize the sign as a "Keep Out" warning. This usually lasts until someone else removes the Gift with some other magic, or until the Bastet sees fit to destroy the Mark himself (not likely!).

System: This costs a temporary Gnosis point for each object or area treated. Anyone making a successful Perception + Empathy roll will feel distinctly uneasy when coming within 10 feet of the Mark, as if they were trespassing in someone else's house or stealing someone else's valuables. Through sensory magics, an intruder may actually see the Mark, even after the spray dries, and may remove it through appropriate use of magical powers. The Bastet may remove the Gift himself by spraying it a second time. This Gift does work on live creatures, but does not harm them in any way.

- **Perfect Cover (Level Two)** — Cats must excel at covering their tracks and lairs, especially in these dangerous times. To help them, the spirits have passed this Gift on to the wild members of the race. By scratching around the place, trail or object to be hidden, the Bastet obscures it from normal and magical view.

System: After the Bastet "buries" all traces of the hidden thing, the player rolls Perception + Survival and spends a Gnosis point. From that point on, the place or object is safe from any form of mortal perception until it moves or is moved. Any magical senses (including Awareness) scanning the area add 1 to their difficulty to



notice the hiding place for every success the player rolls. The difficulty of the roll depends on the size of the object and the surroundings: hiding a haunch of deer in the underbrush would be 5, while concealing a cave entrance in a lightly-wooded area would be 9. The Gift cannot conceal obvious objects, like a car on the side of the street, nor does it make things disappear. Rather, it uses surrounding cover, like shadows and underbrush, to make the hidden spot seem overgrown. A letter on a table covered with paper could be hidden, but a jewelry box on a bare mantle could not. A Bastet may use this Gift to conceal himself, and many do.

- **Underbelly (Level Three)** — By sizing up a foe or obstacle, a feral Bastet can get a feeling for its weakest point. Once that's spotted, he can rip through most things with a good swipe.

System: By rolling Perception + Primal-Urge, the Bastet can find a weak spot on living (or once-living) beings. Picking a weakness on a technological object requires Perception + Repair, while noticing a flaw in a natural one takes Perception + Survival. Either way, the difficulty depends on the target's toughness:

Subject	Difficulty
Typical (man, computer, wall)	6
Sturdy (athlete, car, desk)	7
Powerful (vampire, heavy machine, boulder)	8
Reinforced (man in armor, combat vehicle, bank vault)	9

Each success adds one to the Bastet's damage Dice Pool against that target for the scene. Spotting a weakness in a magical object or mystical protection requires a Gnosis point in addition to the roll. This Gift doesn't work against spirits of any kind.

- **Whisker Sight (Level Three)** — As the Level Two Metis Gift of the same name.

- **Ghosts at Play (Level Four)** — By spraying around an area, the werecat can expose all nearby spirits. Although the Gauntlet remains intact, any active spirit becomes visible, as if everyone in the vicinity had used the Level One Common Gift: Spirits' Sight.

System: The Bastet's player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas against a difficulty of the Gauntlet. Success reveals all spirits in the area. The range of the Gift extends 10 feet for every success the player rolls; the vision itself lasts for one turn per success.

- **Hand of Will (Level Four)** — By willing things to move, the Bastet can lift objects or open barriers merely by staring at them. A strong-willed Bastet can move even trucks and construction vehicles with her mind alone! King-of-Beasts and Hatti favor this Gift, especially given the devastation brought about by human traffic.

System: Invoking the power of the will requires a Gnosis point and a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). Each success gives the Bastet three points worth of Strength at range (see "Feats of Strength," *Werewolf*, page 212). This power can only move things, not punch or crush them, and the cat's degree of control is limited. A typewriter can be shoved aside, but not used. It's possible to employ a bit of fine manipulation by raising the difficulty to 9, but this requires total concentration. For each extra turn the object remains in motion, the werecat has to spend a point of Willpower to keep it going. Once she sets it aside, the Gift ends.

- **Judgment of Pestilence (Level Five)** — In many ancestral lands, epidemics ravage both human and animal populations. The Mistress of Catkind bequeaths this Gift to her feline children in an effort to channel the disease. Communities who respect the cats' Kinfolk and the land find pestilence banished from their homes; those who exploit nature or hunt the great cats receive the disease in return. Nature's balance must be maintained.

System: This Gift doesn't create a plague; instead, it moves it from one place to another. To do this, a cat spends two Gnosis points and rolls Manipulation + Primal-Urge to absorb the sickness without harming herself. From there, she carries it to a place she dislikes, then releases it by breathing into the night air. Once in motion, the disease runs its course in the new location. Every survivor in the original community mysteriously recovers. A werecat who botches her roll quickly dies, overwhelmed by the toxins in her blood.

- **Revolt of the Land (Level Five)** — As the Red Talons Gift: Gaia's Vengeance.

Tribal Gifts

A collection of secrets from the elders of their kind, these Gifts are easy to learn — if you can find a mentor who shares your tribal heritage. Otherwise, a cat would be hard-pressed to uncover the necessary lore. Bastet who come into their own without the guidance of a tribal kuasha often learn these secrets later in life (that is, after character creation), when and if they find a mentor from the same family.

Bagheera

Although the wereleopards range across Africa and Asia, their most refined Gifts come from the ancient lands of India. There, the sages of the Folk have melded the disciplines of Hindu mystics with the ferocity and wisdom of the leopards themselves. As they wander across the world, most Bagheera acquire a variety of secrets from the General Gifts. Their ancestral magics, however, draw a certain flavor from their homeland.

- **Humbaba's Escape (Level One)** — One of the tribe's first and most valuable tricks, this Gift allows a wereleopard to dislocate her limbs and slide through small openings. Though the Bagheera claim that the wise cat Humbaba invented the trick, the Simba maintain that he originally learned it from Mouse-spirits.

System: The player rolls her Dexterity + Athletics to dislocate her cat's limbs. The harder the attempt, the higher the difficulty becomes. Undoing your wrist to get out of handcuffs would be difficulty 6, while dislocating your spine and ribs to get through an air shaft would be 10. While the cat is out of joint, her Stamina rating drops by two. Simple adjustments don't cost any Gnosis, but large-scale body-shifts cost one point.

- **Treeclimber (Level One)** — As the Common Gift of the same name. Leopards excel at climbing, and most kuasha teach this secret first.

- **Lawgiver's Legacy (Level Two)** — In the distant past, it is said that the Bagheera were intended to be the arbitrators of the cat-folk. The position never materialized, but this Gift offers an edge to Bagheera trying to exercise this ancient right with minimal force. With it, a panther can raise her voice to drown out all others without actually shouting, and it adds a note of command that makes even Simba take the panther's words seriously.

System: This Gift works like the Level One Common Gift: Command Attention, but the effects last for an entire scene. Anyone who wants to contest the Bagheera's authority must win a resisted Willpower roll with the panther (difficulty 7).

- **Ojas Surge (Level Two)** — By channeling *ojas*, the mystical energy inside us all, a Bagheera can boost his physical and perceptual abilities beyond their normal limits. To do so, he attains a posture and meditates for a moment, then guides the *ojas* through his body, directing it to whatever his needs might be.

System: To perform the Gift, the panther must meditate first. This usually takes some time, and depends on experience; it usually takes a First Rank Bagheera five turns (minutes) to center himself, while a Fifth Rank cat can do it in one. As he attains this state, he rolls his Gnosis (difficulty 7). Each success he wins can then be applied as a dot in one or all of the following Attributes: Strength, Dexterity, Stamina, Charisma, Perception or Wits. The Surge also brings a rush of ecstasy, a tingling wash that sharpens the senses and lightens the heart. The Attribute bonuses last for one scene, and cannot be “stacked.” The feeling of well-being lasts all day. The Surge can be done as many times as the Bagheera desires, but each additional try after the first raises the difficulty by two and doubles the meditating time. If an attempt to channel the rush fails, the cat gets depressed and cannot try again that day. A botch may provoke a frenzy.

- **Cobra’s Dance (Level Three)** — Long ago, a panther named Tola entered into negotiations with King Snake. After weeks of discussion and debate, the two came to an understanding of sorts. No one knows what secrets Tola offered King Snake, but he learned this Gift as part of the exchange. The Dance allows a cat to freeze prey with a glance. Some old Bagheera claim to know other secrets of the serpent folk, but if any other Gifts have survived, they’re not well known.

System: To begin the Dance, a panther sways in place; the player rolls Manipulation + Expression and spends a Gnosis point. This requires at least one turn spent dancing, and the effect lasts one turn per success. The roll’s difficulty depends on the target: hypnotizing most animals is easy (5), while freezing a hostile vampire is anything but (10). To break the spell, the target must win a Willpower contest with the cat (difficulty 8). Otherwise, he’s held stunned and helpless until the Gift wears off. Once the Dance takes hold, the cat can do whatever she likes — such as leaving, talking or mauling the target.

- **Traveler’s Tongues (Level Three)** — As the Rank Three Homid Gift: Babel’s Cure.

- **The Paradox of Time (Level Four)** — To most followers of Hinduism, time is not the linear stream Westerners believe it is. Rather, all times are one time, viewed from a perspective that shifts. In other words, it only appears to move because we *believe* it does. A skilled Bagheera can employ this seeming paradox to utterly confuse an enemy or enlighten a pilgrim. By showing him the relative nature of time, the panther can offer him a glimpse of his folly — or baffle him for minutes on end.

System: While the cat talks to his target in low, hypnotic tones, the player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas against the target’s current Willpower rating. For each success, the subject’s perceptions skew slightly, disorienting him for two turns. Until the Gift wears off, he subtracts three dice from all Dice Pools due to terminal confusion. Mages who understand the Time Sphere are totally immune to this Gift’s effects.

- **Potter’s Clay (Level Four)** — As the Level Three Homid Gift: Craft of the Maker.

- **Part the Curtain (Level Five)** — Like the Level Four Common Gift: Walking Between Worlds, this spell allows a leopard to cross into the Near Umbra. This variation, however, lets her bring others across as well. The Mistress of Catkind is said to have brought this Gift to several Bagheera elders during the British occupation of India. Working with allies from the Swara and Khan, these old cats turned several staid English manors into shrieking chaos.

System: All systems resemble the aforementioned Gift, except that the Bagheera can take one additional ally through for every point of Gnosis she possesses.

- **Shiva’s Might (Level Five)** — In one of the most impressive feats of godlike destruction this side of a nuke, a Bagheera may change into a form reminiscent of Shiva the Destroyer or Kali the Dark Mother (depending on the cat’s gender). In a burst of holy light, the Bastet becomes a 12-foot-tall, six-armed Crinos-form werepanther wielding flaming weapons. Until the ground is littered with bodies, this engine of feline wrath hacks everything around it — foe and otherwise — into bloody giblets. Obviously, this is a last resort, but a very effective one.

System: The player invoking this godlike manifestation spends two Rage points and two Gnosis points, then immediately rolls for frenzy (difficulty 3). If he wins five successes or more, the Bagheera springs into Crinos form, grows three feet taller, and sprouts four more arms, each bearing a flaming weapon. This destroyer form, the *Juddho*, goes into a sudden killing frenzy which lasts for one turn for every point of Rage in the Bastet’s permanent rating. If he fails, nothing happens; a botch brings on a fox frenzy instead. The stats for Juddho form are:

Strength:	+6
Dexterity:	+3
Stamina:	+6
Appearance:	0
Weapons:	Strength +4 (aggravated)

No one is safe from Shiva’s Might — anyone in sight will be attacked. The Bagheera is totally incapable of any form of rational communication or combat strategy. Until the Juddho form disappears, he knows only how to kill. In his mind, he wanders through the hells of the Asura, slashing and biting everything he meets. When the Gift finally fades, the panther drops to 0 Rage, assumes his breed form, and falls asleep for at least four hours.

Balam

It’s all too easy to see the werejaguars as raging defenders of their homelands; truthfully, though, many of their Gifts recall the ancestral races from which they came — two tribes whose ferocity was matched by their perceptions and wisdom. The magics this tribe calls its own meld the secrets of these lost ancestors with the living land and the fury in the Balam’s hearts — a fury most jaguars are all too willing to take out on trespassers.

- **Hunter’s Mists (Level One)** — As the Black Furies Gift: Curse of Aeolus.

- **Storm of Pests (Level One)** — By singing a plea to Tzinzie and his kind, a werejaguar can call up a cloud of mosquitoes, gnats, biting flies, or some equally obnoxious bugs. These creatures don’t so much damage as distract their prey, although they might, at the Storyteller option, carry diseases like malaria or yellow fever. By drawing the victim’s attention to the biting pests, the Balam may prepare either an ambush or an escape.

System: The jaguar’s player rolls Manipulation + Survival. In most rainforests or coastal areas, the difficulty is 5. In other places, the difficulty rises to 7, and goes to 9 in areas where bugs are scarce. For each success, an area roughly 10 feet square is filled with flying bugs, reducing all Dice Pools by 2 for one turn per success. After that, the insects disperse. The cat is not immune to bug bites, but usually knows what to expect and can act normally.

- **Ancestral Wings (Level Two)** — According to their folklore, the Balam were once two tribes. One of the original families, the Olioioqui, had wings. By digging into this ancestral past, a werejaguar can invoke their gift and fly for short distances.

System: The player rolls Intelligence + Primal-Urge against difficulty 8 and spends a Gnosis point. If successful, brightly-colored wings burst from the Balam's shoulders and carry him aloft. While winged, the cat can fly at 15 yards per turn in any form, and may carry up to 200 pounds of additional weight. This Gift lasts for one scene (or one half-hour), after which the wings atrophy and harmlessly drop off.

- **Smoking Mirror (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Common Gift: Farsight.

- **Touch of the Tree-Frog (Level Three)** — By touching a victim with her paw, teeth or even spittle, a Balam can paralyze him for minutes on end. Some jaguars take this opportunity to get away, or to deliver a warning; others make more sadistic use of that time. This Gift stems from the Tree-frog-spirits, whose fluids coat the arrows of the ancient folk.

System: The jaguar spends a Gnosis point to activate the Gift; once done, it lingers in her skin until she brushes against someone. Unless the target makes a Stamina + Awareness or Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 8), he is frozen for one turn per point of the Balam's current Gnosis (the score she had before she cast the Gift). He may, if he's lucky, break the paralysis with a Willpower roll (difficulty 9); if not, he remains helpless for the duration.

- **Wandering Forest (Level Three)** — As the Red Talons Gift: Trackless Waste.

- **Vision Cloud (Level Four)** — Among the old folk, the jaguars were respected for their insight. Many Olmecs and Maya came to them for visions, and the tribe responded by evoking this ageless Gift. By calling to the spirits of the air and the plants, a modern jaguar can still conjure the Vision Cloud, a swirling fog which wraps itself through the clearing or cave, bringing mystic insights to those who seek them — and to those who do not.

System: By rolling Manipulation + Enigmas and spending a Gnosis point, the Bastet is allowed to call up the Cloud from nothingness. This misty kaleidoscope fills an area up to 50 foot square and affects everyone without breathing gear or magical protection—including the Bastet himself. The hallucinations which ensue are left to the Storyteller's discretion, but should foreshadow possible future events, reveal lost lore, or offer clues that clever characters can decipher (see "Storytelling" in *Werewolf*, pages 59-61 for ideas).

- **Jungle's Vengeance (Level Four)** — By tapping into her ties with the land, a Balam urges the jungle to turn against any invaders. The assault begins innocently enough, with vines that trip and swarms of hungry bugs; if the outsiders don't get the hint and leave, however, the Vengeance turns nastier. Pools of quicksand, poisonous plants and insects and clouds of noxious gas spring into existence right in the invaders' path. Ultimately, the Gift whittles a determined force of trespassers down into a handful of desperate survivors — easy pickings for an angry werejaguar and her friends....

System: The player puts a point of Rage and two points of Gnosis into the Gift, which then swells into a series of scattered but purposeful events. Although the Storyteller has the final say about exactly what happens where and to whom, the land and its pests begin a subtle campaign to drive invaders out. These events escalate from annoyances to fatalities as the Storyteller desires. Although they won't be powerful enough to destroy a band of supernatural foes, most mortals will be driven to near-madness before the Gift runs its course.





- **Feed the Gods (Level Five)** — By reaching out with his hand, a powerful jaguar can rip the heart out of an enemy from a distance, pull it to his palm, and consume it in a burst of fire. This Gift kills the target if it succeeds. Only strong magic can rebuild the ashes of the heart or grow another one in its place.

System: The Balam's player rolls Gnosis against difficulty 7, and spends two points of Gnosis as well. The cat's successes must double the target's Stamina rating; any armor, magical defenses, or dots in Fortitude, Glamour, the Spirit Sphere, Avatar or innate countermagick subtract one success for every dot of protection. Hence, this Gift isn't a very effective method of sacrificing supernatural beings. Against unarmored humans, however, it's devastating. The victim keels over and dies, as his heart flares into flame. It takes two turns to burn the heart into ash; by then, the victim is irrevocably dead unless someone has the power to rebuild his heart from powder and return the soul to its body. This Gift is totally useless against those already dead (but not undead — vampires can still be destroyed this way).

- **Heal the Wounded Land (Level Five)** — As the Level Four Metis Gift: Redeem the Waste.

Bubasti

The sinister shadowcats preserve their Gifts in riddles and puzzles. Although they occasionally learn new ones from spirits like Whispers and Old Snapjaw, most tribal Gifts are passed from elder to younger. These Gifts are *never* taught to other tribes — they're hard-won ancestral lore, proudly protected by a system of taboos and punishments. A Bubasti who instructs an outsider in their ways is hunted down and destroyed (see the Eater of the Dead rite).

- **Alms to the Poor (Level One)** — Beggars are an all-too-common feature of the Bubasti homelands. As a kindness (and perhaps as a bribe to the gods), the shadowcats developed this secret, which allows one to conjure up a small bit of food or money to give to a beggar. Naturally, the cat can use the "alms" for himself, but they taste slightly bitter and leave the palm greasy if used for selfish means.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls his Gnosis against difficulty 6. Each success creates a handful of food or cheap copper coins (no bills, silver or gold). Most Bubasti disguise this "miracle" by reaching into a sack or box before sharing this wealth.

- **Scholar's Friend (Level One)** — A simple yet helpful Gift, this secret allows a Bubasti to read a book, scroll or tablet in any written language. This talent doesn't teach the cat any new language, nor will it help him understand esoteric concepts or missing bits of text. Even so, the ability to read anything set in front of you is a subtle yet powerful gift.

System: The shadowcat spends a Gnosis point, rolls his Willpower and begins reading. The difficulty of the roll depends on the obscurity of the text:

Language	Difficulty
Modern	5
Scholarly (Latin, Sanskrit)	6
Archaic or dead (Aramaic)	7
Common pictograms (classic Egyptian)	8
Obscure pictograms/code (Sigils of Mu)	9
Personal codes/lost cuneiform	10

Only one roll is allowed per reading session. The Gift lasts for one hour per success, and the cat must rest his eyes for several hours after finishing. A failed roll doesn't necessarily mean the werecat couldn't read the text; it may mean that he read it wrong. Storytellers are advised to keep the difficulty of the roll secret, and to base the information given on the success of the roll. One success lets the cat get the general idea, while four successes or more indicate complete understanding.

- **Mousemaze (Level Two)** — An unsettling spell of confusion, this Gift disorients a target until he blunders around in a panic. Walls shift and close in, shadows lengthen, sounds drift to his ears from all corners, and familiar places seem strange and threatening. Although the magic has no real effect on the person's surroundings, his terror and confusion send him into a frenzy, making him an easy target for the werecat lurking nearby....

System: The cat's player rolls Manipulation + Empathy, with the target's Willpower (or Rage, if higher) as a difficulty. Success scrambles his sense of direction and relationship. The better the roll, the more confused the target becomes. Three successes or more send him into a panic; werewolves and vampires must check for frenzy; mages must make Willpower rolls or go into short Quiet; mere humans just freak out. This disorientation lasts about 15 minutes, then slowly fades.

- **Spirit Ward (Level Two)** — By employing the eldritch enigmas of Egypt, a Bubasti can wall an area off from spirit-traffic. No spirit can move in or out of the warded place without the cat's permission. Naturally, the stronger *chaya* can shred this barrier like papyrus; still, the wisest werecats can erect stronger barriers than their youngsters can....

System: By spending a Gnosis point and rolling her Willpower against difficulty 8, the Bubasti erects a barrier across an area no larger than 30 feet by 30 feet. Each success the player rolls raises the Gauntlet around the area by 1 (maximum 10), and extends it so that the barrier exists in both the material and Penumbral worlds. This irritates the spirits, and they can often tell who's to blame. The Ward lasts one day per point of Gnosis in the cat's permanent pool, unless some spirit destroys it, which a *chaya* can do by rolling its Rage against the new Gauntlet rating. Three successes or more will turn the Ward to spirit-dust.

- **Banish Cahlash's Brood (Level Three)** — By calling upon the Father of Dark Spirits, a Bubasti may command one of his brood to depart. Of course, powerful spirits or ones bound into fetishes won't be easily dismissed; doing so may demand great rituals or even a sacrifice. Small independent elementals or Banes, however, may be banished with slight effort. Calling upon Cahlash has a price: Each time the werecat performs this Gift, his fur grows a deeper shade of black and his actions become more... erratic. Garou or Bastet who Sense Wyrms on him will detect the Unmaker's essence upon him until he purges himself somehow. The more spirits he banishes, the deeper the taint becomes.

System: The cat's player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas and spends a Willpower point to attempt to dismiss a spirit. The difficulty is the spirit's Gnosis, or its Rage if the latter is higher. Each success removes 10 points of the spirit's Power. Banishing a 30 Power spirit, then, requires at least three successes. Getting rid of a powerful spirit might require an extended roll or two; a spirit bound into a fetish, meanwhile, sets the difficulty at 6 plus the fetish's level (a level 4 fetish would be difficulty 10, as would a level 5). Sacrificing a bit of blood to Cahlash may add to the Gift's effectiveness; for every Health Level "spent" this way, the Bubasti

lowers his difficulty by 1. The spirit isn't under any obligation to sit still during the process, and may attack the Bastet until either the werecat stops or the spirit disappears. Nala help the werecat who botches this Gift; the Wyrms taint fills him utterly, and he must make a Rage roll, difficulty 6, or frenzy. Atonement isn't impossible, but ridding one's self of the dark taint often requires a rigorous quest without Renown.

- **The Many Tongues of Ptah (Level Three)** — As the Level Three Homid Gift: Babel's Cure.

- **The Scarab's Flight (Level Four)** — By calling together the elements of her soul, a Bubasti can send them out of her body for a while. The body itself enters a deathlike trance until the Scarab returns; although it doesn't decompose, all other signs (magical and otherwise) declare that the cat has died. The flying Scarab resembles an ordinary insect unless inspected with magical senses, in which case it glows brightly.

System: Manifesting a soul into the beetle shape requires a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 8) and a one-Gnosis expenditure. From there, it takes wing from some orifice or crawls away unnoticed (Perception + Alertness, difficulty 9 to spot). The body remains intact for one day per success, during which time the Scarab can reenter and resurrect the cat. After the time limit passes, the body instantly decays, even if it has been preserved somehow.

- **Shadowplay (Level Four)** — As the Theurge Gift of the same name (found in the *Players Guide*). Unlike the werewolf Gift, the Bubasti does not have to mimic the shadow's movements; once free, it can go about its business as if it were a perfect duplicate of the Bastet. Also unlike the Garou Gift, some light must be present to cast the shadow in the first place.

- **Deny the Hungry (Level Five)** — As the Level Five Homid Gift.

- **Spirit Wall (Level Five)** — One of the greatest tricks a Bubasti learns is the art of calling together minor spirits from around the area and forming them into a wailing Umbral wall. Such magics do not endear a cat to the spirits in general, but by the time she achieves this Rank, a Bubasti should have enough sense to use such power wisely — and enough power to protect herself when she uses it at all.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas. The difficulty can range from 6 to 10, depending on how many minor spirits are nearby. This takes two turns. To shape the assembled *chaya* into a wall, she spends two Gnosis points and rolls a contested roll between her Willpower and the spirits' (assume a Dice Pool of three dice for every success the Bubasti scores on the earlier roll). If she succeeds, the resulting wall blocks spirits, imposes a Gauntlet of 10 and lasts for one turn per success on the Willpower roll. If she fails, the spirits remain unbound, unformed and angrier than hell.

- **The Fleeing Scarab (Level Six)** — One of the Bubasti's most obscure tribal secrets, this Gift allows a cat to remove her soul, incarnate it, and send it out of harm's way while her body dies. The soul, which often takes the form of a flying scarab beetle, searches out an appropriate new host body, climbs into its mouth while it sleeps, and "lays" the old soul into the new host. The Bubasti who knows this forbidden secret (and less than eight such cats exist) is theoretically immortal, though such longevity is purchased in other beings' lives.

System: Collecting the soul for transport requires three Gnosis points and a successful Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 8). Failure traps the soul in the body as it dies (although the Gift may be

tried up to three times if the cat has enough time to do so). Once freed, the soul wings forth, searching for a host. It has 24 hours to find one before the soul-essence scatters. Once a host is found, the beetle climbs into his mouth and tries to take the body over. This “possession” demands an additional Gnosis point and a roll of the Bubasti’s current Willpower at the time of her death. This roll’s difficulty is the host’s current Willpower + 3 (maximum 10). If successful, the Bastet takes over the body, retaining her old memories and the host’s as well. If not, she can make one final try before her soul fades away forever.

To retain command of the host, the cat makes weekly Willpower rolls against the host’s original Willpower. Hence, the Bubasti rarely commandeers supernatural creatures or stubborn individuals, at least for long. After a lunar month has passed in one body, the host becomes a Bubasti with five points in the Past Life Background. Although all her previous Gifts are lost in the process, her memories remain intact. Thus, she knows where to learn them again later. A botch at any point in the use of the Gift sends the soul straight into the Oblivion spoken of by the Dead, so this magic is not lightly undertaken.

Ceilican

The Gifts of the “lost” Ceilican show their old affinity to the fae. Illusion, enchantment and other trickery inspire the arts of the faerie cats, which mix wonder and terror in equal measure. Some talents have come to the fore in recent decades, but the majority of the tribe’s Gifts retain their link to lost faerieland—fallen Arcadia, where dreams and reality were one. Despite rumors of their extinction, these cat have no intention of following their allies into oblivion.

- **Mother’s Blessing/Curse (Level One)** — Folklore holds that a cat had the ability to either bless or curse a pregnant woman. In the case of the Ceilican, this legend is true. A kind Bastet can offer a boon to the mother, while a spiteful one can harm her in some minor but memorable way.

System: This Gift’s effects are more psychological than physical, and get an extra boost from the way the Ceilican acts toward the mother while offering his wishes. Setting things in motion demands a Gnosis point and a roll of Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7). While touching the mother’s belly, the cat either wishes her well or ill, usually in some poetic rhyme. After that, some good or bad event befalls the woman or her child. Although the event itself is outside the character’s control, the number of successes he rolls should reflect the power of the Blessing or Curse. Blessings can include an easy delivery, unusual good looks or great health. Curses include breech birth, minor disability or poor constitution. Once one event has occurred, the Gift is discharged.

- **Satyr’s Wisdom (Level One)** — By calling upon the talents of his tribe’s fae allies, a Ceilican can play any musical instrument as if he’d been reared with it in his hands. Although this talent is fleeting, it can make one hell of an impression.

System: With a Manipulation + Occult roll (difficulty 7), the cat gains a few temporary points in Expression, Performance or the optional Singing secondary Skill. For each success, he adds one dot to the chosen Trait. This lasts for as long as the Ceilican plays; afterward, the skill fades from his fingers until he either learns it for good or uses the Gift again.

- **Banish Burning (Level Two)** — This Gift became necessary during the Madness, when sorcerers and witch-hunters both tossed cats on the pyre to please demons and God. With it, the Ceilican may protect herself or a companion from normal fire. While the Moon Mother and Mistress of Catkind originated this Gift, Burning Cat teaches it as well.

System: Before the Bastet meets the flames, the player must roll Gnosis (difficulty 7) and spend one Willpower point to protect the Bastet. If she succeeds, no nonmagical fire will hurt the Bastet for the Gift’s duration. Magical fires reduce their effects by one Health Level for every success. Banish Burning lasts one scene, and does nothing to protect the cat from smoke inhalation, oxygen deprivation or falling debris.

- **Sorcerer’s Blade (Level Two)** — By casting this Gift on a weapon, a cat can enchant a blade so that it harms supernatural beings. A favorite trick of swashbuckling Ceilican who wandered the open roads in bygone eras, this Gift often comes from the King of Cats or Mistress of Catkind.

System: The player spends a point of Gnosis and rolls Manipulation + Occult while the cat cradles the weapon in her hands. The blade then inflicts aggravated damage until the next sunrise. Although this Gift allows the cat to enchant missile weapons, each bullet or arrow must be Gifted separately. Although the arrows may be reused, bullets cannot be.

- **Data Flow (Level Three)** — As the Glass Walkers Gift (in the Players Guide).

- **Phantasm (Level Three)** — Twisting the fibers of illusion, the Ceilican create majestic nonsense to baffle and entertain their companions — or horrors to torment their enemies. This secret obviously comes from forbidden faerie lore, and can be quite powerful in the hands of a cat with an active imagination.

System: To cast a Phantasm, the player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge and spends a Willpower point. The resulting illusion lasts for one scene unless the cat chooses to dismiss it, and can extend through an area roughly 10 feet square. Simple illusions are easy; the more complex the trick, the harder it is to perform. Although the illusions have no solid form, a casual witness might be fooled into believing that a Phantasm was real.

Illusion	Complexity
One success	Minor lights and noises
Two successes	Coherent and recognizable images or sounds
Three successes	Complex, interweaving images and sounds
Four successes	Vivid multisensory hallucinations
Five successes	Indistinguishable from the real thing with out examination

Illusion	Difficulty
Single sound or flash of image	6
Complex pattern of light or sound (an object or conversation)	7
Complex moving pattern (a person speaking)	8
Complex active pattern (person walking, speaking and responding)	9
Complex active multi-pattern (group of people speaking, moving, reacting or all three)	10

- **Monkey’s Uncle (Level Four)** — As the Level Four Homid Gift of the same name.

- **Small Cousin (Level Four)** — Some Ceilican over-steeped in human culture call this Gift Blofeld’s Cat after James Bond’s nemesis (who, they insist, was the white cat, not the man). This Gift allows a Bastet to physically become a house cat. While this form can be limiting, it’s very unobtrusive. Best of all, it doesn’t hamper cat magic in any way, and screens out routine mystic senses.

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Unless the victim subjects his housecat to a rigorous magical appraisal, the Bastet is free to enter and observe whatever he likes.

System: The Ceilican's player spends a Gnosis point and rolls her Gnosis against difficulty 8; for each success, the Ceilican can retain her feline form for one hour. During this time, her Physical Attributes become those of a domestic cat, although her Social and Mental Attributes remain the same. She cannot speak, but can use any Gift that her feline form will allow. Although a person who makes a successful Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) might realize that "there's something weird about the cat," her true nature remains hidden unless someone penetrates her disguise magically (with Disciplines or True Magick, for instance). Attempts to do so add 3 to their difficulty. It should be noted that few vampires or wizards bother to check every passing cat with magical sight unless they have some compelling reason to be so paranoid (over and above their usual paranoia).

• **Chariot of Lions (Level Five)** — This less-than-subtle Gift lets a Ceilican conjure a chariot drawn by huge cats. Like the craft of the goddess Freyja, this chariot is made of coarse-cut wood and covered with Nordic designs. The two huge cats that pull it run as fast as the average car, and can, in a pinch, carry the Ceilican and one passenger into the air for a few moments. Only the Mistress of Catkind teaches this Gift; learning it without her blessings is a grave insult.

System: The player rolls Gnosis against difficulty 8 and spends three Gnosis points. The chariot appears from thin air and lasts for one scene, or for an hour — long enough to make a quick getaway, but not long enough to use as regular transportation. By spending a Willpower point, the Bastet's player may urge the chariot into the air for two turns; each additional turn costs another Willpower point.

• **The Madness of Crowds (Level Five)** — As tales from the witch-craze demonstrate, some Ceilican indulge their darker appetites after sundown. The more sadistic of these games involve bystanders whipped into a frenzy by this nasty secret, then set loose. By capering around a room or clearing, the Ceilican can stir up the wild side of everyone nearby, causing an orgy or riot unless her "subjects" are unusually stubborn or controlled. The same Gift can tame an angry mob, although it's generally easier to start trouble than to end it.

System: The fae cat's player rolls Manipulation + Empathy to turn the mood of a crowd her way. By adding a Willpower point to the mix, she seizes control of their collective will. The difficulty of the task depends on the size of the mob, and on how inclined it is to follow her suggestion. A packed nightclub is more likely to be led into an orgy than a Baptist congregation (though the results of the latter might be more disturbing...). All targets must be within 700 feet when the cat begins to use the Gift. Circumstances and surroundings may add or subtract from the overall difficulty; calming a disturbance raises that difficulty by 2. A person caught up in the Gift can attempt to resist with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). The Madness lasts for one scene, and leaves the werecat's control once in motion.

Size of Group	Difficulty
Small group (2-20 people)	6
Medium group (20-50 people)	7
Crowd (50-100 people)	8
Mob (100-300 people)	9
Riot (300-500 people)	10



Khan

The weretigers' warlike nature is balanced by their cultural discipline. Their tribal Gifts tap into both violence and serenity, tempering personal strength with refined skill. Traditional servants of the Maker, these fierce cats can invoke devastating powers against the Asura and all their kind.

- **Rhino's Favor (Level One)** — By calling on the spirit of the rhino, a Khan may grow a temporary horn on her skull. Although this protrusion is a bit unsightly, it allows the tiger to head-butt an opponent for considerable damage.

System: The Khan rolls Gnosis to grow the horn. This protrusion lasts for one scene, and allows her to gore opponents for Strength +2 (aggravated damage, difficulty 7). Tiger skulls aren't built for ramming, however; botching such an attack inflicts normal Strength damage back on the Khan.

- **Skin of Jade (Level One)** — Willing himself solid, a Khan might turn his skin to the hardness of jade. It's said that the spirit of the rock itself taught this Gift to Yu Kwan, a warrior in the service of the alchemist Ko Hung.

System: By spending a Willpower point and rolling Gnosis (difficulty 7), the tiger gains an additional two dice to his soak rolls. This Gift lasts one scene.

- **Heart of Fury (Level Two)** — As the Ahroun Gift.

- **Ricepaper Walk (Level Two)** — By attuning his inner energies, a Khan can walk across a light or fragile surface without disturbing it, regardless of his form or weight. A 900-pound Crinos weretiger weighs no more than a wisp of paper so long as he concentrates on this feat. Once his attention shifts, the Khan's full weight returns.

System: The player makes a Gnosis roll to activate the Gift. Once he does, the Khan must move immediately at half his normal walking speed across whatever surface he wants to cross, and cannot stop. Any distractions force the tiger to make a Willpower roll to keep his concentration; the louder the disruption, the higher the difficulty. The tiger can't carry any other living weight, although he may bear a significant amount of inanimate baggage.

- **Maker's Charm (Level Three)** — Like the Level Three Homid Gift: Craft of the Maker.

- **Paws of the Raging Spirit Tiger (Level Three)** — By channeling his chi energy through this Gift, a Khan may wreath his paws or hands in crackling spirit power. Thus fortified, the tiger can rip through enemies in the spirit world without stepping sideways to do it, so long as he can see them. Obviously, no spirit will teach a Bastet such a damaging Gift; he'll have to learn it from another Khan (and considering this Gift's nature, the learning can be very dangerous!).

System: The Khan spends a Gnosis point and concentrates. The next turn, his paws or hands begin to smolder in blue-white light. This light burns from blue to green to yellow to red. When it attains a pinkish hue, the Gift dissipates. This takes roughly six turns.

- **Asuras' Bane (Level Four)** — As the Level Three Bubasti Gift: Banish Cahlash's Brood, except that using it turns the tiger's pelt white instead of black. Unlike the shadowcats, tigers channel Rahjah to banish corruption.

- **Dragonroar (Level Four)** — Bellowing like a thunderclap, the Khan vomits a ball of fire on his foes. This burning exhalation continues to blaze until either it or its target is consumed.

System: This Gift costs one Gnosis point to perform and blasts out a fireball worth one Health Level for each point of the Khan's current (not permanent) Gnosis. A successful Dexterity + Brawl roll puts the fireball where the tiger wants it. Anyone within 10 feet of

the blast is burned unless he makes a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 8). If the target has already acted this turn, the Dragonroar inflicts its full damage. Next turn, it will burn for half that damage, igniting anything flammable in its range. On the third turn, the Gift's fire burns for one additional Health Level, then dies. A fire begun by the Gift will burn like any normal blaze (see Werewolf, page 197).

- **Call to Battle (Level Five)** — As the Ahroun Gift: Strength of Will.

- **Thousand-Thunder Strike (Level Five)** — By slamming his paws together and invoking Rahjah or one of his manifestations (Shiva, Pan Gu, etc.), an angry tiger causes a shockwave that can level buildings or disrupt unclean spirits. The King of Cats, in his more regal guises, teaches this Gift to worthy Khan.

System: The player spends two points of Gnosis and rolls Willpower (difficulty 7). Each success inflicts three points of Power damage against Asura or other Banes, whichever side of the Gauntlet they might inhabit. This wave also shakes structures in a 200-foot radius. The severity of the damage depends on the Khan's successes: One breaks windows, two crack plaster, three snap wood, four shatter concrete and five bend metal. The wave lasts only a moment, but can be felt for a mile or more.

Pumonca

Simple, rugged folk as a rule, the sturdy Pumonca draw their magics from their connection to the land they wander. Unlike many other nature-bound cultures, the solitary cougars pass lightly across the land, rather than living bound tightly to it. This fleeting contact, and the hazards they encounter on their quests, have given rise to a collection of eclectic, timeless Gifts.

- **Mockingbird's Mirror (Level One)** — According to legend, an early Pumonca known as Three Spiders Climb mastered the art of mimicry and ventriloquism, and passed the secret on to his friends. This secret lets a cougar imitate whomever he wishes — birds, animals, humans, even machines — and allows him to throw his new voice for some distance. As the name suggests, a Mockingbird-spirit often passes the secret along, usually in return for food.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Subterfuge to imitate sounds within the normal human vocal range. So long as he's successful, his mimicry is flawless. If he tries to mirror sounds outside the normal range — subsonic vibrations, explosions, high-frequency whines, etc. — the cat must spend a Gnosis point and the difficulty is 7. This Gift lasts roughly a scene, and sounds can be "thrown" up to 100 feet away from where the werecat stands.

- **Wanderer's Boon (Level One)** — Travel is hard, especially given the Spartan ways of the Pumonca. This Gift allows a cougar to adapt to changing climates quickly, or to ignore the pangs of hunger or thirst for some time. Bird and Bear-spirits pass this Gift along.

System: By rolling Stamina + Survival and spending a Willpower point, the player allows her werecat to do one of the following things: ignore the worst effects of normal heat and cold for a week; go one day without water; or go three days without food. The difficulty for the roll is 6, although harsh conditions (blizzards, droughts, heat waves, etc.) can raise it by two or more. The Gift can be repeated, but the difficulty rises by one each time it's performed in succession.

- **Raincalling (Level Two)** — The spirits of wind and weather are the best friends and worst enemies a Pumonca can have. This Gift, which came from a pact between Old Stone Face and the East Wind, allows a cougar to call forth rain. The shower is more a drizzle than a thunderstorm, but it can cool a hot day, water crops or dampen an empty creek bed in minutes.

System: The cougar's player rolls Manipulation + Survival and spends a Gnosis point to call forth rain. The difficulty depends on the conditions: humid, overcast skies are difficulty 6, while dry, clear skies raise it to 10. If there aren't any clouds in sight, the Gift could take some time to manifest. The intensity and length of the shower depends on the successes rolled; one success might get a brief drizzle, while five successes would make it rain fairly hard for an hour or so. This Gift inflicts no damage and cannot flood most areas.

- **Stonework (Level Two)** — As the Level Three Homid Gift: Craft of the Maker, except that it only affects stone, dirt, clay and glass, employs a Manipulation + Survival roll, and reshapes the object permanently.

- **Bayou Shambler (Level Three)** — Deserts and mountains aren't the only places Pumonca roam. So-called "swamp cats" know the Southern wetlands well. By crooning to the spirits of the bayou and calling upon any favors owed, a Pumonca can call forth a swamp elemental, dripping with plants and ooze, to assist her. While the creature retains its own free will, a Shambler is disposed to be friendly to the cat and hostile toward anyone in her way.

System: The player spends two points each of Rage and Gnosis to animate the Shambler, and rolls Willpower against difficulty 7. The resulting creature is semi-intelligent at best, smells terrible, and lasts for three turns per success. Suggested Shambler Traits are:

Attributes: Strength 4, Dexterity 2, Stamina 5, Wits 1

Abilities: Alertness 1, Brawl 3, Stealth 3

Health Levels: Two per success, and no penalties apply. Once its Health Levels are gone, the Shambler falls apart.

- **Thunderbolt (Level Three)** — A pact with the spirits of the storm allows some Pumonca to call down a thunderbolt. So long as at least one cloud hangs in the air, the cougar can call down lightning. Most cougars learn this mighty spell from Thunderbird himself.

System: The cougar's player spends a point of Rage to summon a bolt of lightning, and rolls Dexterity + Survival to hit the target. Under normal conditions (partly cloudy skies, human-sized target), the roll's difficulty is 8; large targets or stormy skies can decrease it to 7 or 6, while dry conditions or unusually small targets can raise the difficulty to 9 or even 10. The bolt inflicts two Health Levels worth of fire damage for every point of the werecat's Gnosis. Even if the Thunderbolt misses its victim, it's still a terrifying experience to be on the receiving end of a lightning strike. Would-be victims to roll their Willpower against difficulty 8 to avoid running in fear.

- **Element-Folk Favor (Level Four)** — Old Stone Face made many allies among the elemental spirits, and performed many favors for their kind before passing on. The ageless spirits remember his good deeds by aiding those who invoke their ancient ancestor. A Pumonca who performs this Gift can call up an elemental spirit (see Werewolf, pages 266-267) for help. Once it arrives, the spirit will do what it can to assist the cat; after it finishes one task, the spirit departs.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas and spends a Gnosis point to summon the elemental. The roll's difficulty is that of the local Gauntlet. The spirit, if it appears, will be friendly toward the cat, so long as she reminds him of her blood-link to Old Stone Face. No other tribe warrants the same kindness; in fact, Bubasti who have tried to swipe this Gift have been destroyed by the angry elemental spirits they called up. When the first service named has been finished, or when one hour has elapsed, the elemental departs peacefully.

- **The Hungry Earth (Level Four)** — The Mother is not at peace. Some Pumonca know how to rouse her enough to show her displeasure. When this Gift is employed, the ground shakes, opens or gives way, covering tracks, sealing passages or burying the cat's opponents alive.

System: Depending on the cat's environment, this Gift takes many different forms: among hills or mountains, it causes an avalanche; in the swamps, it begets quicksand; in deserts and plains, it causes the ground to open up beneath a target. To invoke these disasters, the cat's player rolls Manipulation + Survival, with the difficulty being the area's Gauntlet +2 (maximum 10) and spends a Rage point. The exact effects are up to the Storyteller, but often affect a 100-foot radius for each success rolled. If the attack causes damage, assume that the victim takes two or three normal Health Levels for each success. Some attacks, like falling rocks, are more deadly, but may allow the target a Dexterity + Athletics roll (difficulty 6-8) to get clear.

- **Earthspeaking (Level Five)** — By sifting dirt and calling on the spirits within the ground, a puma receives visions of things that have happened in the area. These insights can help her follow trails, "witness" past events, or learn where things came from or went. Bird-spirits often pass this Gift along, but some worm and elemental chaya do their part too, especially if the Bastet's questions serve the spirits' ends.

System: The Pumonca concentrates while chanting a single question and a plea. While she does, the player rolls Perception + Enigmas to see into the past. Success reveals the answer. The more distant the event, the higher the difficulty, unless it left impressions so vivid that they never fade (like the Trail of Tears), which might reduce the difficulty by one or two. Events that occurred more than a year ago require a Gnosis point to "see." The vision comes from the perspective of the ground nearby, which might make details hard to read (imagine a worm's-eye view of a murder); some dreams pass emotional impressions, too, leaving moods that can last for hours.

Time Elapsed	Difficulty
A week	4
A month	5
Six months	6
A year	7
10 years	8
50 years	9
100 years +	10

- **Thunderbird's Cry (Level Five)** — As the Level Five Metis Gift: Wrath of Nala, except that the storm may last for up to an hour if the player's roll exceeds five successes.

- **Earthquake (Level Six)** — An old and desperate secret known only to a handful of living cats, this pact allows a Pumonca to shake the earth Herself, wrecking roads and crumbling buildings. Although the epicenter of the quake is fairly small, the tremors can be felt for miles.

System: As the Gift: The Hungry Earth, except that an Earthquake requires two Gnosis points and two Rage points, affects one mile, and causes damage proportionate to the cat's successes (one success can break windows; two would crack plaster; three crumble asphalt, four shatter concrete, and five buckle metal).

Qualmi

Insight and enigma. Perception and misdirection. The Qualmi may be a small tribe in both stature and numbers, but they make up for their size with the strength of their riddling magics. Most Qualmi Gifts and rites involve riddles and guessing games. In many cases, the best defense a target has is to figure out what the werelynx is doing and counter it with another riddle before the enigma takes shape. As a rule, Qualmi respect anyone who can out-guess them; the best way to make friends with a lynx is to beat her in a riddling contest. The names given to Qualmi Gifts reflect their fondness for metaphor; a trick rarely does what its name implies.

- **Breakfast of Stones (Level One)** — As the Level One Pumonca Gift: Wanderer's Boon.

- **Turned Fur (Level One)** — As the Wendigo Gift: Camouflage, save that the cat must discard any clothing and gear before the Gift takes effect — the lynx is the only thing that changes color.

- **No Hidden Thing (Level Two)** — By reading the riddles of the world as mystic patterns, a Qualmi can discover answers that aren't immediately obvious to mortals. It's hard to hide things from a lynx!

System: This Gift combines the Level One Common Gifts: Spirits' Sight, Dowsing, Pathfinder's Pride, Sense the Truth, Sense Unmaker's Hand and Cat Sight. The roll is Perception + Enigmas, and the difficulty ranges from 5 to 9, depending on what the lynx is looking for and how well it's hidden. The Qualmi must spend one Gnosis, but retains the use of this Gift for the entire scene.

- **Wind from the West (Level Two)** — Words can be as ephemeral as the Pacific fog; by making them dance and shimmer, a Qualmi can lead a less-clever opponent into a mental maze, then leave him there to puzzle his own way out. This takes the form of a series of high-speed riddles designed to tie folks' minds into knots. Most Qualmi are especially pleased to find someone clever enough to avoid this mental snare.

System: As the Level Two Bubasti Gift: Mousemaze, except that the roll is Manipulation + Enigmas, and does not cost a Gnosis point. To counter the confusion effect, the target might try to figure out the puzzle (Wits + Enigmas) before it takes effect. Oddly enough, it pleases most Qualmi when a victim can think for himself; this often leads to a riddling contest, with the loser becoming confused by the magic. To simulate this exchange, see "Gamecraft" in *Werewolf* (page 223), and raise the difficulty by one after each turn. When it reaches 10, check the final result: if someone wins and another loses, the loser suffers magical confusion; if both lose, they're both confused; if both win, neither is confused. Most Qualmi take defeat well under these circumstances, and can be very generous losers.

- **Drop of Sea (Level Three)** — Qualmi are renowned shapeshifters; this Gift, which allows them to take a variety of forms, demonstrates why.

System: This Gift combines the powers of the Level Four Homid Gift: Monkey's Uncle and the Level Five Swara Gift: All the Beasts Under the Sun, with the following differences: The roll is Manipulation + Subterfuge (difficulty 7); the animal shapes run from hare-sized to bear-sized; and an observer who makes a Perception + Enigmas roll (difficulty 9) may see the

werecat for what she is. If he wants to undo the magic, he may ask the transformed werecat a riddle (see “Gamecraft”); if she can’t answer it, she changes back to her old form immediately.

- **Nighttime Web (Level Three)** — As the Level Three Common Gift: Cheshire Prank, except that it works in all forms and does not require a grin.

- **Dancing on Air (Level Four)** — As the Level Four Metis Gift: Moon’s Gateway, except that the roll is Intelligence + Enigmas.

- **Still Breeze Blowing (Level Four)** — Like the Lupus Gift: Elemental Gift, this magic allows a Qualmi to conjure a spirit to shift the elements to her advantage. Dwelling in the North as they do, most members of this tribe favor air and ice elementals over fire or earth.

- **Call Down the Stars (Level Five)** — Sometimes the best answer to a riddle is force. This Gift recalls the days of Strange Owl Woman, when the white men dragged iron monsters across the open lands. By confusing the spirits inside machinery with a staggering riddle, the lynx causes fires, power generators and other sources of combustion to explode. This tends to fix most problems for good.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Enigmas (difficulty 7) and spends a Willpower point to drive the riddle home. If she succeeds, the power source — be it gas, coal, wood, electricity, kerosene, whatever — ignites. The exact effects are left to the Storyteller; small fires may flare for one or two Health Levels per success, while car gas tanks or steam train furnaces might blow for four Health Levels per success. Some combustion must be involved — a canister of gasoline will not explode on its own. No Qualmi has dared to find out what would happen if the spirits of nuclear power plants were confused; the results might poison the entire land.

- **Water’s Vision (Level Five)** — Water sees everything. By learning to see as the water does, a Qualmi can look through barriers to see what lies beyond them. Walls, vaults, the Gauntlet — nothing stops a Qualmi who wants to see around them.

System: Seeing through barriers requires a Perception + Primal-Urge roll against the Gauntlet rating. For each success, the lynx can see 100 feet without obstruction. Every object, from stone walls to living bodies to the Gauntlet, appears translucent and immaterial. Unfortunately, it’s often hard to pick one thing out from among the series of see-through patterns; it often requires a Perception + Alertness roll to notice details. This vision stops at ground level, although the cat can see into basements or cellars if her sight extends far enough. This power lasts one turn per success.

Simba

Ferocious and inspiring, the magic of the lion-folk drives inferior creatures to their knees — literally. Although there are a few benevolent tricks in a Simba’s bag, most of them are geared toward mastery, not subtlety. Fast, impressive and loud, many of these magics rely on imposing his will on others. The Simba who cannot master such an easy task is not long for this world.

- **Majesty (Level One)** — The first trick a good king learns is how to impress his subjects. By employing the ancient right of command, any Simba may demand respect and expect to get it.

System: Like the Level One Common Gift: Command Attention, except that it lasts a whole scene and involves Manipulation + Intimidation. Other Simba are immune to its effects.

- **Submit (Level One)** — The second trick in a ruler’s arsenal is the ability to make his subjects obey whether they want to or not. By mastering their bodies, a Simba can force others to fall to their knees or roll over on their backs in submission. They can say whatever they like, but their reactions betray their cowardice!





System: Like the Philodox Gift: Roll Over, although Simba of Ranks One or Two will have to spend two Gnosis to use it. The Gift won't change a target's mind, but it *will* master his body if the player rolls at least three successes in a resisted Willpower roll (difficulty 7). This lasts one turn per success. Simba are immune to this Gift if it is used by one of their kind.

- **Armor of Kings (Level Two)** — As the Children of Gaia Gift: Luna's Armor.

- **Rallying Challenge (Level Two)** — By sending her inner power outward, a Simba may rally herself to accomplish things normally outside her range. With a shattering cry, she raises her physical strength or force of personality to unusual heights.

System: Like the Level Two Bagheera Gift: Ojas Surge, except that it only boosts Strength, Stamina or Charisma, takes one turn (and a thunderous roar) to achieve, and can only be done once per scene.

- **Fire roar (Level Three)** — As the Level Three Khan Gift: Dragonroar.

- **Shadow the Moon's Light (Level Three)** — There is a time for everything, even for stealth. As nocturnal hunters, the catkings have perfected a secret which allows them to dim the light as they approach. While it can't actually extinguish the moon, this Gift stifles natural, magical and technological lights equally well.

System: To dim the local lights, the werecat's player rolls Manipulation + Stealth. The dimness lasts for one turn per success.

Light Source	Difficulty
Weak (torches, lamps)	6
Bright (fires, moonlight)	7
Harsh illumination (headlights)	8
Powerful lamps (halogen bulbs, yard lights)	9
Overwhelming (spotlights, sunlight)	10

- **The Bountiful Dominion (Level Four)** — A ruler must be prepared to provide for his subjects. By laying this Gift upon the land, a Simba can make the local crops grow quickly, the soil turn fertile and the waters run clear. This Gift comes from the hand of Manu T'Chaa, who ended a famine with his wisdom and passed the secret to his descendants.

System: As the Level Four Metis Gift: Redeem the Waste, except that the magic doubles crop growth and health, purifies water immediately, and costs one Gnosis per success.

- **King of Beasts (Level Four)** — As the Philodox Gift: King of the Beasts, except that it affects all animals within 300 feet.

- **Command the Multitude (Level Five)** — Like the Level One Gift: Submit, except that it affects everyone in a 200-foot radius and requires a Gnosis point. To make things easy, the Storyteller may simply have the player roll three successes with Willpower (difficulty 9) to dominate a strong-willed crowd. Lesser foes, like normal humans or animals, reduce the difficulty to 6.

- **Rising Sun (Level Five)** — It is said that the lion carries the sun in his heart; the saying may contain more truth than poetry. Some powerful Simba can cause the land around them to blaze with sunlight, even at night. According to tribal caliah, Taa Mlimba used this magic to drive the vampires from his lands ages ago. Although it's not as effective against the undead as true sunlight, this Gift is certainly potent.

System: Conjuring sunlight requires two Gnosis points and a Charisma + Primal-Urge roll (difficulty 7). Once this is done, the surrounding rock and earth begin to glow. Each turn, the light grows brighter, until the rocks blaze like the sun; after six turns, it fades away. This light, blinding as it is, doesn't hurt most living things, and leaves

the rocks stone cold; against vampires and other things that fear the sun, however, the Gift inflicts one additional cumulative aggravated Health Level for every turn after the first (one during the second turn, two during the third, etc.). Thus, at its height, the light causes five Health Levels of damage. While this damage may be soaked with Fortitude, most Kindred will remember such an encounter....

• **Royal Privilege (Level Six)** — This deeply despised trickery allows an ancient and powerful lion to steal another werecat's Gifts, even those which traditionally belong only to that tribe or breed. Black Tooth has gathered a lot of his power through this deadly secret. Those who've met him claim he invokes his "privilege" by killing other Bastet, then taking their secrets from their spirits as they die. While there may be other Bastet who know the Gift, they don't have many friends.

System: This Gift comes from the Unmaker, and may be restricted to one or two corrupt old lions in the Storyteller's domain. Using it is simple, yet difficult: To learn a new Gift, the werecat who knows it must be killed. As the victim dies, the Simba invokes this terrible power, ripping the secrets from the dying flesh. This requires two Gnosis and a Manipulation + Occult roll. The difficulty is the dying cat's Rank +5. For each success, the lion may learn one Gift he didn't know before, providing the slain Bastet knew it instead. To "keep" these Gifts, the Simba must pay experience points for them; a stolen Gift that remains "free" can be used once, then forgotten. Only Simba know this trick — some Bubasti have tried to acquire it, but have died in the process.

Swara

It's easy to underestimate the Swara. Most people do. They're not particularly strong, and their Gifts concentrate on misdirection and speed. Although they're faster than any other creature on land, the Swara's general skittishness and shy behavior lead other werecats to underestimate their equally quick and subtle minds.

As rovers, Swara tend to pick up many general Gifts, and learn secrets from many other tribes — including the Garou. Unbeknownst to most Bastet, the children of Damaa walk the space beneath the world. In the Umbra, they traffic with the spirits and learn many of the ancestral Gifts usually reserved for the dogs. These Gifts, too numerous to mention, place them close to the werewolves when it comes to spirit-savvy. Most Theurge Gifts can be considered tribal secrets of equal rank, in addition to the ones offered below. This wisdom is not common knowledge among catkind; for the rambling cheetahs, it's helpful, even essential, to remain underestimated.

• **Diamond Claws (Level One)** — As the Level One Common Gift: Razor Claws. This magic is especially helpful for the Swara, who wear their claws down through daily use.

• **Impala's Flight (Level One)** — As the Level Three Common Gift. This results in a truly impressive speed.

• **Walking Between Worlds (Level Two)** — As the Level Four Common Gift of the same name. That this talent is so common among the Swara is a closely-guarded secret.

• **Weight of a Heart (Level Two)** — As the Swara know, the weight of emotions comes from the weight of the heart. Making the heart swell creates euphoria, while shrinking it generates terror or despair. By working the weight of another being's heart, a Swara can induce crazy mood swings from a distance. Nothing diffuses a fight faster than making the aggressor walk away in near-suicidal depression. Tales credit this Gift to Hatti, who knows the ways of the heart better than most people do.

System: A Manipulation + Empathy roll changes the target's mood. The more radical the shift (from joy to sudden weeping), the higher the difficulty. Even so, this is an easy Gift to use — its difficulties range from 4 to 8. The victim — if even aware that something has changed his mood from the outside — can resist the Gift with a Willpower roll at difficulty 8. Otherwise, the Gift lasts one scene, and inflicts no damage.

• **Clearwater Passage (Level Three)** — By turning herself into liquid, a Swara can pass through barriers without fully passing into the Umbra. Like water, she trickles through cracks, seeps around obstacles and soaks through materials. Once she reaches the other side, the cheetah reforms into a solid shape and continues on her way. It's said that Shi'a the Water Ghost taught this Gift to the Swara elder Nyolo in return for a kiss. He nearly drowned, but survived her embrace long enough to pass the Gift to his friends before joining his love beneath the waves.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Stamina + Enigmas (difficulty 7) to turn her Bastet into water, and the cat remains in that state for two turns per success. While liquid, she cannot be harmed by any physical attack except fire (from which she takes the usual aggravated damage). She may reform at any time, but must use the Gift again to turn into liquid again. If she's been "absorbed" while in a watery state, the Swara bursts out of the material when she turns back into solid form.

• **Dance of the Chaya (Level Three)** — One of the greatest favors a Bastet can offer a spirit is the chance to ride in his skin for a while. Although most cats would never consider such a "loan," many Swara see voluntary possession as a service, not a chore. This Gift, which begins with a frenzied dance, allows a chaya to enter the werecat and "take control" for a while. The spirit gets a body to ride, and the werecat gets certain... benefits. The Dance is seen more as an act of love or affection than of servitude — a sentiment few Bastet would ever understand.

System: A smart cheetah performs a spirit calling before he starts the Gift, and scans the Umbra to see who responds before opening himself to the possession. More often than not, the cat will be familiar with the ghost or spirit before he offers it a ride. Once the Dance has begun, the player rolls Charisma + Enigmas, difficulty 7. The Gift lasts about two turns per success, and allows the Swara to do things that would usually be impossible — wild contortions, great feats of strength, flight, etc. The exact effects of the Dance will depend on the spirit, the Bastet, their circumstances, and the relationship between the three, but should emphasize drama over game systems.

• **Ghost Caress (Level Four)** — This secret, called the "Ghost Caress" because most people blame ghosts for its effects, recalls the time when all things were still one. By tapping the spirits that bond objects together, the Swara can send sensations across a distance. To use the Gift, a cheetah must hold something that contains the essence of the person she wants to affect; locks of hair, prized possessions, or items of clothing are good examples. Focusing her intentions on the item, she does whatever she wants done to the item, not the target. A sympathetic pulse passes between the two objects and, if the cat has been successful, transfers a feeling from the item to the target. Although the magic can't physically harm someone, it can drive him nearly crazy as phantom pains or pleasures wash over him without noticeable cause.

System: To reach across space, the Swara's player spends a Willpower point and rolls Gnosis. The difficulty depends on the distance between the Bastet and her target. Whatever she does to her focus from that point passes the sensation on to the person on the

receiving end. Each success gives her one action to perform. When those actions are done, the spell ends. This Gift passes sensations only, not damage; it can send the *feeling* of being slapped, but it will not do harm. Likewise, it cannot move the target at all; a Swara who simply lifts a handkerchief cannot lift the person who owned it.

Distance	Difficulty
Nearby (one mile)	7
A ways off (two to five miles)	8
Distant (six to 10 miles)	9
Really distant (10 to 50 miles)	10

- **Judgment of Pestilence (Level Four)** — As the Level Five Feline Gift of the same name.

- **All Beasts Under the Sun (Level Five)** — As the Black Fury Gift: The Thousand Forms.

- **River of Blood (Level Five)** — The soil of Africa has been bathed in the blood of its inhabitants for millions of years. A Swara can call that spilled blood together through the soil and give it form, creating a pool, a river, a mass of tentacles, or a variety of other things. This bond to blood seems to be limited to African soil; if a Swara has ever used this Gift outside his native land, no tales of the event survive.

System: It costs a Rage point to pull a large amount of blood together. A successful Manipulation + Primal-Urge roll is also required. The roll's difficulty depends on location; a place that's seen a lot of bloodshed (a watering hole, the site of a massacre, etc.) is only 7, while a remote mountain peak would be 10. It takes several turns for the blood to coalesce into solid form; once it does, the cheetah can work it into any of the following shapes: a wall, a column, a shower, a geyser, a pool, a river, a rope, a bridge, or a mass of "arms" which wrap the target in a liquid embrace. All forms have Strength or Health Levels based on the cat's successes. For each success, the blood attains two dots of Strength or two Health Levels. Although it remains liquid, the River of Blood can be as solid as thick sand or as fluid as water. This Gift lasts for one scene, then the blood drains back into the earth. The Swara who performs the Gift will be sad for hours afterward; the blood of immeasurable death has passed through his hands.

Rites

*A witch; and one so strong
She could control the moon — make flows and ebbs,
And deal in her command with all her power.*
— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

Potent as the Gifts of cat magic are, some tasks require more ceremonial rites. Although the Bastet, being less social and more individualistic, don't place the same importance on rites as their lupine cousins, some occasions are still significant enough to warrant an elaborate ritual.

Most Bastet rites are solitary; while they often include *chaya*, these ceremonies are performed by a single cat. Taghairm Rites are an exception — these ceremonies demand the presence of a number of Bastet. Other werecats can participate in the solitary rites; their presence just isn't *required* to complete the rituals.

Like Gifts, rites involve story elements more significant than the game mechanics. Such rituals are important milestones in a werecat's life, especially the Rites of Kuasha, Need and Moon, and shouldn't be brushed off with a simple "Yeah, you did the Rite of Contrition and everything's fine." Folklore speaks in hushed tones of mad-cat rites, where screeches and yowls could be heard for miles and villagers

Rites Chart

Type	Roll	Difficulty
Kuasha	Charisma + Rituals	6
Moon	Manipulation + Rituals	9-phaseofthemoon
Need	Wits + Rituals	7
Taghairm	Charisma + Rituals	7

locked themselves inside, lest they catch sight of the dancing cats even by accident, and be hunted down and ripped to pieces. The Folk are not casual with their rites — no stranger, not wizard nor werewolf, not mortal nor immortal, is welcome at feline rituals. Play a rite for all it's worth; to a Bastet, it's worth a hell of a lot.

In game terms, Bastet rites function much like Garou ones. Each rite level requires at least 10 minutes worth of ceremony to enact, although the cat-folk don't require the various celebrants that werewolf rites do. A cat can only perform rites that she has the Knowledge Ability to understand, and must set aside a ritual space by clearing and preparing a spot for a sacred working. Although the Bastet don't have the strict social codes that Garou abide by, they take their rituals fairly seriously. The cat must be in the right state of mind to invoke the proper magics, and among some tribes that may take a bit of preparation in itself.

Overlapping Rites

Many Bastet rites duplicate Garou rites in effect, if not in form. Storytellers and players should work together to define the variations in a rite; for example, a Bastet might perform the Dedication Rite only at twilight. The following rites are shared, if not in name, by both werecats and werewolves.

Kuasha: Dedication Rite (Rite of Talisman Dedication), Rite of Contrition

Moon: Bind the Spirit-Fetish (Rite of the Fetish), Rite of Summoning, Rouse the Sleeping Spirit (Rite of Spirit Awakening)

Need: Rite of Cleansing, Rite of the Opened Bridge

Taghairm: Festival of Flowers (Gathering for the Departed)

Kuasha Rites

During a werecat's "apprenticeship," he undergoes many trials and learns many things. Most kuasha celebrate a pupil's progress with a series of rites which they pass to a new Bastet as his teachings end. Most of these rituals are considered Level One rites; once taught, they can be performed at any time. The kit has earned the privilege to learn the secrets. The more advanced rites are taught to brilliant pupils who attain higher levels of knowledge before they finish their training. Of course, if the Tekhmet fails his First Year, or if he has no official training at all (like the Hitchhiker template in chapter five), he won't know any of these rites until another Bastet sees fit to teach him.

Speaking of the Name

Level One

Names have power; thus, all Bastet change their birth names to new titles during their First Year. This rite, performed by the Tekhmet and the kuasha together, "seals" that new name and makes it part of the cat. Traditionally, the Swara mark this rite (and the apprentice) with a ceremonial tattoo, usually across the initiate's chest. The Balam often pierce the newcomer's lip, earlobe or nostrils



with a jeweled plug. Simba and Khan mark the rite with a hunt, usually of a human target, in which the initiate tastes the blood of her first kill as a Bastet. Pumonca and Qualmi send their kits on short visionquests, take them to sweat lodges, or offer them ordeal rituals like the Sioux sun dance, while the Ceilican bless their new members in old faerie rings. The more ceremonial Bagheera and Bubasti perform elaborate and formal rites to welcome their offspring; these rituals, which might take as long as a day to complete, often involve two or more elders who have been invited to attend.

System: Aside from a standard roll, a new name and the ritual needs of the tribal ceremonies, this rite requires nothing special.

Rite of Recognition

Level Two

To be accepted into a new Rank, a Bastet must perform this rite before the spirits, his peers, or both. Like many werecat rituals, this ceremony can be done by a solitary cat, and it often is. A Balam in the wilderness doesn't have to travel to the nearest taghairm to be recognized — the spirits will carry tales of his deeds to other cats.

To petition for a new Rank, the cat stands in a circle prepared for the rite with herbs and, if possible, trophies of his achievements. Speaking the ritual phrases, he recites his deeds, relates his accomplishments since attaining the last Rank, and demands to be recognized for what he has done. If he succeeds, the others agree and declare his new standing; if not, they tell him why they're dissatisfied and deny his petition. These reasons can range anywhere from a lack of progress to bad politics. The Bastet may only perform this rite once per season.

System: In addition to the usual rite roll, the cat must make a good impression (either Charisma or Manipulation + either Enigmas, Etiquette, Expression, Leadership, Occult or Politics,

depending on the cat, his audience, and the case he's trying to make). The difficulty for this roll often depends on what the cat has done in the past, and how he stands in the eyes of his jury. Unless the werecat does something truly striking between attempts, this rite rises in difficulty each time it's failed, then repeated. Neither the cats nor the spirits respect a loser.

Passing the Yava

Level Two

These secrets contain the seeds of survival or destruction for the entire tribe. Passing them on to a youngster is a sign of the utmost trust and pride. Imagine handing a loaded gun to your child and telling him to shoot at a target behind your head; that's the kind of importance the Yava convey. They're not passed on lightly, or to fools. Thus, this exchange, often the last rite between a kit and her mentor, is deeply important.

This ritual, traditionally performed at dusk, involves a recitation of the three secrets, a reminder of their importance, and an admonishment to keep them safe. The kuasha informs her apprentice that someday he too will pass on the Yava, and that his judgment will reflect the future of the tribe. To betray the trust, even under torment, is the worst crime a Bastet can commit. Before this rite is performed, the mentor scans the area for spirits or other eavesdroppers. If the area is clear, the secrets are then passed between elder and kit. Afterward, the two spend their last night together and part ways at dawn. Although they may very well remain friends, the First Year has ended. The kit is on his own.

System: Although the kuasha traditionally checks and secures the ritual site before beginning the rite, this ceremony requires no special materials.



Kuasha Degree

Level Three

With this rite, a teacher passes on the secrets of her teaching, so that the pupil may become a kuasha. Normally, the Degree must be uncovered through the “proper channels” — that is, the secrets of the rite must be dug out of a series of mentors, contacts and friends, then pieced together. An especially apt Tekhmet might impress her mentor so well that he passes on everything she needs to know before her apprenticeship ends; it’s rare, but it has been known to happen.

The Kuasha Degree contains all the rites, advice, secrets and preparations a Bastet needs in order to take a pupil, and confers the right to do so. Even so, the elder usually cautions her kit to take a bit of time to see the world for himself before he begins teaching someone else about it. Taking a kit means responsibility; most kuashas stress that their pupils must run free for a while before taking on such a burden. At the end of the ritual, the mentor invests her student with the power to take a student of his own, and advises him to do so carefully.

In the Degree, a Tekhmet learns how to find taghairms, how to petition spirits, how to find a new-Changed Bastet and how to chastise him for doing wrong. It relates the responsibilities and rights the mentor receives under Bastet law, and offers lots of common wisdom about the feeding and caring of a kit. The Yava is not passed on through this rite — that requires its own rite. The Tekhmet has been taught how to pass on the tribal secrets, but isn’t told what they are until the mentor and student part ways.

System: This rite takes six hours, often longer. Aside from making time to talk and having the freedom to do so, this rite doesn’t require special preparations.

Moon Rites

These magical rituals can only be performed beneath the glow of Seline and the vault of Ahu. Moonlight is an essential part of all of the following rites, so each of them occurs outside after sundown. Although cloudiness won’t prevent the rite, it’ll make performing it a bit more difficult (add 1 to the difficulty, add two if it’s raining, unless the rite conjures a storm). Bastet often choose full-moon phases to enact such rituals; the strength of Seline makes the rites easier and more powerful.

Moon Rites invoke the power of the Bastet patron, strengthening their ties with her and infusing them with her essence. All Moon Rites have mystical effects; tales of them have colored human folklore and superstition for millennia. These are the most sacred rites of all; anyone caught spying on them will be hunted down. This punishment is rarely necessary; Moon Rites evoke such power that any non-Bastet — including wizards and other shapechangers — feel distinctly uneasy and physically sick. All spies must make Stamina + Enigmas rolls once or twice during the ceremony or freak out (the difficulty is 5 + the level of the rite). The effects of the breakdown depend on the spies and the Storyteller, but include insanity, uncontrolled nausea, total panic (as the Delirium) or phantom pains. Vampires and werewolves have been driven to frenzy, while sorcerers have fallen into Quiet as a result of peeking at Moon Rites. Bastet elders, of course, know what such signs betray, and the worst fate — being ripped apart by angry claws — often follows a spy’s discomfort.

Rite of Warding

Level One

A simple precaution taken around any site of importance, this rite is typically performed before the guests for a taghairm arrive. By calling up spirits, securing the corners and entrances of the site and charging the safety of the area to Seline, the Bastet sets up an “alarm system” which bars the site against lesser intrusions and alerts the ritespeaker against greater ones.

System: By spending a Gnosis point, the ritespeaker ties herself to the place for the duration of the Warding. This Warding continues for one hour per success unless the ritespeaker either leaves the area or dismisses the guard. For as long as it lasts, any non-Bastet who enters the area triggers a mystic feeling of unease; the ritespeaker will not know exactly who or what the culprit is, but she’ll know something isn’t right. Intruders cannot enter a warded site at all without succeeding in a Willpower roll (difficulty is 5 + the caster’s successes) — the energies of the place simply drive them away for no explicable reason. Even spirits cannot pass through a warded area without alerting the ritespeaker.

Rite of Claiming

Level Three

This mystic secret proclaims the foundation, or transferral of a Den-Realm. To do this, a Bastet travels across his territory on foot, marking the boundaries with scratches, urine and other forms (graffiti, incantations, blood, etc.). When the circuit is completed, the werecat performs the rite in the place where he began, and binds himself to the essence of the place. From then on, the area is his Den-Realm, and he may do what he wants within it.

Occasionally, Den-Realms exchange hands; some upstarts take the lands from dying elders, while others receive old friends’ territory for safekeeping. This rite is still essential to becoming one with the land; until it’s performed by the new owner, it’s just another hunting ground. Sometimes, a dying elder will pass the rite along to the newcomer as a gesture of respect. If the Den-Realm has been ripped from her hands, however, the old owner’s not likely to help the thief. Although Den-Realms may be expanded by performing this rite again, no werecat can keep more than one separate Realm. Fewer still would give up their lands without a fight. The Den-Realm is the cat’s true home, and until she dies, it remains a part of her.

System: Standard roll; the rules for Den-Realms can be found in Chapter Three.

Eater of the Dead

Level Four

The Bubasti alone command this rite, a vile punishment reserved for oathbreakers among their tribe and thieves from outside it. By calling to Sobk, the Egyptian crocodile lord, an elder Bubasti sends the soul of the offender into a labyrinthine spirit realm deep within the ground. Here (they say), the victim is stalked by Sobk, who pursues him, corners him, judges him and may consume his soul.

Once a transgressor is caught, the shadowcats bind him for the rite. During the ritual, the offender’s tongue is ripped out, his eyes are seared and his ears are plugged up. Special wrappings, prepared in sandalwood oil and honey, are wound around the cat

from toes to forehead. Then his head is struck off, followed by his limbs, and the whole mess is burned in an oven prepared for the rite. This ceremony, horrifying in itself, sends the cat’s soul to the tunnels of Sobk to be judged.

The chase begins as the cat, now whole again, rips out of his bandages and flees into the tunnels. The Eater of the Dead pursues the soul for what seems like weeks, until he finally corners the cat. Biting off each limb in turn, he judges the soul on a golden scale. If the punishment so far is ruled enough, the soul is freed to its final journey. If Sobk doesn’t like what he sees, he devours the offender forever.

System: Standard roll, plus a Gnosis point and the preparations mentioned above. Rather than joining his Ancestor-spirits, a truly unworthy victim’s essence is gone for good. Tales of this gruesome rite keep other cats very far away from Bubasti affairs.

Call the Four Winds

Level Five

Cats are renowned masters of the weather. While many Gifts reflect this talent to a small degree, Call the Four Winds affects weather patterns across whole sections of a country.

Unlike many rites, the Call demands the presence of five Bastet. One leader, the ritespeaker, decides what changes to request and begins the ritual. The others take the roles of the four corners of the earth and invoke the powers of each of them in turn. The ritespeaker acts as a center, and stands amid the others in a prepared circle, channeling their power. As the rite progresses, the power builds until the circle is swept through with elemental force. Spirits swirl screaming past the ritespeaker, who sends them up into the sky to bind the clouds and invoke the werecats’ will. In time, storms gather or disperse, rain comes, winds rise, blizzards begin, tempests rage or calm.... A whole range of weather effects, from dust storms to squalls, can be evoked with a pride of cats, this rite, and a knowledgeable leader.

System: The exact effects of the Call are left to the Storyteller. These should depend on the wishes of the ritespeaker, the successes she rolls, the local climate, and the dictates of the story. A severe weather front will be harder to raise or disperse than a subtle shift, and a long-lasting change will be harder to affect than a brief storm. Unseasonal patterns, like blizzards in summer, should be considered difficulty 9 or 10, but may be possible if the story allows.

Rite of Nine Lives

Level Five

The secret knowledge granted by Seline to the wisest of her children allows them to literally return from the dead. This rite, which may only be performed once in a werecat’s life, allows her to return from the dead as many as eight times before her spirit departs for good.

To begin, the werecat sets aside a ritual space outside and calls upon Seline’s favor. After mixing a bit of blood, water, spit and fur in a bowl, she holds the bowl up to the moon and chants the rite. Once finished, she drinks the broth and hopes for the best. Seline will be the final judge as to whether the cat survives her death or not.

System: Standard roll, plus two Gnosis points. This rite can be performed only once, and the success of it remains uncertain until something kills the werecat. If successful, the Bastet recovers from her death; her spirit remains in the body and wills

it to return to health. Depending on how she perishes, this may take some time. A Bastet who's "merely" mauled will return in a day or two; if she falls off a 40-story building, it may take a week to recover; a really nasty demise, like immolation or entombment, may take her weeks to confound. The recovery process is slow and painful — a Bastet who had been skinned to death may wish she had *stayed* dead before she heals completely. As you can imagine, a werecat who returns from death often has some serious scores to settle upon her return....

Once the cat lives again in all senses of the word, she may still face difficulties. If she was buried, she'll have to dig herself out. This may kill her a second time before she can escape. Dismemberments do not prevent resurrection — some gruesome tales speak of werecats who were hanged, drawn and quartered, only to drag their limbs from their crossroads graves to rejoin somewhere in the middle. Once recovered, the werecat loses one permanent point each from her Rage, Gnosis and Willpower. These points may never be regained; hence, a Simba who died eight times finishes his life with a maximum of two dots in each of these Traits. Any part of the cat that is destroyed (see below) is lost forever; resurrected cats often lose limbs or retain other disfigurements. Aside from that, the werecat is her old self (though some deaths leave permanent emotional and psychological scars).

Naturally, some deaths cancel out even this arcane secret. If a Bastet dies in one of these ways, she won't come back, and must face her fate like the rest of Gaia's children.

- Total destruction of the body (cremation, dissolution in acid or toxic waste, wood-chipper shredding, etc.)
- Natural death by old age
- Death in some outer Realm (the Deep Umbra, a Horizon Realm, an Umbra world, etc.)
- Imprisonment of the soul (through some forms of magic or magick, or through soul-pacts or annihilation)
- The vampiric Embrace

Wishing Waves

Level Five

By yowling, spitting and dancing around a lake or sea, a werecat can stir the surface into waves. Ceilican who drowned their enemies this way gave rise to tales of witches who danced with cats to create storms at sea. Although this tribe claims to have originated the Rite, the Bubasti say otherwise. In their stories, Bast herself taught her children to wreck invaders on the Nile, and supposedly used it to punish Pharaoh Snefru II, who persecuted her kind.

System: This rite must be performed on a cliff or beach overlooking the sea. To begin the tempest, each player makes the standard roll and spends two Gnosis points. If more than one cat performs the rite, all their successes are added together. Each blood-Kinfolk present adds an additional success to the total. One roll is made for each hour spent dancing, at successively higher difficulties; each new roll costs an additional two Gnosis points and a point of Willpower. The turbulence extends out for one mile for every Bastet participating in the rite, and dies down an hour or so after the dance ends.

The severity of the storm depends on the successes gathered; obviously, most Bastet perform this rite as an extended roll, accumulating successes until they reach the desired ef-

fect. Each success level makes the waves a bit more powerful: One or two create choppy little waves; three to five turn the water rough; six to eight create trouble for small craft; nine to 10 make sailing difficult for large boats, almost impossible for small ones; 10 to 15 successes can capsize anything smaller than an old sailing ship, although large vessels remain unmoved. 15 to 20 can create problems for freighters and small navy ships, while 21 or more can swamp large warships and tankers. The waves often spill across shore, and might threaten the dancing cats before the rite is finished.

Rites of Need

In an emergency, a wise Bastet can perform certain rites which may carry him through the crisis. Unlike most rites, these ceremonies take only five to 10 minutes; time is often of the essence when such rites are involved.

Jamak Promise Bond

Level One

Even a cat can need a friend. When a spirit and a Bastet come to an understanding, they offer each other a pledge of friendship. This rite seals that bond; while it has no mystic repercussions, it's considered a formal oath and is taken seriously by both parties.

Standing alone in a clearing or room, the Bastet and her Jamak recite certain promises: to help when possible, to be truthful always, to respect, and to trust. Both sides agree to protect (or to refrain from harming) the other's loved ones, and to meet once in a while to share secrets and good times. The rite lowers the Gauntlet long enough for both parties to exchange a handshake or a kiss, and reduces the difficulty by two if one party wants to cross over to the other side. By the end of the rite, both cat and spirit feel flushed and happy; although it confers some responsibilities to both sides, the Bond carries a sense of fellowship and love. For a while, at least, both partners are united.

System: Standard roll. Although a Bastet can have many spirit friends, she may only choose one Jamak at a time. Carelessly breaking the Bond promises may reduce her Rank by one or two, depending on what happens and why, as the Jamak spreads word of the werecat's infidelity.

Rite of Fear

Level Three

A relic of the Madness and the tiger hunts, this rite sends a cloud of terror across the land, conjuring nightmares and spreading panic. Animals may stampede, riots may flare and brave men may decide that now is a good time to leave....

To begin the rite, the cat assumes her Crinos form and dances madly, howling her hatred to the moon. As her fury rises, she rips everything around her to shreds, living or otherwise, and flings the pieces across the site. Screeching, spitting, arching and slashing, she sends her fury outward to infest the minds of everyone in reach. Once there, the terror festers, bursting outward through dreams into waking and sending the locals into a panic. At the end of the ritual she falls exhausted, but has begun a wave of fear that continues until the second sunrise.

System: The Rite of Fear requires two Rage points and a standard roll, and spreads one mile for every success. Every

additional cat can add to the total (like Wishing Waves), but anyone close by is at risk, including the other cats. A werecat enacting the rite is considered to be in a frenzy until the ceremony ends; when it ends, she falls asleep.

Obviously, the Rite of Fear is performed at night; a full moon lowers the difficulty to 5, and a gibbous one to 6. Across the land, savage nightmares and anxiety attacks plague every living thing for a night and a day; any characters in the area must make Willpower rolls (difficulty 8) to get through the day without acting irrationally. Other effects are left to the Storyteller; children, old people and farm animals are especially sensitive to the Fear, and any number of things can happen.

Taghairm Rites

Bastet aren't social animals as a rule, so when they gather, certain rituals must be observed. These rites create an aura of fellowship and trust — essential ingredients for a gathering of territorial Folk — and keep things proceeding smoothly.

During each taghairm, one Bastet is chosen as the ritespeaker, either by the group or by the host of the gathering. From then on, that person carries the respect and responsibility of her office. Most regular taghairms have permanent ritespeakers; these cats gain additional status with the post (see "Renown" in Chapter Three). Although the ritespeaker performs most Taghairm Rites in that location, she'll often appoint assistants in case she leaves between gatherings, or to help her perform elaborate rites.

Caliah

Level One

Like the Garou Moot Rite, this ritual opens all taghairms, charging the participants with mystic energy. Unlike the Garou, werecats rarely keep sacred sites. Instead, the Caliah refreshes the Gnosis of all participants and generates a sense of wonder and togetherness. As the ritespeaker chants the histories, rivalries are put aside and quarrels silenced. For a few minutes, at least, everyone present is hamaal, one family.

System: Standard roll. For each two successes (rounded up), each Bastet present receives a temporary point of Gnosis. If these points exceed a cat's usual rating, they fade in the morning. This rite can only be done once per month for the same group or by the same ritespeaker.

Grooming the Newcomer

Level Two

When a new Bastet enters an existing group, she must be welcomed with this ritual; until then, she's considered *naa*, an untrustworthy stranger. First, the ritespeaker questions the newcomer, often using Gifts like Sense the Truth and Righteous Gaze; she then asks others whether or not they've heard of the newcomer. Some taghairm groups test new visitors with questions, quests or ordeals to see how worthy they might be. If the examination satisfies the ritespeaker and the host of the gathering, they both welcome the newcomer into the group. All attendees rise and greet their new cousin with gestures of affection and offer her gifts of food and drink. From then on, that Bastet is always welcome.

System: Standard roll, often performed after a variety of Gifts.





Hanshii

Level Two

Some grudges can only be settled by force. To keep the peace, a host might demand that quarreling Bastet enter a ritual combat to decide the issue. All attendees and their allies agree to abide by the decision.

The formalities depend on the host's tribe, the grudge and the location of the gathering. The combatants are obliged to follow the host's rules regardless of their tribe. The Balam, Khan and Simba favor death-matches more than the other tribes do; Ceilican and Qualmi prefer tests of wit, while Bagheera and Bubasti respect tests of judgment. The Swara often send both parties questing in the Penumbra, opening a "window" to watch their progress. Pumonca let the elements decide, and sponsor tests by fire or exposure. No use of Gifts or outside assistance is allowed. The rite ensures that both sides play fair; those who cheat are magically marked.

As the duel begins, the ritespeaker chants a litany extolling challenge, fairness and honor. From there, she watches what transpires, watching especially for fair play. If someone does cheat, the ritespeaker feels a sharp tingling and calls the contest to a halt. The cheater's skin or fur blazes with a sickly yellow or green light. His punishment depends on the host. If a winner is declared, the dispute is considered over. While this often ends the problem, a few Bastet take their grudge home with them and handle it without witnesses next time....

System: Standard roll, plus a Gnosis point, from the ritespeaker. The cheater's glow lasts for one day and costs him five to 10 points of Honor (see "Renown") until he redeems himself.

Exile

Level Three

Taghairms are gatherings of trust; if someone breaks that trust, the others throw him out. The rite marks such betrayals, and carries the stigma of shame to other gatherings. A werecat's future companions may judge him by this sign.

When the host has declared an Exile, the other cats must vote. If the majority agrees, the ritespeaker begins the ritual. In some cases, the gathering must decide unanimously; in others, the host may simply demand a majority vote. The rite itself involves a revocation of the Grooming ritual, a recitation of the exile's crimes and usually a few choice words. As the ritespeaker spins a cloak of words, the exile's forehead begins to glow; by the end of the rite, the sigil of an oathbreaker appears. As the glow fades, the sigil remains and the other cats chase the offender from their gathering. If they catch him, they'll beat him to a pulp, but leave him alive to remember his shame. The mark fades from view by morning, but remains a part of the exile's soul. Any subsequent Grooming rite reveals the mark; only the forgiveness of the host (a separate rite of the same Rank) or some powerful quest will wash away the mark.

System: The ritespeaker makes her standard roll and spends a point of Rage to apply the brand. Some Gifts, like Sense the Truth and Righteous Gaze, expose the mark to the viewer. An Exile loses all Honor and Wisdom Renown. Sometimes, falsely convicted (or powerful) Bastet can get help from supporters or sympathetic parties; more often, the effects of this rite linger for a lifetime.

Festival of Dreams

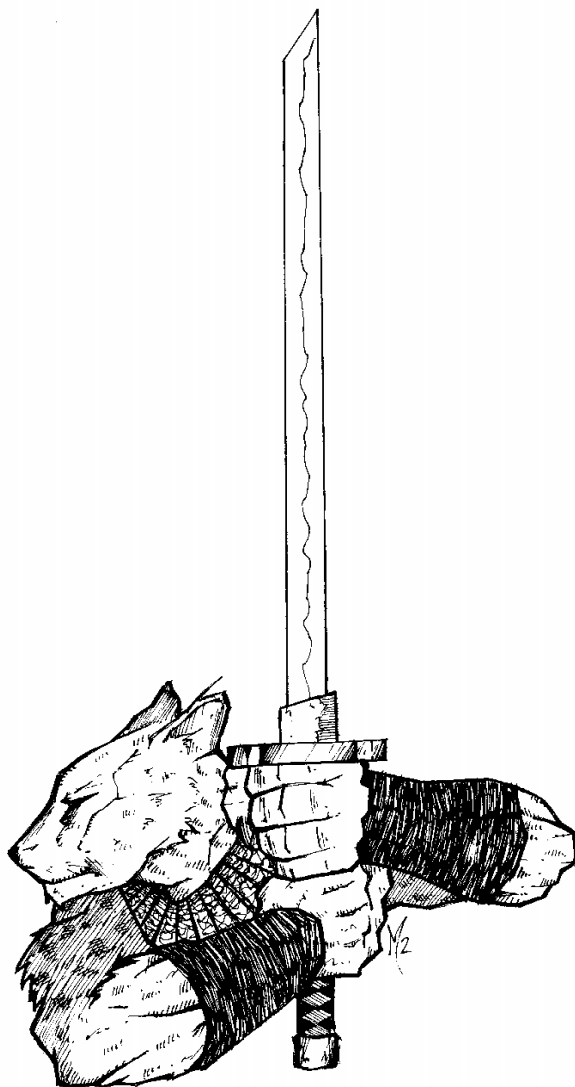
Level Four

By inhaling smoke from burning wood and herbs; steam; psychoactive drugs or all three, the collected group enters a vision trance. Depending on the circumstances, they may experience memories of the past, future sight, soul-seeing or simple hallucinations. These complex insights are often consulted for future plans, battles or other tasks which involve the whole taghairm.

As the other cats gather in an enclosed circle, the ritespeaker and her assistants begin the fires. Tossing in herbs, wood and stone, they chant, sing and play music as the vision smoke rises. The other Bastet breathe deeply, sharing their essence with each exhalation. As the visions begin, a feeling of peace descends to keep the taghairm from scattering. One by one, the Bastet hit their personal limits and stagger out into fresh air. The last werecat to remain receives a special vision that only she remembers. As the ritual ends, the smoke clears; the remaining Bastet receives gifts of water and affection from her companions, and is celebrated for the rest of the night.

System: The exact effects of the Festival depend on the Storyteller and the issues confronting the taghairm (see the Balam Gift: Vision Cloud). If the cats are looking for a vampire lord's haven, the dream might offer clues; if they want to uncover the solution to a problem, an answer may present itself. Visions of past glory or defeat might spur the group out of a rut, while warnings of upcoming disaster might galvanize them into action. Whatever occurs, the visions should be highly symbolic rather than literal.

The Festival lasts several hours and takes a toll on its participants. Each half-hour or so, everyone in the room must make a Stamina roll against difficulty 5 or flee, coughing. After the second roll, the difficulty rises to 6; after the third, to 7, and so forth. By the end of the third hour, the difficulty will be 9. The last character in the room receives a special vision, which the Storyteller creates based on the needs of his chronicle. Because of her resolve and fortune, the other werecats award her an extra three points of Cunning Renown.





Chapter Five: The Pride (Templates)

*When people await a cat, the stranger manifests himself as a lion...
and when the village prepares itself for a lion, here comes a cat...laughing
in the night.*

— Nouk Bassomb, “The God with Two Faces”

• Old Man Speaks of an Ending

A ghost came to me one night and told me something my grandfather knew. He took me to the end of the world and I saw it with my own eyes. Three signs he showed me, three signs that would begin the ending.

The first was the children in glass. When babies are born in tubes of glass, never touching their mother’s womb, that will be the first sign.

The second was the word-without-words. When people speak without speaking so loudly that their words can be heard across the world, that will be the second sign.

The third was the rising giants. When the children of the first killer open their eyes and consume the multitudes, that will be the third sign.

I did not see the ending, but the ghost told me what would happen. Dust would rise from the ground and blanket the skies. All the other ghosts would rise and dance in the streets. The earth would roll up and the fences and telephone poles would all go away. The steel mountains would fall and the fires would become as men and eat the people, every one.

“What am I to do,” I asked the ghost, “if I see the end of the world?”

The ghost had no answers for me. He turned to dust in my hand and I awoke.

Since that day, the ghost has haunted me. I see his signs in the sky and I wonder. What will I do when the third sign comes?

Who understands the riddles of ghosts?

My story is over. I have no answers, only questions.

Something to Prove

Beneath every cat’s shining fur is a predator waiting to escape. While the Bastet are hardly the warriors that Garou are, in some ways, they’re more deadly than raging war machines. They’re silent, clever and very, very wise. Underestimating one, we might add, is not very wise. Not at all.

A young Bastet has something to prove — a name to earn, secrets to gather. The following Tekhmet have only recently found the cat inside them, and they are excited, expectant and afraid. Each one has a chip on his or her shoulder and a hunger for the mysteries just out of reach. The answers they learn, if they learn any at all, will come from you, from your chronicle, from the roles you offer. Have fun, and treat them well.

Although they come from all cultures, Bastet belong to none. They are strangers passing through others’ lands like whispers. Even when settled, a cat is never really home. They carry their homes within them, and that alone offers them comfort. All else is shadows, delusions and rain.

Sidhu (Bagheera)

*I know all creatures
that have been, that now exist,
and that are yet to be;
but, Arjuna, no one knows me.*
— *The Bhagavad-Gita*, Verse 26

Quote: *Shut out your world so that you might see the whole world.*

Prelude: You were born during the season of monsoons, when the rains drove the Americans from your home, Anjuna Beach. You carried more than a little of them wherever you went; it was common knowledge that your mother had conceived you during a brief “courtship” with the foreigners. Her family cast you both out for the shame. Your mother later explained why: “We have shared the blood of the leopard. He is our savior and our destruction.” It would be years before you understood what that meant.

As you grew, the strictures of the *jati*, the caste system of birth, chafed you as they had your mother. For a time, you were angry, a thief and liar who punished foreigners for contributing to your outcast state. During a stay in a hellish Bombay jail, you repented such crimes and decided to seek a higher path. During this imprisonment, a young man with a blissed expression — a holy sidhu wanderer — caught your attention. His hair was long and dirty but his

eyes seemed focused on immaculate visions. After a few discreet questions, you were introduced to him. And from there, to Vishnu.

It wasn't Vishnu but Shiva who got you out of prison. One night, during the monsoon season, a scalding fever boiled into transformation. You became the leopard that Mother spoke of and ripped through a dozen guards to get away. You never saw the sidhu again, but his example led to the path you now follow: the higher path of denial of the flesh for the benefit of the self. Even so, you are of the leopard's blood. Whether that leopard came through your father, your mother's line, or the gods' curse or favor remains a mystery. At the moment, it's unimportant. Your dharma holds many puzzles. It is not for you to know the answers. At least, not yet.

Concept: An angry young man turned spiritual wanderer: although technically a Hindu, your own life has been proof that the perfect life is not always to be found in the sutras. Your mother rebelled against her place, as have you, and yet the gods seem to have some special destiny planned. In time, those plans may become obvious, but for now, simply focus on your own perfection. Only by freeing yourself from worldly distractions can you attain some insight into dharma's path, and your direction on it.

Roleplaying Hints: Luxury is not for you; it's a distraction and an indulgence. Let others eat their poisoned meats and unclean breads — you hunt and kill your own food, forswear all conveniences. Spiritual questions interest you more than idle gossip, and you love a good debate. When in doubt, see the world through the leopard's eyes. His vision is much clearer than your own.

Equipment: Cobra companion, dhoti loincloth, and nothing else.



BASTET™

Name:
 Player:
 Chronicle:

Breed: *Homid*
 Pryio: *Daylight*
 Tribe: *Bagheera*

Pride:
 Jamak:
 Concept: *Sidhu*

Attributes

Physical

Strength ●●○○○
 Dexterity ●●○○○
 Stamina *Enduring* ●●●○○

Social

Charisma ●●○○○
 Manipulation ●●○○○
 Appearance ●●○○○

Mental

Perception *Clear* ●●●○○
 Intelligence ●●●○○
 Wits ●●●○○

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ●●●○○
 Athletics ●○○○○
 Brawl ●●●○○
 Dodge ●●○○○
 Empathy ●●●○○
 Expression ●○○○○
 Intimidation ○○○○○
 Primal-Urge ●●○○○
 Streetwise ●○○○○
 Subterfuge ○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken ●●●○○
 Drive ○○○○○
 Etiquette ●○○○○
 Firearms ○○○○○
 Leadership ○○○○○
 Melee ○○○○○
 Performance ○○○○○
 Repair ○○○○○
 Stealth ○○○○○
 Survival ●●●○○

Knowledges

Computer ○○○○○
 Enigmas ●●○○○
 Investigation ○○○○○
 Law ○○○○○
 Linguistics *English* ●○○○○
 Medicine ●○○○○
 Occult ●●●○○
 Politics ○○○○○
 Rituals ●●○○○
 Science ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies (Cobra) ●○○○○
Contacts ●●○○○
Secrets (General) ●●○○○
 ○○○○○
 ○○○○○

Gifts

Cat Claws
Atumbaba's Escape
Spirits' Sight

Gifts

Renown

Ferocity
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Honor
 ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Cunning
 ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Rank

Rage

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Gnosis

● ● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Willpower

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

Health

Bruised
 Hurt -1
 Injured -1
 Wounded -2
 Mauled -2
 Crippled -5
 Incapacitated

Java

Man-Eater (Khan)

*Parasitical scum, you die so easily
But you have always sickened me
— Gwar, "Crack in the Egg"*

Quote: (Homicidal roar, followed by tearing sounds)

Prelude: Once, you were the runt of the litter. The others batted you around the den and forced you away from Mother's teat. While your sisters and brothers ran, you limped behind. Your twisted leg hobbled you, slowed you, made you weak and strange in the eyes of your pridemates. They avoided you and hoped you'd die.

You didn't.

At night, Mother watched you while the others were asleep. Watched you hunt the beetles and worms that took the place of milk. Watched you learn to run on three legs. Watched you grow angry and strong.

On the night you became a man, she watched you kill and eat your siblings, then taught you what you really were. Not a tiger. Something more. Something like her. Like your father, long departed. More than tiger. More than man.

Mother died suddenly, all too young. Her skin was to have warmed a hunter's floor. Instead, his skin warmed the dirt and fed the beetles you once ate. You made his dying hard. It was fun. There were too many of them, anyway. Too many men, too many hunters, too many machines that made trees fall and prey scatter. If you couldn't eat the animals, you'd eat the men who made them disappear. And you did.

Naturally, they came for you. Other men. Other cats. You killed them all. The men tasted better than the beasts. Spicy. Fatter. In time, other tigers, other men like you, came to talk. They wanted you to put aside your war, to save yourself for bigger fights. So far, you have refused, but the idea lodged in your mind like a thorn in your paw. Somewhere in the night sit men with fat bellies and angry hearts. Cowards eating dead meat from plastic skins. Weaklings. Worms.

Good eating.

Hmmmm....

Concept: The ultimate hunter, disfigured from birth but toughened by a harsh existence. You don't know a damned thing about social niceties; the forest is your home. Still, you've grown curious, and not a little hungry for fat prey. Given the chance, you'll stalk that prey in a new and better hunting ground. Food is getting scarce in the forest. Why starve when there are so many places to hunt?

Roleplaying Hints:

Speak simply and directly, when you speak at all. Stalk carefully, lying in ambush until the prey approaches. Trust no kindness — you have known none. Recall your place at the top of the food chain. And remember the law of the jungle.

(**Note:** Until someone teaches you the different tongues of man, you know only a smattering of Bengali and the language of the cats. Learning human skills is going to be difficult, but if you're going to survive, you'll have to adapt.)

Equipment:

Nothing.



BASTET™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: *Metis*
Pryio: *Night*
Tribe: *Khan*

Pride:
Jamak:
Concept: *Man-Eater*

Attributes

Physical

Strength *Powerful* ●●●●●
Dexterity ●●●●●
Stamina ●●●●●

Social

Charisma ●●●●●
Manipulation *Fierce* ●●●●●
Appearance ●●●●●

Mental

Perception ●●●●●
Intelligence ●●●●●
Wits ●●●●●

Abilities

Talents

Alertness ●●●●●
Athletics *Leaps* ●●●●●
Brawl *Claws* ●●●●●
Dodge ○○○○○
Empathy ○○○○○
Expression ○○○○○
Intimidation *Rears* ●●●●●
Primal-Urge *Feral* ●●●●●
Streetwise ○○○○○
Subterfuge ○○○○○

Skills

Animal Ken ●●●●●
Drive ○○○○○
Etiquette ○○○○○
Firearms ○○○○○
Leadership ○○○○○
Melee ○○○○○
Performance ○○○○○
Repair ○○○○○
Stealth *Stalking* ●●●●●
Survival ●●●●●

Knowledges

Computer ○○○○○
Enigmas ●●●●●
Investigation ●○○○○
Law ○○○○○
Linguistics ○○○○○
Medicine ○○○○○
Occult ●○○○○
Politics ○○○○○
Rituals ○○○○○
Science ○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds

Kinfolk ●●●●●
Pure Breed ●●●●●
○○○○○
○○○○○
○○○○○

Gifts

Pathfinder's Pride
Sense Primal Nature
Skin of Jade

Gifts

Renown

Ferocity
●●●○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Honor

○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Cunning

○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Rank

□□□□□□□□

Rage

●●●●●○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Gnosis

●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Willpower

●●●○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised □
Hurt -1 □
Injured -1 □
Wounded -2 □
Mauled -2 □
Crippled -5 □
Incapacitated □

Yava



Riddling Stranger (Qualmi)

Just what did the voice of the spirit-chief
Say about wealth?

“The voice of the hummingbird will be
Heard on my head during the spring.”

— “Song of Hrywayyem of the Tsimshian Tribe”

Quote: *What is the blue egg on the velvet? Where are the seven drops of moonlight? Who are the mothers of the first born? Doesn't anyone know? I give up! Rabbits are wiser than you.*

Prelude: Things seemed simpler when you were just a cat, but then again, you never liked simple. On the contrary, you enjoy a puzzle. That's how you met your mentor, and discovered what you really are.

It was the old man who turned you human. At least, you *thought* he had during that long winter you spent together in his cabin. Well, he offered you a fish, and what were you to do? It was a young and hungry time, and you were bored. To amuse yourself, you made patterns in the snow and watched rabbits try to figure them out. When that got old (which it quickly did), you tried it out on the old man. Surprise, surprise, he understood the riddle, and left you another one shaped from snow. This continued until the day he offered you the fish. When he led you into his cabin, it felt like home. Through the long winter that followed, it was.

The old man seemed pretty surprised the night you turned into a woman. You wanted to be his mate, but he resisted. Like the ripples of the pond, you were different shapes of one whole. It was not to be.

He taught you, though. As the wind bayed at the wooden walls, you puzzled each other with riddle games. In each answer, there were truths about your kind. When the thaw came, he wandered off into the woods, abandoning his cabin to you. In three winters, he has not returned, and you are bored again.

The woods have changed since you were a just a cat. In the distance, you hear the blatt and blur of townfolk. Some days, you visit them as a woman, others, as a cat. Each time, you test their cleverness. The rabbits were smarter. You wonder where the old man went, and you miss him plenty. In the town, they look for easy answers. As you know, none exist. There are only patterns in the snow.

Concept: A deep woods cat with an active mind and an informal education at best. You haven't seen much hardship, so your outlook's pretty cheerful. Good company is hard to find, and no one seems to understand you. Where's the old man when you need him? Maybe you just need an interpreter....

Roleplaying Hints: Speak in riddles that even you don't understand, then gauge your company by how folks react. Get restless when people seem obtuse. You really want some friends, but everyone seems stupid. Maybe it's time to go back to the cabin again....

Equipment: Winter clothes, fractured vocabulary, walking stick.

Beastmaster (Simba)

Man is the animal that has made friends with fire.

— Henry Van Dyke

Quote: *Don't even think of crossing me.*

Prelude: You didn't have to run away to join the circus. You were born into it, the latest in a proud family of animal tamers. Dad broke with tradition when you were young. He believed that the old whip-and-chair ways were cruel to the cats. The better way, he insisted, was to befriend the animal. To share a mutual respect.

The lions tore him to shreds before you reached 13. So much for the soft approach.

Discarding his experiment, you followed your father into the pens. The big cats learned real quick you weren't gonna take any shit, and your stormy relationship made for great theatre. Beauty against beast, all that crap. Strange things started happening soon after you began, though. Odd dreams. You didn't tame the lions in these dreams, you *became* one. Weird. Then one night, you woke up naked in the lion cage — and *they* were terrified of *you*. No whip. No gun. Just you. And you wondered why.

Soon you found out.

It's a secret, so far. Mom'd have 16 kittens and a biplane if she knew, and you don't think you'd like to know what the other carneys'd think. Folks never liked you, anyway. That stare of yours. Weird. Like one of the cats, some said.

A cat on the other side of the cage. Well, the lions know their real place now, and the other animals do, too. You don't need your gun and whip any more. You talk, they listen. Sometimes you don't even have to talk. You've mastered every beast in the show before your 18th birthday.

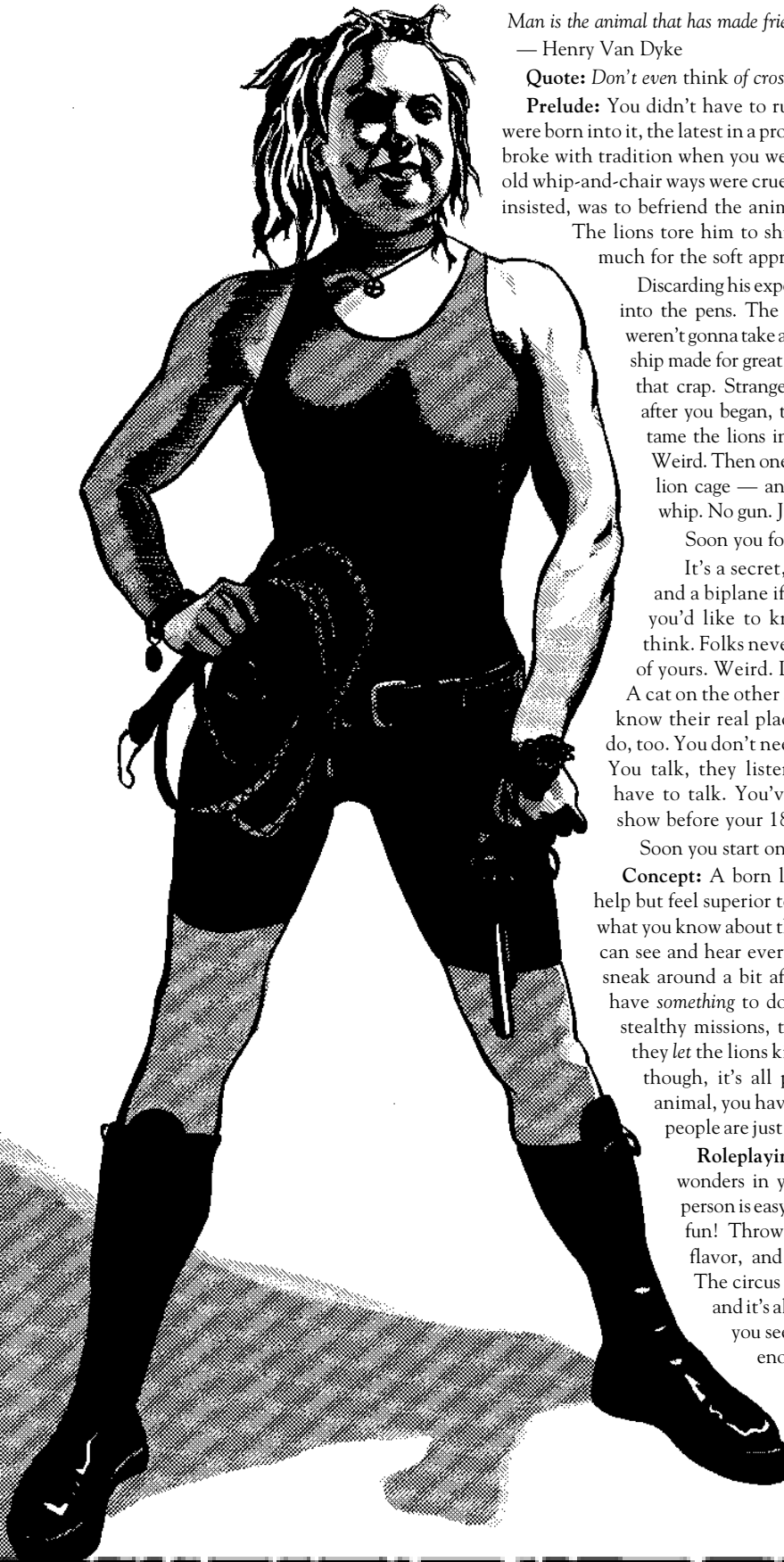
Soon you start on the people.

Concept: A born lion tamer. Literally. You can't help but feel superior to your fellow carneys. Not with what you know about them. Hey, it's not your fault you can see and hear everything they do. Okay, so you'll sneak around a bit after dark, but hey, a kid's gotta have *something* to do! There's a bitter core to your stealthy missions, too. Deep down, you wonder if they *let* the lions kill your father. Most of the time, though, it's all part of the game. To train an animal, you have to let it know who's boss. And people are just animals with attitude problems.

Roleplaying Hints: Intimidation works wonders in your profession. Staring down a person is easy — hell, you stare down tigers for fun! Throw around some carney slang for flavor, and distrust everyone around you.

The circus can be a sleazy place to be a kid, and it's all you've ever known. Every town you see goes by like morning fog. Soon enough, it's history. You're the only constant in your world. You and your cats. The ones in the cage. And the one inside.

Equipment: Whip, pistol, impressive outfit, bag of treats.



BASTET™

Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Breed: *Homid*
Pryio: *Night*
Tribe: *Simba*

Pride:
Jamak:
Concept: *'Beastmaster'*

Attributes

Physical

Strength _____ ●●●●●
Dexterity *Quick* _____ ●●●●●
Stamina _____ ●●●●●

Social

Charisma _____ ●●●●●
Manipulation *Scary* _____ ●●●●●
Appearance _____ ●●●●●

Mental

Perception _____ ●●●●●
Intelligence _____ ●●●●●
Wits _____ ●●●●●

Abilities

Talents

Alertness _____ ●●●●●
Athletics _____ ●●●●●
Brawl _____ ●●●●●
Dodge _____ ●●●●●
Empathy _____ ●●●●●
Expression _____ ●●●●●
Intimidation _____ ●●●●●
Primal-Urge _____ ●●●●●
Streetwise _____ ●●●●●
Subterfuge _____ ●●●●●

Skills

Animal Ken _____ ●●●●●
Drive _____ ●●●●●
Etiquette _____ ●●●●●
Firearms _____ ●●●●●
Leadership _____ ●●●●●
Melee _____ ●●●●●
Performance _____ ●●●●●
Repair _____ ●●●●●
Stealth *Forest* _____ ●●●●●
Survival _____ ●●●●●

Knowledges

Computer _____ ●●●●●
Enigmas _____ ●●●●●
Investigation _____ ●●●●●
Law _____ ●●●●●
Linguistics _____ ●●●●●
Medicine _____ ●●●●●
Occult _____ ●●●●●
Politics _____ ●●●●●
Rituals _____ ●●●●●
Science _____ ●●●●●

Advantages

Backgrounds

Allies ('Big Cats') _____ ●●●●●
'Pure' Breed _____ ●●●●●
_____ ●●●●●
_____ ●●●●●
_____ ●●●●●

Gifts

Majesty _____
Submit _____
Sweet Hunter's Smile _____

Gifts

Renown

Ferocity

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Honor

○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Cunning

● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Rank

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Rage

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ● ●
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Gnosis

● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Willpower

● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Health

Bruised _____ □
Hurt -1 _____ □
Injured -1 _____ □
Wounded -2 _____ □
Mauled -2 _____ □
Crippled -5 _____ □
Incapacitated _____ □

Yava

□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Warder (Svara)

Governments need to have both shepherds and butchers.

— Voltaire

Quote: *You have killed without mercy. Expect none in return.*

Prelude: Mother groomed you to the sound of gunshots. The poachers took whatever they wanted. Unlike the cloak-birds and laughing dogs, you never ate the rot hunters left behind. Instead, you ran to catch the gazelle, your claws flinging dirt behind you. When game grew scarce, your pride dispersed. The children had grown, and there was no room for sharing. Intrigued by men who wandered through your lands, you followed some home, expanding your territory into their yards, and finally into their lives.

The wardens were good men, and good to you as well. At night, you earned your meals by tracking down poachers. Finally, you caught one. His knife was quick, and if it hadn't been for a lucky break, you would have died. A warden took you home and bandaged your wounds. In time, you could run again.

Things changed after that. One night, a *sangoma* came to you. "Become a man," the witch-woman said, and you did. "Walk with me," she commanded, and you followed. The journey led on for many days, past caverns of living bone and pits of liquid fire. Ascending into the sky, you both looked down on

the lands you had roamed. "You are the walking secret, the barking night," she said. "Your legacy is watchfulness, and I name you Svara. If you trust me, I will teach." You did, and you learned.

Some time later, you returned to the wardens as a young man looking for work. They hired you for odd jobs, and seemed pleased with how well you did. Over time, you learned the poachers' ways as well as the protectors', and took up your old stalking task. This time, you win the fights. Your *kuasha* taught you magic Gifts and fighting tricks. The wardens cannot wage war on the poachers, but you are not a warden. You're a guardian of the night, and trespassers rarely live to see the dawn.

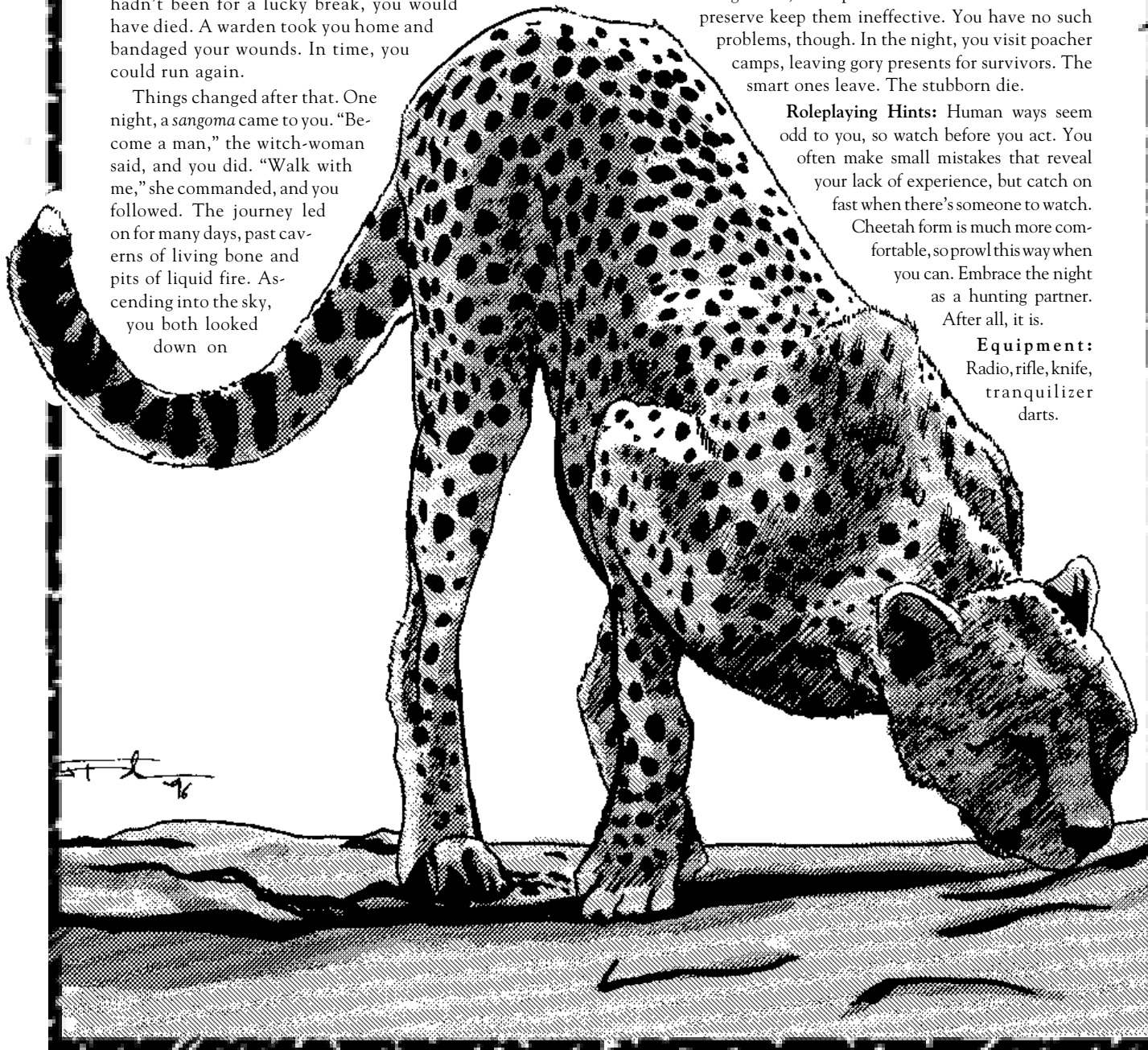
Concept: Once, you fled the poachers; now they run from you. Though the *kuasha* has long since gone, she left a spirit-guide behind. In the meantime, you have many friends among the wardens, and you've learned how hard a task they have.

Mismanagement, corruption and the sheer size of the preserve keep them ineffective. You have no such problems, though. In the night, you visit poacher camps, leaving gory presents for survivors. The smart ones leave. The stubborn die.

Roleplaying Hints: Human ways seem odd to you, so watch before you act. You often make small mistakes that reveal your lack of experience, but catch on fast when there's someone to watch.

Cheetah form is much more comfortable, so prowl this way when you can. Embrace the night as a hunting partner. After all, it is.

Equipment:
Radio, rifle, knife, tranquilizer darts.





Chapter Six: The Others

It is no easy task to win the friendship of a cat... He does not bestow his regard lightly, and, though he may consent to be your companion, he will never be your slave.

— Théophile Gautier, *La Ménagerie Intime*

• Raindance Speaks of Rebirth

There are cats on the moon. I haven't seen them, but I was told so by a sparrow. She saw the end of the world, and told me of the cats in the ring. She said they came from the moon. I'd like to think they did.

This sparrow came from beneath the ground. She woke up to the sound of the world ending and by the time she'd taken flight, it was over. Someone had rolled up the streets and gone home. It was really quiet everywhere; the flames had died down and the only sound was the beating of her wings.

Imagine an infinity of nothing. No birds, no insects. No wind, no voices. Just silence and a void. The last glowing children rolled over in their blankets and went to bed. Everything went dark, deeper dark than a desert night. No fire, no stars. Nothing.

The sparrow saw a moonbeam and flew up it. The beam stretched up through the sky-that-was-no-sky and rose to the moon. After a long,

long flight, she reached the mountains of the moon and flew across it, following the source of the moonbeam. She passed over a city which was many cities — pueblos and castles and gingerbread houses and lodges and skyscrapers all made of shimmering light that changed each time she blinked her eyes. The city shone with a cool glow, but the moonbeam came from far beyond the city-that-was-no-city, so she kept flying.

The beam ended on the open plain of barren rock, in a ring of cold bright fire.

In that ring, the sparrow saw cats. Nine cats dancing the world anew.

So there are cats on the moon. Maybe they're dancing even now. Maybe they climb up the moonbeams and run off across the surface of the moon, past the city-that-is-no-city, past the pools of cool fresh moonlight and the barren places where men smashed their feet into the dust, past the places where the ghosts howl in the void, to the ring of rebirth.

A ring that leads home to earth. An earth where nothing ever really dies.

A Shared World

Bastet do not walk the world alone, nor are they limited to the American/European landscape most werewolves know. In their journeys, quests, and in their native lands, most cats encounter a variety of allies and foes. If you plan to walk the road of the cat, you may want to know what other creatures walk beside — but never before — the elusive Bastet.

Jamak

The Wakinyan hates all that is dirty. He loves what is clean and pure. His voice is the great thunderclap, and the smaller rolling thunders that follow his booming shouts are the cries of his children, the little thunderbirds.

— John Lame Deer, “Wakinyan Tanka, the Great Thunderbird”

• The Plains of Kenya

The shadow fell across Malcolm as he pondered the gutted carcass. Dark poison had burned its skin away, and no animal had touched the corpse in days. Those that had dared had limped off into the grasslands, twisting into grotesqueries as they went. With spirit-sight, Malcolm had examined the body. Its rot had touched more than its physical form.

“Looking for dakat, are we?” wheezed a voice behind him. The Swara turned slowly, aware from the bristle across his back that spirits were at work. The scavenger bird strutted up alongside the lion as Malcolm panted in disgust. The corpse smelled better than the bird.

“Mind if I have a bite.” It was a statement, not a question. The ragged vulture picked its way across the ribcage, sending flies spinning as it went. Malcolm drew back, closing his nostrils against the bird’s heavy stink. Shaking maggots free, the spirit-vulture sank its beak into corrupted flesh. The Simba gagged as the bird worked a strip of meat from the bones and watted it down. “You were looking for dakat,” the vulture repeated.

“I was,” Malcolm allowed.

The vulture leaned forward, its feathers slick with grease. Malcolm felt breakfast lodge in his throat, halfway up. “I can tell you where to look,” said Bonyscrap the Vulture, “but it’s going to cost you...”

Independent as they are, werewolves aren’t stupid. It’s a harsh world out there, and a good spirit ally — a Jamak — can spell the difference between survival and extinction. These allies often come out of nowhere and offer their services in return for a favor or two. If the bond holds, both sides can strike a pact. Such bargains mean that each will come to the aid of the other if requested, or will grant some other favor instead of a personal appearance. Although these alliances usually last a year or less, some last for lifetimes.

A Jamak won’t just show up every time its ally needs it. These spirits tend to be more finicky than Garou totems, and grant Favors when and if they please. Most often, that service can be found listed under “Favors” in each Jamak’s description, and their due can be found under “Bans.”

There’s an important distinction between granting a Gift and teaching a Gift: A Gift which is granted can be used immediately, with no roll and no Gnosis cost. Once used, it’s gone, and must be given again as another Favor. A Gift that is taught is a secret passed to a Bastet, regardless of Rank. Once the Gift is learned, the cat can use it anytime, although the usual rolls and Gnosis costs apply.

Occasionally, the spirit might appear to offer some guidance or assistance, or send some non-magical animals to help. This usually happens only when the Bastet’s in real trouble. Occasionally, a Jamak won’t do anything at all. This usually happens when the spirit’s angry, but might occur for no reason, too. Cats may be capricious, but they’ve got nothing on their spirit allies!

Storytellers should make the most of a Jamak; it appears when important things are in motion and often asks favors which may begin a whole new adventure. Each Jamak has a distinct personality; it may be a bit two-dimensional, but it exists. The spirit’s Gifts and bonuses come with a price beyond the Background points paid. A Jamak becomes a regular supporting character, complete with its own eccentricities and demands. Chapter Three explains more details about this curious bond, and about the Background Costs involved.

Jamak Traits

Jamak prefer to stay immaterial. They may speak to their patrons and appear as ghostly images, but unless a werecat goes into the Umbra, she won’t have much “physical” contact with a Jamak. Rarely, a major crisis or minor whim causes the spirit to manifest itself across the Gauntlet, or to join an Umbral fight. If this occurs, use the following guidelines for the spirit’s Traits and feel free to add anything that seems appropriate. Remember, Jamak are avatars of a larger whole and may possess many startling abilities. Some basic Traits:

- 10 points of Power for every point in the Background Cost;
- The Materialize Charm, plus Airt Sense, Healing, Reform, and any other Charms you feel would be appropriate;
- 10 to 15 points to divide between Rage, Willpower and Gnosis.

The Jamak given below represent a small fraction of the Bastet spirit allies. Other notable Jamak include Bodingo the Yapping Dog, Burning Cat, Grandmother Spider, King Snake, Holo the Rhinoceros Lord, Gundee the Swollen (hippopotamus), Waloo the White Crane and Anjura the Lady of Hawks. Many Garou totems have personalized aspects as well, and the cats are often familiar with their names. Feel free to devise your own personalities for such spirits. After all, the dogs understand only part of the story....

Bonyscrap

Background Cost: 1

A brooding scavenger bird, Bonyscrap lurks near the dying and the doomed, waiting to pick their corpses. He does not, it should be noted, always wait until the prey dies. Although honorable Bastet shun this Vulture-spirit, wise cats know he has valuable insights to share with those who tolerate his company. The Bubasti, in particular, listen to what Bonyscrap has to say.

Favors: The vulture occasionally whispers clues and hints that foreshadow the future into a werecat’s ear. First, though, the Bastet character has to endure the spirit’s reeking breath, foul presence and obnoxious comments. Bonyscrap usually taunts his “buddy” before giving up the goods, which consist of bits of information that the Storyteller wants to pass along to the player. Alternately, the spirit’s favor may simply add a die or two to Enigmas or Investigation rolls, although this option’s not nearly as much fun to roleplay.

Ban: Bonyscrap is an obnoxious cuss, and often insults finicky Bastet just for fun. He usually offers bites of a rotted roadkill or a partially-devoured meal, accompanied by a blast of avian halitosis. Any cat who can put up with this abuse is considered all right in Bonyscrap’s book.



Butterfly

Background Cost: 1

The many forms of Butterfly recall the metamorphosis at the heart of creation. Unlike so many other creatures or spirits, Butterfly is always changing, forever bursting into new shapes, colors and sizes. A special favorite of the Balam, Bagheera and Qualmi, this Jamak values the peaceful heart, full of wonder at the eternal dance.

Favors: Butterfly grants its ally with the Gift: Monkey's Uncle, and adds +2 to the Bastet's frenzy roll difficulty. Although it shifts across the color spectrum, Butterfly is without anger or despair. This spirit stands as a symbol of hope and renewal.

Ban: Allies of Butterfly cannot attack a foe in anger, only for defense.

Citlacoatl, the Feathered Serpent King

Background Cost: 3

A crafty, clever spirit, Citlacoatl floats across the humid forests and arid plains, chuckling to himself. His folk know the tiny shadows where even werecats never venture, and they listen from the newspaper's shade and the hanging branch as humans scurry about their short little lives. The Serpent King is endless, and like his folk, understands the ways between life and death. His jaunts span the Three Worlds of creation, and his tongue tastes the essence of Gaffling, ghost and Epiph any alike.

Only Pumonca and Balam understand the wisdom Citlacoatl brings; most other Bastet disdain his council and chew his children between their fangs. Fair enough — cats may have nine lives, but serpents are eternal. Citlacoatl watched the rise and fall of Aztecs,

Incas, Mayans, Olmecs and so many others, and he watches their ghosts even now, wandering through the Flayed Shadowlands as if they still lived. Mortal men amuse the Serpent King. A cat who respects the spirit's wisdom might learn to share that humor — or to fear it.

Favors: Citlacoatl winds between the worlds of life, death, consciousness and dream. To find him, a werecat enters a trance and goes seeking. Occasionally, the Serpent King follows the werecat, if only for amusement. There's a lot of fun to be had in mortal warfare; Citlacoatl has an odd (some would say sick) sense of humor. Bastet who make him laugh or protect his kind *might* learn the Rite of Nine Lives or the Gift: Walking Between Worlds. More often than not, Citlacoatl just sends snakes to his allies' aid, or teaches them the Dance of the Cobra if they're admirably wise and persistent.

Ban: Although there are similarities between Citlacoatl and King Snake, the two have never come to an accord. A follower of one becomes the foe of the other. Citlacoatl also hates the agents of the Unmaker Wyrn; creation is too much fun to be destroyed.

Hatii the Thunderer

Background Cost: 5

One of the most powerful Jamak, this Elephant-spirit rarely chooses allies among catkind. There's too much bad blood between his protected cousins and the predatory cats. He will never choose a Simba ally, for it's been said that in the early years following the Impergium, the children of Akuma hunted elephants for fun. Hatii never forgives a slight, nor does he forget an act of kindness. To the Khan, he's a valued ally, a strong and wise friend who gifts his chosen few with tough skin and an excellent memory.

Favors: It takes an outstanding act of courage or wisdom to attract Hatii's attention; werecats who heroically defend el-

elephant herds, especially from other werecats, are his favorite allies. To them, this spirit grants an additional two points of Stamina in battle. This bonus only appears during a fight, and fades when that specific fight ends. Additionally, he may gift the werecat with the Photographic Memory Merit for one specific event per story, and occasionally offers a hint to some puzzle which confounds the Bastet (An “under-the-table” hint from the Storyteller might come through as the elephant’s guidance). On the grasslands of Africa or India, a herd of elephants might intervene to save one of Hatti’s chosen from death.

Ban: Hatti’s allies must defend herds of his cousins whenever possible, and should hunt down and kill anyone who murders an elephant for sport or ivory.

Ika-Ika the Monkey King

Background Cost: 3

A noisy and boisterous spirit, Ika-Ika represents caprice, mischief, nonsense and ferocity; his friends, however, understand the wisdom inherent in the Monkey King’s chaos, and respect his drive to break rules whenever possible. When he finds someone he respects (a rare occurrence), Ika-Ika is a loyal and powerful ally. While he might kid his friends, or play pranks on them, he’ll be the first Jamak to show up if something’s wrong. The Bagheera and Swara find Ika-Ika amusing, while the more serious Khan and Simba resent his careless ways. Bubasti, as a rule, hate this mad spirit, and avoid those who befriend him. Naturally, he loves to annoy their kind, and favors a cat who does the same.

Favors: A Favor from the Monkey King means an extra dot in Dexterity and Acrobatics, which last the remainder of the day. On a more permanent basis, he sometimes teaches his friends Gifts like Treeclimber, Farsight, Clawstorm and Monkey’s Uncle. These last two Gifts he leaves for respected allies, not simple buddies; a Bastet must achieve at least Third Rank and maintain a long alliance with Ika-Ika to receive such valuable Favors.

Ban: Ika-Ika likes anarchy; his friends have to know how to kick down the walls and let loose. Even so, they should know where to stop — the Monkey King is wise chaos, not cruelty. They should also understand the value of friendship. When he’s feeling wild, Ika-Ika might show up in person, either as a monkey or as a crazy man. His friends should welcome him if they want to keep him.

King of Cats

Background Cost: 3

Dashing, quick and clever, the King of Cats embodies both the bright works of Rahjah and the dark charm of Cahlash. Although most Bastet follow one aspect or the other, very few realize that both spirits are one and the same — a rogue who does good deeds even as he violates good conduct.

Some see the King of Cats as the first of their kind, the one who saved Seline from the Asura; others believe he’s an avatar of both Father spirits. Whatever his origins, the King of Cats is a dapper fellow with a sharp sword and a razor wit. Although his dress changes to suit the occasion, he seems to prefer swashbuckler trappings. Though he turns feline if need be (sometimes white, often black), the King of Cats prefers to dance around in human guise, daring enemies to harm him. He is the soul of valiant rebellion, and favors those who live and die with style.

Favors: Allies of the King of Cats receive the Grace Merit and a permanent point of Dexterity if they live by his codes: Play hard, laugh at death, and go out with a flourish. He can teach any Bastet Gift, but seldom does.

Ban: The King of Cats will not tolerate a sober disposition. If one of his allies falls into depression or morbidity, he abandons her to find another.

King-of-Beasts

Background Cost: 6

The majestic symbol of kings and conquerors, this Lion-spirit roars proud challenges to all rivals. The revered spirit of many Simba prides, King-of-Beasts crushes enemies beneath his mighty paws. His mane is like sunshine and his roar is 500 thunders. No creature can meet his gaze for long; cowering, they slink away and hide.

Still, King-of-Beasts is a generous despot. Though he demands total obedience, he gifts those he loves with strength and magical prowess. It’s a rare Bastet who can “afford” this spirit’s patronage, so Simba prides often follow him together (pooling their points as do the Garou with a pack totem). Once, many humans gave homage to this spirit, and he favored them as well. In the modern world, men have grown too “smart” for totems. His allies come from the Bastet, and from some Garou packs.

Favors: This Jamak speaks in formal tones and demands the same from his chosen. Werecats who can meet King-of-Beasts’ high standards might receive one extra dot of Strength in battle and may reduce all Intimidation difficulties by three. Their voices seem to deepen, and those who can see auras notice that the followers seem to blaze with power. The King also teaches many Gifts when he feels a pride is worthy. These benefits extend to every member of the pride that allies itself with the totem (maximum of four characters).

Ban: This spirit is a harsh ally; his followers must bow to his majesty while dominating every other creature in sight. Any faltering or cowardice will cost the entire pride his aid, perhaps forever.

Mantis

Background Cost: 2

The creator of the world according to some folklore, the wise and patient Mantis dreams its way out of trouble. This Jamak knows the seven levels of silence, from meditation to death, and teaches them to its allies. When some problem threatens, Mantis folds itself still and waits. Sooner or later, the solution comes. The Khan and Bagheera understand Mantis’ wisdom, and the Simba of the Kalahari claim its example helped them temper their tribal rage.

Favors: Mantis sends dreams and prophecies to those who understand how to be still. In game terms, this lowers the difficulty for rolls involving Enigmas, Investigation or Occult. This bonus depends on the successes the cat makes on a Willpower roll (difficulty 9) to remain still and clear her thoughts. Each success lowers the difficulty by one. Such discipline often takes an hour or more, and cannot be done in combat or hectic circumstances.

Ban: Allies of Mantis cannot be hasty or reckless. If they aren’t smart enough to be still, the spirit leaves them alone.



Mistress of Catkind

Background Cost: 5

Creation, as the Bastet know, is a woman. From mad Mother Nala to the endless birth-death of Ahu and the comforting hands of Seline and Gaia, the cats recognize the female essence that gave them form. The Mistress of Catkind is that essence in spades, the embodiment of fierce maternity, nurture and passion. Through her many faces, the Bastet recognize the greater power she represents. Freyja, Durga, Hecate, Sekhmet — all these names and more personify the Mistress to human eyes. The Bastet themselves echo her most obvious manifestation, Bast, in their racial name. Even so, the Mistress is a personable spirit. Like the King of Cats, she channels her divinity behind an accessible face. Let other boastful Jamak rival her for power; those who embody All need not make displays.

The Mistress appears in a variety of forms; sometimes she comes in the form of a great white cat, sometimes a woman clad in moonlight, a goddess in robes of war, a white buffalo or a tiny blue kitten. Unless she's angry, her voice is soft as her touch, and all sounds fade as she approaches. This spirit teaches all the skills of survival, from hunting to magical Gifts, and often appears when her followers need her, not before. Sometimes she takes human guise for fun, or becomes a white tiger on the Siberian cliffs. Whatever face she wears, the Mistress' followers recognize her instinctively. While she never expects them to bow to her, this Jamak deserves respect, and has no trouble getting it. As gentle as she seems, the Mistress can be fierce and unpredictable. In defense of her children or of nature, she lashes out like a cornered lion. Doting mother, passionate lover, goddess of war, mystery-walker — the Mistress of Cats is all those and more.

Favors: The Mistress comes to comfort her lost or fearful children, or to rally them for a good fight. In every aspect, the Mistress teaches all the Gifts of catkind to those who deserve them. Occasionally, she grants some special power or sends animal minions to a follower's aid; under most circumstances, however, the Mistress prefers to come in person, advise a cat, and leave.

Ban: While the eternal Nala may be drawn to Cahlash, her Mistress aspect despises corruption. A fierce enemy to Asura, she has nothing to do with the servants of Cahlash, especially if those servants are cats. Needless destruction or perversion is anathema to her. A Bastet who joins Cahlash will lose this Jamak forever.

Old Snapjaw

Background Cost: 2

A favored spirit-friend of the Bubasti, this devourer guards mystic knowledge. An Alligator or Crocodile-spirit (depending on where you find her), Snapjaw lurks below the waters of transition, watching things pass away until someone approaches her storehouse of secrets. If he is worthy, she tests him until he solves a series of riddle-games; if he seems foolish or hesitates to do what must be done, Snapjaw consumes him, sometimes killing him entirely, more often just marking him to warn other Jamak of his cowardice.

Favors: Snapjaw tests her chosen constantly; a werecat who guesses the answers to her riddles (Wits + Enigmas tests with varying difficulty) may add an extra three dice to his Dice Pool for any Enigmas roll that does not involve Snapjaw's own riddles ("You have to figure *that* one out yourself, boy!"). Old Snapjaw's ferocity also conveys an extra point of Rage to the Bastet who wins her favor.

Ban: Those who approach Old Snapjaw must not hesitate to do whatever is necessary to learn a magical secret. She does not choose cowards or fools.

Thunderbird

Background Cost: 5

Like a crack across the sky, Thunderbird comes on endless wings. His domain is courage and purity, and he sleeps on the tops of mountains and rides the skies in forms so vast that the human eye can't recognize him. The tester of courage, Thunderbird roars and flashes to frighten the seekers of visions while cautioning them to be brave. Those few who can withstand the fury of the Thunderbird's cry gain this spirit's respect.

Thunderbird lives cloaked in clouds. He has no head, but he does have a great beak filled with sharp teeth. He has no feet, but great grasping talons. He has no face, but shoots lightning from his eyes when angry. Although he seems to be a raging spirit, Thunderbird likes humans and favors the Pumonca and Wendigo above all other creatures. In his voice, the crack of creation can be heard. In the winds, the beat of his wings can be felt. Cats who can withstand his tests of bravery are rewarded by his friendship.

Favors: Many Pumonca Gifts come from Thunderbird, and he teaches them to any cat he favors. In emergencies, he may send a thunderbolt (as per the Gift) or two to buy the Bastet a chance to regroup. Hawks and eagles often come to the aid of Thunderbird's friends, and bursts of sheer terror scare his enemies away.

Ban: Thunderbird detests a coward. Running away from anything in fear may cost an ally his favor, although he tends to be more forgiving than many other spirits. Corruption and its agents are abominations to him; an ally of this Jamak must destroy anything tainted, or at least try to redeem it. Those who side with the forces of decay (including vampires, fomori and Banes) may be struck down with thunderbolts.

Tzinie

Background Cost: 2

Buzzing eternally, Tzinie the Fly Lord spins across the universe, biting whomever he pleases and pestering folks for the sheer hell of it. He stands for elusiveness, for a trickster nature which flits past larger, slower beings, tantalizes them with a false promise, and disappears, laughing. Most Bastet pay no mind to this annoying spirit, but those who understand him (usually Bubasti, Ceilican or Qualmi) realize what a profound folly-finder Tzinie can be. By dancing under the nose of the serious and the wrathful, the Fly Lord points out their own foolishness. Those who join his dance find the steps become that much easier.

Favors: Cats who ally themselves with Tzinie often learn the Catfeet, First Strike and Swipe Gifts, and gain an extra dot in Dexterity when fleeing from a bigger, more powerful opponent.

Ban: Tzinie's chosen must never bully the weak, nor should they let a self-important person rest peacefully.

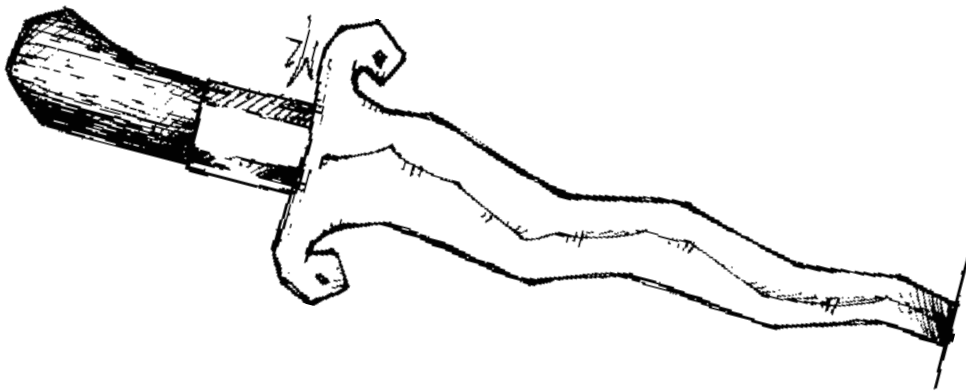
Whispers

Background Cost: 2

The spirit of secrets, Whispers leads her allies to discoveries. With a little effort, her chosen can decipher messages no normal person could understand. This Jamak drifts in the air, unseen and barely heard. It's said that she's the echo of the Jamaa themselves, of celestial voices that filter down to the mortal world as half-heard memories. She's a hard Jamak to find, and tends to reveal herself only to the wisest Bastet.

Favors: Whispers' allies reduce all Enigmas-related difficulties by -3 if they make their Perception + Awareness roll first (difficulty 7 or so). On a whim, she might bestow a Gift like Night's Passage, Cheshire Prank or Eavesdropper's Ear. No one makes assumptions about Whispers' motives.

Ban: Allies of Whispers must avoid making loud noises, especially while speaking.



Ajaba

Bitter Seeds

You've given us your best shot, you goddamned bastards, and we're still around to pick your bones. Somehow I doubt you'll be as hard to kill, and catflesh makes good eatin'!

Caliah

Mourn for us, O child of laughter, and set your teeth in a killer's grin. Once, we were *inaka mateda*, the rainmakers, and we hounded the sick and dying to final rest. Now we are *tanoka*, unclean, broken, leaking marrow as our people die. A dry and lifeless season on the Endless Storm, and a gut-rattle pox on those we once called brothers, the cats that walk upright! They have brought us to destruction, and we will return the favor tenfold soon.

We are of the last of our kind, desperate seeds in a fallow field. It was not always so. In the light of First Morning, we were the children of Siracca, born of her union with Seb-at-Al the Moonlight Stranger. On a cool night, he came to her, padding through the plains like a quiet storm. The grasses parted where he walked, and his eyes were majesty unveiled. As her sisters fled with fear, Siracca went into the night and danced with this stranger, and he took her away to the top of mountains that scraped the sky. A full year as men know them, he loved her with the passion of bright thunder, then he led her back to her pride and blessed her as his own. Born of his seed, we were strong and hardy, with jaws that cracked the bones of buffalo. To the vanity of our cousins, we were ugly, and they set our kind apart. Poor Siracca howled her loneliness into the night, but Seb-at-Al remained by her side, and in time, she was comforted.

In winter's season, Seb-at-Al returned to bestow his *zawadi*, his father-gift upon his children. We were the choosers of the slain, said the father, the bringers of the grassland rain and the cullers of the flock. Our labors would bring the rains that fed the grasses, and our eyes would spot the weak and the infirm. Our jaws would offer salvation from a slow death by hunger, and we in turn would feed the little scavengers and the carrion-birds. It was a fair legacy he offered us, a birthright strengthened by magical gifts. For generations without number, we held to our ways, and the veldt prospered. In time, we clashed with our brethren, but the rightness of our cause prevailed. They had their task, we had ours, and both had meaning under Ahu.

Then the grasslands died. The deserts on the fringes grew to sweep away the world-that-was, eaten bare by the cattle and the goats. We moved to cull their flocks as well, but humans baited us, hunted us, and in time, we sought accord. These were strong men and women, and their blood strengthened our own line. In time, they came to see our purpose, and they joined the midnight hunts. Even so, the wild flocks faded. Our cousins sought the dwindling herds also, and we warred beneath the twilight for the food to feed our cubs. Then the white men came, with their loud machines and distant killers. The war between ourselves and catkind grew to desperate levels. They murdered our young, and we theirs, and the grasslands sipped on blood from both. Then came the Endless Storm, and the battle reached an ending.

Bare your teeth, O my daughter, at the name of Black Tooth, slaughterer of our kind. It was he who learned the Yava of our people. It was he who raged across the lands, killing Ajaba, hyena and human all. It was his pride who swept the Serengeti like a murderous squall, and his minions who hunted us to the streets of Bombay. So merciless was the reach of Black Tooth that our king, Adjua Ka, called all of us together to rally and counterattack. In his cavern court, we gathered in the hundreds — men, women, metis and Kin, an army of hyenas, humans and we in between. Adjua railed against the Simba and promised total war. It was a night of spirit-raising, war-planning, truth-telling. It was to be the night when the choosers of the slain took back the midnight land.

It became a trap instead.

Few of us escaped. I remember bristling fur and nervous eyes as the lions boomed across the night, and winds that cracked the hills and torrents which washed the campfires out as the Endless Storm bounded into view, tearing Folk and Kinfolk to pieces in their madness. In the lightning-flare and bursts of gunfire, I saw a wall of lions, leopards and men. Spirits howled on both sides and grappled in their own worlds as ours shook. We fought hard, we choosers of the slain, and we accounted for our lives in blood. But Black Tooth knew our Yava, and our people fell like raindrops to the land.

They killed everyone.

Oh, I escaped, and so did several others. Seeing how the battle went, we ran across the grasslands and summoned up spells to hide us. When we reached the cities, we scattered and hoped for the best. The ones who stayed were butchered, everyone. Each man and woman, Ajaba and hy-



ena. Kits and Kinfolk, warriors and children. They slew us all, destroyed the court. To mock us, they decorated the site with skulls. So many lives, so many futures, so many tales forever lost. Mourn for us, O daughter of the rain, for we are the last of our kind.

But we are far from dead. It falls to us to build our kind anew, to coax the bitter soil to bring forth life. We must remain a gathered secret, must take advantage of this cluttered humans' world to dig ourselves a burrow while our anger burns anew. Our wise ones have called upon our father Seb-at-Al, and he has promised aid to us. Our seed is fertile, and we plant it everywhere. In time, our kind will come again, and the cats will squeal as we wash them into hell. We are determined. We are enraged. We have set our jaws to the killing-task, and our rain will bring the heavens down.

Embrace me, daughter, and rejoice!

Tribal Background

The Ajaba, or werehyenas, are the last of a dying race, and they're determined to survive and return by any means necessary. After centuries of conflict with Bagheera, Swara, Simba and Khan, the "choosers of the slain," as they call themselves, have been reduced to two or three dozen living members. Scattered across the modern world, they're a tribe without a home, a leader or a future. They have no intention of staying that way.

In the distant past, these shapeshifters were respected for their role as trash collectors. Weak and aged creatures, tribal exiles and outlaws were hunted down and eaten, and bad children were lifted from their beds and taken into the night. The Ajaba, not truly catkind at all, were never well-liked, but they served a purpose. Many human tribes called them "rainmakers" for the tears they caused to fall, and they secured their villages against the beasts by lock, spell and spear. Bastet, especially among the Simba prides, took a more active role; if one of their kind was killed by hyenas, the local werecats rushed into the night and took revenge. This went on for thousands of years; as far as the Ajaba were concerned, the Impergium never ended. The casualties they suffered in return seemed to be part of the cycle, and kept their own tribe from growing too large. This genocidal war, which worsened as humans expanded beyond their villages, continued until the Simba Black Tooth discovered a terrible secret. Making the most of it, he led his allies against the hyenas until, in 1984, he virtually wiped them off the earth.

After the battle of the Hyena King's court, the surviving Ajaba fled. Those with connections in the human world set up escape routes for their brothers and sisters, who took along a handful of ancestral Kinfolk as they left Africa. In overrun metropolises like Bombay, Calcutta, Los Angeles and Cairo, the Ajaba run in packs, making what allies they can and keeping themselves alive. No hyena can afford to die, so the members of this tribe play a very careful game. To endure, they must propagate as quickly and surely as possible. To that end, many have secured bargains with their spirit father Seb-at-Al — an incarnation of Cahlash — and with other denizens of the urban darkness: Bone Gnawers, Ratkin, Nosferatu vampires and far worse. For breeding stock, the most debased raid zoos and grab unsuspecting humans, dragging their future mates into "fosterage dens" in the cities' hidden places, where they breed until they die. In the long run, the ancient rainmakers might leave a legacy more corrupt than their tormentors: a legacy of thievery and shame.

Tribal Home

Although the Ajaba once ranged from India to South Africa, the Serengeti grasslands were considered their tribal home. The Hyena King's court, which fell in '84, was located near Mount Kilimanjaro

in modern Kenya. The Simba have locked it off from the survivors, now; a magical ward prevents them from returning for 100 years.

In general, these elusive creatures prefer open countryside to city life. The few who migrated to urban areas saved the race; without their help, the survivors of Black Tooth's massacre would have been picked off eventually. Now the tribe has new courts in the U.S., India and Egypt. Several Bubasti have discovered these refugees, but hope to parlay their location into a big score against their tribal rivals, the Simba. For now, the Ajaba have no home. Soon, they hope, this will change.

Culture and Kinfolk

In the past, werehyenas placed great importance in family ties, ancestry and group identity. They ranged in packs of three to six members and kept their Kinfolk close. Most hunting parties had human, hyena and shapechanger members, and although the Ajaba had the upper hand, the Kinfolk had a say in group activities. Now many of the ancestral bloodlines are cut; the Kin have been slain alongside their cousins. These days, the Ajaba mate with whomever they can to keep their kind alive — vagrants, lunatics, even each other. The older members dislike "polluting their blood" with undesirable strains, but this is survival, after all, and the end is all that matters.

Organization

Each Ajaba pack has one leader (usually female), an Aktu, who dictates the group's behavior. Such hunting parties are extended family units with a dominant male and female, lesser members, and "children." The latter include Kinfolk tagging along for a meal or newcomers learning the ropes. Trial by combat and face-down contests often resolve disputes; in kinder years, these Folk preferred wrestling or riddles to open combat, but the Ajaba are a race under siege, and everyone follows orders, or else.

Even so, each Ajaba life is sacred. There are no cousins left to waste, so every measure is taken to protect the pack. Injured cousins are nursed, dissenting ones punished and breeding ones secured until they have raised their kits. Most packs run with a couple of allies, or *takuya*, who share in the kill. Since the massacre, many *takuya* have become more sinister; several packs include a Black Spiral Dancer or two, and others contain at least one vampire child. The average pack has six to 10 members now, and each one rides on a hair-trigger temper. The Ajaba are at war with the world these days, and anyone — especially a werecat — who crosses their path is treated to new worlds of pain.

Tribal metis have an interesting mutation: they either change genders, or are hermaphrodites. The race has never shared the usual Changing Breed view of metis, and the current crisis only makes them more accepted. Even so, they cannot reproduce. Their bodies are sterile, and this drives them crazy with shame. To make up for the children they cannot have, Ajaba metis adopt a bodyguard role for the fertile members of the pack. No one gets to the others without going through the metis first.

Java

Each of these secrets has been seized by the Simba; even so, they are not common knowledge — the lions have cultivated their image of superiority, and insist that the Yava had nothing to do with their success against the hyena-folk.

- Each Ajaba has a nick the size of a quarter on the back of her skull. He who strikes this spot will demolish the brain.
- Mixing white wine in a hyena's footprint intoxicates the animal who left it. The stronger the drink, the longer its effects will linger.
- An Ajaba cannot bear the taste of baby meat; an infant younger than a year of age is always safe.

Appearance

Ajaba may descend from any human racial stock. Regardless of their heritage, werehyenas tend to have large lower jaws, thick teeth, bristly hair, heavy builds, broad shoulders and hoarse voices. They're not the most attractive of the cat-folk. These days, most tend to dress in cast-off clothing and carry improvised weapons. Their Kinfolk include gang members, street people, junkyard prophets and urban mongrels. Ragged survivors all, these creatures are usually hostile to outsiders and damned hard to kill.

Form Statistics

Sokto	Crinos	Chatro	Hyaena
Str: +1	Str: +3	Str: +2	Str: +2
Dex: +1	Dex: +1	Dex: +2	Dex: +2
Sta: +2	Sta: +3	Sta: +3	Sta: +2
Man: -1	Man: -2	Man: -2	Man: -2
App: -3	App: 0	App: -	Bite Damage: Strength +3

Stereotypes

- **Bagheera:** Smug chop-lickers who'd stick their nose into a light socket if you told one it'd enlighten him!
- **Balam:** From what I've heard, we might share a common sorrow. I've never met one, so I couldn't tell you if he was as bad as the other cats, better or worse.
- **Bubasti:** Sneaky little shits who sniff mummy farts and call it perfume. I wouldn't trust one as far as I could throw a pyramid, and that ain't too far.
- **Ceilican:** Who? Oh, yeah, they're dead.
- **Khan:** Vicious bastards masquerading as holy fighters. If they had a shred of the decency they pretend to, they'd've slaughtered the lions a century ago.
- **Pumonca:** Poo *what?*
- **Qualmi:** Never heard of em', never met one, and never want to.
- **Simba:** *Diediediediediediediedie!!!!*
- **Swara:** Fleet-footed cowards who would outrun their own shadows given half a chance. Worse, they hit you from behind and seem to come from nowhere. And they call *us* craven? Hah!

Ajaba Gifts

In addition to any of the Common or Breed Gifts mentioned in Chapter Four, werehyenas can learn a number of tribal magics from their elder cousins. An Ajaba that sticks her face into a taghairm is asking for trouble; thus, the other Gifts must come from an Akту's teachings or a spirit's favor. Or from a darker place.

The Ajaba are a tribe deep in shadow; for the survival of their kind, they're bargaining away their connection to the earth, exchanging it for a pact with the forces of corruption. Many old Ajaba have learned Black Spiral Dancer Gifts, and some have acquired fomori mutations, Demonic Investments, or both. These demented and powerful creatures become lords of the night wherever they live. Their packs, though small, terrorize the competition and leave chewed bones as warnings to others. The less said about these packs' breeding methods, the better. The fate

of the race may have already been sealed by another less obvious party than the Simba — themselves. (See Freak Legion, pages 74-75, for details about shapechanger fomori.)

The following Gifts run up to Level Four. No surviving Ajaba had achieved Bon Bhat status in time to learn the higher Gifts. These powers may be lost forever, although the survivors continue to search for them. Perhaps the answers lie inside the ruins of Adjua Ka's court, sealed away by the magic of the Simba. Who knows what secrets remain just out of reach — or what price the living hyenas might pay to get them back?

• **Sweet Hunter's Smile (Level One)** — As the Level One Homid Gift.

• **Crushing Jaws (Level Two)** — By invoking this Gift and snapping her jaws shut on prey, the Ajaba gets a solid hold that lasts until either the bone shatters, or the hyena lets loose or dies. The spirit of Mother Siracca teaches this Gift to her remaining children, who consider it a necessary birthright. By using this Gift as a group, several Ajaba can shred the mightiest opponent.

System: The hyena makes a Strength + Brawl roll (difficulty 6) to get a firm grip, then spends a point of Willpower. Each turn, the Ajaba inflicts an additional Health Level's worth of aggravated damage as her teeth mash the bone to marrow and splinters. (Strength + 4 damage on the second round, + 5 on the third, and so on...) The target cannot escape this grip unless he kills the hyena herself; her grip places her within easy reach (reducing his Dexterity + Brawl difficulty by 2), but prevents him from escaping.

• **Laughter of the Soul (Level Three)** — The hyena's barking chuckle is unsettling under the best circumstances; augmented by this Gift, it becomes a maddening threat. Normal humans and animals panic at the sound of this echoing Laughter; even supernatural creatures have been driven off in fear. An Epiphling of Fear itself teaches this Gift to the hyena-folk in exchange for a little extra lip service.

System: To activate the Gift, the Ajaba simply has to laugh. The Ajaba's player rolls her Manipulation + Expression or Intimidation (whichever is higher) against the victim's Willpower, each success makes the panic more profound: One success makes the target uneasy, while three sets her shivering uncontrollably and five drives her into the night, screaming. A Garou or vampire must check for frenzy if the Ajaba rolls three successes or more, and the results should send him into a fox frenzy until the Laughter ends. Only by spending Willpower can he keep his self-control, and even then, the chuckling disturbs him badly.

• **Culling the Weak (Level Four)** — By studying a foe or a group of prey, a hyena can tell which one of them is most ready to die. The Gift reveals states of sickness of the mind, body and soul and helps a hyena choose her next victim. This vision can be pretty abstract and open to interpretation; a young Garou on the verge of Harano is more likely to be spotted than an elderly wolf with a healthy heart. Even so, the sight's accurate, and provides disturbing insights that a target may not even be aware of...

System: The Ajaba's player rolls her Perception + Awareness and spends a Gnosis point. The difficulty depends on the severity of the subject's illness, or on the number of subjects nearby. Spotting a man with a bad liver is easy if he's alone (difficulty 5), harder if he's in a crowd (difficulty 7), and harder still if he's healthy but emotionally unbalanced (difficulty 8). If more than one person in range is unhealthy, the magic picks out the sickest one. This disease may be physical, mental or emotional, but should be significant. A minor case of the flu doesn't qualify, though pneumonia would. This Gift lasts one scene; its results, while accurate, depend on the circumstances of the story and its characters.



Don Fawcett

Appendix

*I've reached in darkness and come out with treasure
I've laid down with love and I woke up with lies
What's it all worth only the heart can measure
It's not what's in the mirror... but what's left inside
— Stevie Nicks, "Sometimes it's a Bitch"*

• Old Man Speaks of New Beginnings

I left the others where they lay at morning. The sun turned the sky a chill gray as I walked away from the fire, leaving something to remember me by. They were good Folk, I thought as I left them behind, but too young to know the value of silence. Some distance away, I laughed to the dawn sky, and my voice cackled across the open plains. I hope they live to grow as old as me. Their tongues are free; their hearts are trusting. Our world is too dim to see such sparks grow cold.

Perhaps my gift will teach them something. Or maybe not. The sky is vast, and I have places to go.

Bastet of Note

Bastet, as a rule, are not well known. Anyone stupid enough to go around declaring "I'm a werecat! I'm a werecat!" deserves the death she'll soon receive from one of any number of enemies — Garou, vampires, humans, spirits, other werecats... Nevertheless, the following Bastet have made names for themselves in the modern world, if only through the gossip of their fellow cats. These reputations are not, shall we say, public knowledge, even among the Shadow-Folk. Bastet get pretty clannish when it comes to the deeds and identities of their kin.

The deeds attributed to some historical werecats, like Old Stone Face, Tybalt deLeon, Hundred Blooded Reeds and many others, can be found throughout this book. The Bastet below are all secretive and hard to find, but very much alive.



Jureem Pakura
(Bagheera Information Merchant)

When in the East, the Bastet say, look up Jureem. He's got the dirt on everything and everybody you could want to know about. For a price, of course. What would life be like if everything were free?

Jureem is an elderly Indian werepanther with an inquisitive manner and a collection of books that rivals some wizards' libraries. He actively pursues new stories, gossip, myths and insights, and may be far older than he seems. Although his cat-forms are pretty fragile these days, he's a spry old guy. Stories say he can become a shadow at will, and often leaves his library in this form to spy on people and creatures all over India. Occasionally, he turns up in other countries; other Bastet have speculated that his library hides magical gates leading all over the world — and possibly to other Realms as well. The tales of his trickery and wisdom are many, and some of the best of them might even be true.

Although this Bagheera is rumored to be over a hundred years old, his body remains fairly limber and strong. His eyes seem to glow a faint blue (though they're black in full light), and the black fur of his coat is shot with silver streaks. His whiskers are pure white, and he has no hair at all in his human form. Jureem's clothing depends on his whim: In his library, he often wears a brightly-colored robe or English smoking jacket. When entertaining guests, he dresses in rich Hindu fashions or sharp European clothes. While scouring for secrets, he might be a naked holy man, a young girl, a shadow or a toothless beggar. No matter his guise, Jureem has elevated interrogation and conversation to high arts. He can coax strangers to admit things they wouldn't offer their closest friends, all the while seeming like a harmless, talkative old man. The secrets he commands are said to be priceless, but many of them can be had at bargain rates....

Trade is Jureem's lifeblood. The endless amounts of lore he stockpiles have been gathered for the express purpose of trading with interested parties. As the stories go, his estate, a virtual palace buried somewhere in a corner of Bombay, was a gift from a cabal of wizards. In return for a collection of answers, they granted him a mansion that shifts location every new moon. This grand payment is only one of many things Jureem has acquired through his hobby — his collections of rare books, art and sacred scriptures makes magicians and vampires envious. As far as anyone knows, he attains all of these luxuries through trading secrets. Who knows? Each night births a thousand questions. Perhaps Jureem has the answers you seek — and perhaps you have something he'd like in return....

Ten Thunders
(Balam Cartel Leader)

The Medellin and Cali cartels get all the press, but they're quickly becoming old news. Buried deep in the forests of Columbia, a small but powerful new group harvests the purest cocaine in the world and smuggles it past the tightest security devised. Few DEA agents have even heard this new cartel's name, but its imprint — the black jaguar — has become infamous among the white death pipeline, so infamous that even the most talkative informers speak nothing of it except the name of its leader — Ten Thunders, the Lord of the Bleeding Night.

Despite the name and common belief, Ten Thunders is a woman. Not that you can tell easily by looking at her — this Bastet is a hard, nasty character, and the ruthlessness she brings to her job has etched itself into her face. She usually wears men's clothing — often army fatigues or tailored suits — but occasionally "lowers herself" to dress in traditional Colombian woman's garb. Her personality is rigid and her voice is harsh. The penalty for disobeying her is a quick trip to the Hunting Gallery — an underground maze where she stalks the offender in one of her cat



forms, devours him, and drags the remains to the entrance as a warning. Although she looks like a woman in her mid-30s, Ten Thunders carries herself like an avenging Inca ghost.

Ten Thunders may seem like a cold, sadistic, evil bitch. She may be all of those things and more, but she does have her reasons. Before she took control of the cartel that she now leads, the people — her people — were hungry, taxed by a corrupt government, and afraid of the sudden disappearances that mark so many Central American nights. The previous cartel leader was a harsh and greedy man named Quabo, who tortured the people for fun. Ten Thunders, who swears she emerged full-grown from the jungle night, ripped out Quabo's throat and tossed his body to the scavengers. The same punishment fell on anyone who disagreed with the woman's commands. Soon, she had the whole cartel to herself.

Why does she grow and sell drugs? It's simple, really; before the cocaine trade, her people were starving. Overseas, fat and undeserving foreigners blew their money on chemical poisons, then worsened her people's poverty so they could buy *more* drugs. Why, then, shouldn't honest working people profit from making the poisons that the fat ones so willingly ingest? It's killing two rats with one stone, really — her people get the rich ones' money, and the rich ones kill themselves off. Nothing wrong with that, at least not as far as Ten Thunders could see. So now she runs a cocaine cartel, one of the largest in Columbia, slaughters her rivals, enriches her people, and gives the fat ones what they want: death by ecstasy.

Anya Z (Dark Subasti Siren)

Exotic, arousing and irresistibly charismatic, Anya Z has become a near-goddess in the modern music underground. Countless Gothic artists have immortalized her captivating gaze in clubs, bookstores and galleries across the world, and midnight deejays shake the dancefloors with the ethereal thunder of her music. A friend to vampires, wizards and “mere” human toys, Anya ranks with Nico, Diamonda Galas, Gitane Demone, and other sirens of the final night. In her songs, the dancing dead hear whispered mysteries drifting just out of reach. It's as if the music *said* something, as if breathed a tantalizing secret just on the edges of perception....

And, of course, it does.

Anya loves the darkness; she weaves it into her music like gold thread in a fine tapestry. Her taste for exotic forbidden thrills takes her from Cairo's backroom temples of Qadesh to Carfax Abby, Forbidden Pleasures and, years ago, to the Succubus Club. The things she learns in her midnight travels find their way into tahlas wrapped in song. Few humans understand them, but even so, they sense that something's going on behind the lyrics. Those with a taste for the arcane treasure her like fine wine. The Shadow-Folk understand better, and many of them welcome this dark chanteuse into their parlors for games of show-and-tell....

A haunting blend of Indian, African and European aristocracy, Anya dresses in black outfits which seem all the more revealing for the lack of skin they display. Her extensive jewelry and body art includes numerous piercings, occult tattoos, and a nose ring joined to an ear lobe by a thin chain. She seems to whisper ancient wisdoms even when she says nothing at all, and carries herself like a banshee queen. Her cool manners display fine breeding, but if the many tales about her are true, she has no aversion to dirtying her hands when a good time comes around. Anya Z is far from a household name, but that's how she



likes it. From the shadows, she observes the spidery world she prefers. And it, in turn, observes her and echoes her name.

Rucksack Mary/ Maria Caliper/ Maureen Jones (Ceilican Vagabond/ Corporate Spy/ Computer Systems Whiz)

The epitome of her tribe's multiple personality disorder approach to life, this Bastet spends portions of the year as three very different women. Four months out of twelve, Rucksack Mary wanders across the continental U.S. seeking new friends and sensations. For four months after that, Maria Caliper's answering service accepts calls from executives who want the dirt on their competitors — or their co-workers. During the next four-month period, Maureen Smith takes freelance job offers creating office systems or debugging sensitive software. All three personalities are well known in their fields; very few folks connect the three women. Even her fellow Bastet remain ignorant of her identities. In particular, no one who has heard about Rucksack Mary's many names knows which tribe she hails from. Most assume she belongs to the Bagheera or Pumonca and leave it at that.

Physically, all three fit a similar “type” — late-20s to early 30s, pretty but not remarkably so, athletically built with graceful mannerisms. From there outward, they appear quite different. **Rucksack Mary** wears worn, cut-off denim shorts and vests decorated with art and autographs of the people she's met. Her wild blond hair contrasts with sunburnt skin, and her elfin grin offsets the age lines around her eyes. Mary's only footwear consists of toe-rings and an elaborate anklet, and her enthusiasm for life is infectious. **Maria Caliper** is suave, with well-manicured nails, perfect makeup and an expensive wardrobe of modest but en-



trancing dresses and high-heeled shoes. Her personality is cool and formal, with only a hint of playfulness beneath an “all business” facade. Maria’s hair is short and brown, calculatedly messy rather than severe. **Maureen Jones** is the werecat’s “resting” persona — quiet, focused, introverted and antisocial. Her clothing is bland and efficient; she wears no jewelry and keeps her red hair hanging across her face. In conversation, she seems distracted and quickly breaks contact with anyone. Only the Bastet’s cat-forms — each of them black with white stripes, paws and mask — bring the three different women together, and only the most perceptive of beings could realize any connection at all between these very different women.

Each of the Ceilican’s personas are curious in their own way; Rucksack Mary loves to meet people, bond quickly, then skip away into the sunset; Maria digs up inside info and sells it to finance her luxurious lifestyle; Maureen prefers the mysteries of code and cipher to personal interactions and avoids conversation whenever possible. Each “face” the Ceilican possesses is sharp-witted and perceptive with an affinity for other people’s quirks. Each identity wages a very quiet secret war against corruption, passing information into the right hands at the right time. Although she’s no champion of catkind, this elusive Bastet is exactly what she was born to be: watchful, playful and lethal when need be.

Tiger Toranaga *(Japanese Khan Yakuza)*

As a boy, Isao Toranaga watched his father’s fingers disappear one by one, victims of mistakes made in service to the Hiaku Gumi, a Tokyo yakuza clan. When the last mistake proved too much for the oyabun to bear, he had Isao’s parents murdered. The boy would have died, too, if Mikso, a “family

friend” had not burst through the door in tiger form to rip the hit men to shreds and spirit young Isao into the night. She became the boy’s mother, extending the usual one-year apprenticeship into a 10-year fostering. During this time, Mikso taught him many martial arts forms and introduced him to a rival yakuza gang, the Oni No Miza Gumi. When he reached First Change, she led him to the local Khan overlord, as well. Naturally, Isao swore revenge for his parents when he reached maturity; moreover, he swore to demolish the entire Hiaku Gumi alone. He has yet to complete the task, but has a good head start.

Destroying an entire yakuza family isn’t easy; it takes a few well-placed kills, some selective bits of inside information, bribes and threats, and the occasional rampage of terror. With whispers in the shadows and claws in the night, Isao Toranaga, now grown into an impressive warrior, has thrown the Hiaku and their allies into a panic without exposing his identity. Now he wears two faces — the silent enemy, and The Tiger, a capable enforcer with an uncanny knack for patchinko. Working from the inside, he leaks family secrets throughout the Tokyo Bastet. In time, those leaks become cracks; as the water streams from these many faults, the Hiaku’s walls crumble. The silent enemy adds to the damage with subtle kicks and slashes. The dam will burst soon and the Gumi will be washed away forever.

Tiger Toranaga resembles his namesake: powerfully built. He walks low to the ground, taking in everything around him. Inscribed in vivid inks across his shoulders, a tiger dances with each roll of Isao’s muscles. His features are as brutal as the bone-breaking punches and kicks he deals his foes. Unlike many yakuza, Tiger doesn’t like sunglasses; the sheen of his eyes has caused a few remarks, but a cold look and a display of strength are usually enough to silence them. Although he dresses in expensive tailored clothes, Toranaga seems to care only for gossip, gambling and war.



Ling Chu (Khan Supercop)

Ling Chu is a Hong Kong policeman with unbelievable reflexes, endless stamina and an unerring sense of where to go to cause the most trouble. He's said to be single-handedly responsible for crashing three Triads and demolishing a Communist spy ring in the provincial government. Although officially stationed with the Hong Kong police, Ling actually works with Interpol. He works in Homid form to avoid blowing his cover, and rumors in the Chinese underground speak of Chu's legendary temper. He's known to have killed at least 20 men in the line of duty, and darker tales claim he becomes a tiger through his powerful kung fu.

Despite his awesome reputation, Chu's a very friendly, almost self-effacing guy; his occasional rages and cockiness contrast so badly with his usual manner that few friends know how to take him. Despite his good looks, Chu bungles relationships with women on an almost weekly basis. If not for his amazing fighting prowess and frightening temper, this so-called "supercop" would be the laughing stock of his precinct. As it is, his name is spoken carefully and his outbursts ignored; there's no telling when the friendly policeman might become a one-man weapon. As Chu's superiors believe, that weapon is better aimed on the side of law than against it.

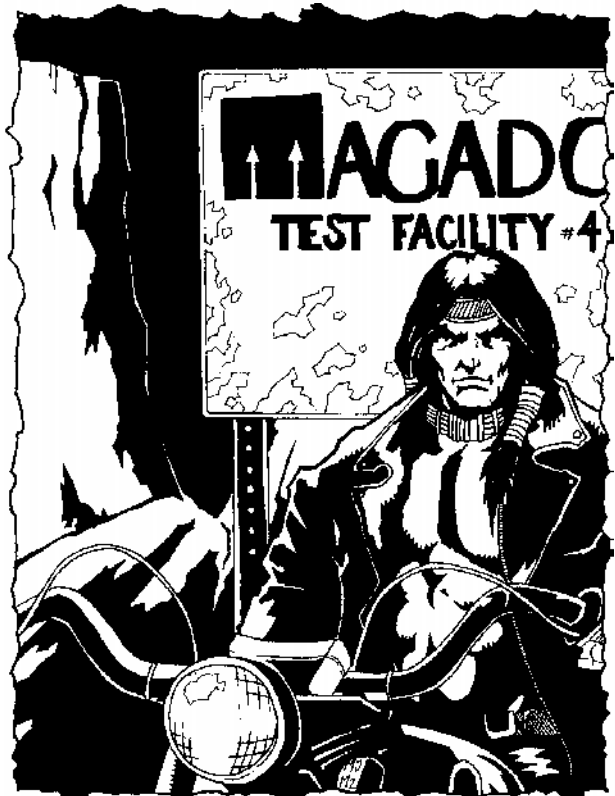
Ling Chu's kung fu is powerful indeed. He has worked with Tiger Toranaga in the past, and the two Khan remain on friendly, if guarded, terms so long as each one stays on his respective island. In mainland China, the United States coast and other Pacific lands, the two Bastet have kicked ass and taken names in several epic adventures. There's no telling where either one will show up next.

Raindance Smith (Biker Pumonca)

In contrast to his occasional traveling companion Rucksack Mary, the Sioux biker known as Raindance Smith is quiet and reserved. He's friendly enough once you get him going, but prefers listening to talking. That's okay with most women he encounters: Raindance (so called because of his propensity for showering during thunderstorms) is a babe.

Tanned and trim, with long black hair and deep brown eyes, Smith rests easily on a massive black Harley. Raindance dresses in denim and leather, and he wears his Apache heritage proudly. For a biker, Smith has few tattoos. He's got a story for each one, though: The two-faced hawk on his left bicep recalls the tale of Three-Rings-Carrying, while the eagle spread across his back was engraved by his grandfather just before Smith left home. Smith is quietly edgy, with a restless streak that keeps him moving. His eyes burn through whatever's in his sights and retain a predatory edge even when the man himself is smiling.

Tales of Raindance are many and varied; supposedly, he fought in the War of Chicago alongside the Garou, exposed a right-wing politician who ran a child prostitution ring, killed a Mexican people smuggler and torched a Pentex factory single-handedly. He is known as the Son of the Thunderbird, and travels under that Jamak's good graces. Occasionally, he's said to dress as a woman or act contrary for a while, as Thunderbird's chosen sometimes do. Raindance has a great memory for faces, and recalls people he met in childhood. Many Bastet speculate on Raindance Smith's agenda (or lack thereof), but even his best friends only know him casually. Like a cloud across the sky, Smith rolls through quickly then passes on.

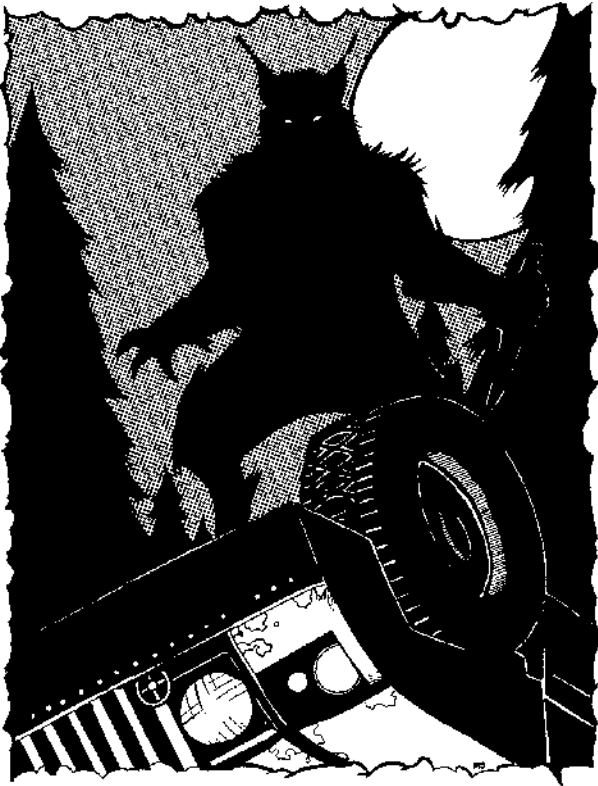


Momma Treebender (Qualmi Entrepreneur)

Momma Treebender is big. Really big. Not just big for a Qualmi, but big in general. Big voice, big heart, big body, big temper. A heavy-faced veteran of the "Trail of Broken Treaties" in 1972, this Chippewa woman eventually discovered a way to reclaim the land around her ancestral home: She bought it.

Originally known as Monica Treesapling, Momma soon grew strong enough to double her namesake in half with one pull — hence, her new name, Treebender. A group of friends (who may or may not have been wizards) helped Momma Treebender "discover" a rich vein of gold on her family's lands. With shrewd investments (aided, no doubt, by Qualmi wisdom and supported by a few people who knew how to manipulate the stock market), Momma created Treebender's Lodge, a chain of high-quality taverns specializing in good beer, good music and Native American cuisine. In less than 10 years, Treebender's become a popular fixture of the northern U.S. and southern Canada, and Momma became a millionaire. Her millions bought dozens, then hundreds of acres of prime land across the upper states. Using the white man's laws, Momma has had those lands declared "hands off" to everyone except her friends — Native Americans, conservationists and like-minded folk who want to settle down to more traditional lifestyles, without the intrusions of modern industrial living.

Physically, Momma Treebender is huge and strong: over 300 pounds of fat and muscle standing over six feet tall. Fortunately, she often smiles — her anger is not a pretty thing to see. Although she has a selection of "modern" business suits for meetings, Momma favors more traditional dresses of buckskin and patterned cotton, leggings and braids. Her throat is always covered



in scarves and necklaces — she feels it's unlucky to expose her neck to evil spirits after an encounter with what may have been vampire assassins. Her black hair is long and thick, and her small gray eyes look out from a round and generous face. Her cat-forms are equally large — twice the size of the average Qualmi — and shift from black with gray markings to white with brown stripes, depending on the season and her mood.

Momma often tours between her taverns, which are quite popular with the Garou and Dreamspeaker mages. Although many of her more... interesting... clients recognize that Momma is not what she appears to be, few of them know her Bastet heritage. However, more than one would come to her side if she called for aid.

Black Tooth, the Dark Lord of Endless Storms (Genocidal Simba)

The mightiest Simba in Africa, Black Tooth has killed more of his own kind during his lifetime than some Garou murdered during the War of Rage. Common wisdom claims he has 17 Bastet kills to his “credit,” but those who’ve been close to him and survived claim he’s slain a great deal more. Tales say he carries the avatar of Cahlash the Unmaker in his black-furred breast. Judging by the magical powers he commands, this may very well be true.

Black Tooth is perhaps the biggest lion alive. He very rarely takes any other form, but resembles a huge Zulu king or black sabertooth when he does so. Although his teeth aren't really black, his fur is like solid night and his mane resembles a stormcloud. He's been shot, stabbed, raked, burned and bespelled enough to kill an army of Garou, but has survived everything the world has thrown at him. Black Tooth can call devastating storms, ruin miles of farmland, or rip enemies in half with a single blow; worse, he heads the largest, meanest

pride on any continent — the Endless Storm, 10 Simba who kill any trespasser on sight. Even the human authorities fear the Endless Storm. Hunters, elephant herds, werecat war bands — all have fallen to the pride's fury. Like a marauding horde, Black Tooth's band leaves any place they visit in ruins.

Black Tooth and the Endless Storm were the final dust on the grave of the African Ajaba. He called upon the tribe's Yava, herded them into the Hyena King's court, then led his pride against them like a tidal wave. For fun, he decorated the final court of the Hyena King in Ajaba skulls — over 50 in all, plus untold numbers of hyena and human Kinfolk. This massacre drove the tribe almost to extinction, and the surviving members fled Africa to avoid the Hyena King's fate. They've sent the occasional war band against him, but no curse, ambush or attack has been able to drop the Dark King of Endless Storms. His ferocity remains undimmed.

Black Tooth may be the strongest Simba alive, a Rank Six Bon Bhat with mighty Gifts and a ferocious pride to back him up. To date, he has destroyed every would-be assassin or war party he's encountered. His day will come someday, but he won't fall without a huge, bloody fight.

Asante Jua (Swara Assassin)

A charming Bantu with impeccable fashion sense, Asante is astute, well spoken, fluent in six different languages, and a stone-cold killer. The cheetah at his side is in reality his feline lover Brihen, and the two of them often vacation on the plains while the heat dies down after one of Asante's “visits.” The two Swara keep a palatial house in Botswana, where the servants know when to stay indoors.

Years ago, Asante worked as a porter, then a manager at a classy hotel in Gaborone. Years of service taught him both manners and hatred. When his First Year came at the unusual age of 24, Asante was fed up, burned out and looking for a change.





He got it. In the 10 years since, he has used the politesse he learned on the hotel staff to become a polished member of high society — a lifestyle he supports by freelance people hunting. Brihen, his kuasha, remained beside him as Asante earned his own place among the Swara, and the two men became lovers. With Asante's criminal connections and Brihen's animal allies, the two have created an oasis of their very own around Ghanzi. Few outsiders come or go without their knowledge.

Asante is tall, lanky and graceful, with close-cropped hair and a neat beard. His features recall a black Lucifer, and his mannerisms are sleek and elegant. Asante prefers knives or claws for his work — guns are for those afraid to face their prey, spears are for those who prefer to keep a distance, and explosives are a coward's way out. For Asante, the measure of a man is how well, and how stylishly, he can kill. Afterward, he (and occasionally Brihen) celebrates the kill with a ceremony in which hungry cheetah ghosts are satiated with the blood of Asante's victims. Passing into the spirit world, they drag the corpse with them and feast. All that remains in the mortal world is a smear of blood and the head which Asante delivers as proof of his kill.

- **The Foothills of Kilimanjaro**

Malcolm paused to wipe the blood and sweat away with a greasy hand. Beside him, three corpses cooled, gutted by a lion's claws. The fight had not been painless; the Simba's left arm was burned by acid blood and his teeth sizzled in blistered gums. Three slashes and a bullet hole throbbed unmercifully even as they healed. Still, it was over. The three dakat had made an impressive first kill. Not bad for a starving Brooklyn city boy, thought Malcolm as he wiped the scorching blood away. Not bad at all.

With a machete, he whacked off the heads of the three monsters and set them on their own jeep hood to bake. As the setting sun cast cold shadows on the plains, Malcolm called out to his spirit friend. "Heya! Heya, you old farhouse! Chow time, garbage breath. Come and get it!"

"Humph," grumped the vulture as he wheeled from the skies and tore into the dakat. "Rotted meat. Couldn't have a fresh kill, could we? No, no, you're a Simba. Big monster hunter, Oh yes."

"You got that right," said the city boy, "and I think my kill deserves a little respect." Setting the heads in a circle, he raked a pattern in the dirt with his claws. Standing upright, he stretched out his arms and bellowed. The wind stirred his mane around his shoulders and the air itself seemed to shimmer. Ancestors both lion and Zulu seemed to gather just out of sight, welcoming back one of their own. "Call me Tatu Mlima," he roared, "Three Mountains. I have survived alone, and I have killed these ugly suckers, and that gives me the right to make my name — my own name — and to demand respect."

"It does, ndugu, it does. Habari za jioni, my friend." Radi stood beside the vulture, who had lifted his own head to appraise the young man. In the deepening shade, both man and bird faded into darkness.

"Come on, Tatu Mlima, and we'll get you cleaned up and bandaged. The elder extended his hand to the lion-man. "Let us go."

"You sonofabitch," Malcolm sighed, but it was a happy insult. "Can we get the hell outta here now?"

"Yes," agreed the kuasha. "You can return home soon...."

Toys

Jack: What more could a person ask for?

Egg: The Six Demon Bag!

Jack: Terrific. The Six Demon Bag. Sensational. What's in it, Egg?

Egg: Wind. Fire. All that sort of thing.

— Jack Burton and Egg Shen, *Big Trouble in Little China*

Trinkets

Each of the items below carries a bit of mystical power, and can be purchased with the Trinket Background. Most are fetishes, like those spoken of in *Werewolf*, but some are simply mystical objects that clever Bastet can use. Although the descriptions often refer to Bastet owners, any of the creatures that employ fetishes (that is, Changing Breeds and Spirit Sphere mages) can use the following trinkets, regardless of species, unless the listing says otherwise.

Devil's Deck

Level 1, Gnosis 5

A collection of "normal" playing cards, this trickster's deck deals whatever card would be most helpful to the Bastet who owns it. Devil's Decks come in a variety of styles, from Tarot cards to playing cards and even collectable game cards, leading the few werewolves who know about such things to wonder about their origins. Some Devil's Decks are pretty old — they're said to have been a staple of the Old West — but the more recent variations have some occult-minded Bastet puzzled. Who makes the damned things? Some Bastet would give a lot to find out....

A Devil's Deck grants the user a Dice Pool of five — the fetish's Gnosis score — when gambling, or offers an additional five dice if he's already got the optional Gambling Skill. Whenever the cat wants to play, he blows on the deck and asks for luck. The spirit in the cards responds accordingly. Smart Bastet switch decks to avoid winning too often. Unless an opponent checks the cards with magic, the Deck looks totally normal.

Lotus Petals

Level 2, Gnosis N/A

In the Court of Luna, there grows a garden of 1000 year lotus flowers. Each Bastet that journeys to the moon may bring back a small bag of five Lotus Petals from the garden, as keepsakes of Seline's love. Naturally, these mystic flowers have a few added properties. Although few Bastet willingly sacrifice their precious Petals, emergencies do happen.

The Petals' magical effects are said to include:

- The power to dissolve any poison, either inside or outside the body;
- The ability to heal any mortal disease if eaten;
- The power to increase the potency of Moon Rites;
- The seed to ensure the birth of a Bastet kitten.

Any, all or none of these rumors might be true. The tales give a variety of ways in which the Petals might be used, from brewing a tea or serving them in corn meal to eating them raw or grinding them to dust. Although it takes a trip to the moon to obtain such flowers, some generous kuasha give them to their students as parting gifts. Their magical properties — or lack thereof — are left entirely to the Storyteller's discretion.

Grandmother's Stones

Level 2, Gnosis 5

When the waters receded from the last great flood, they left behind shimmering stones which called to women in the night. When young girls went out under the moonlight to pick them from the cliffsides and fields where they rested, these stones brought them good fortune. In time, they were turned to jewelry and christened Grandmother's Stones. When women with the blood of Seline happened upon such Stones, the mystical power of both increased.

In game terms, these brilliant blue gemstones, often set into wooden or golden jewelry, capture the moonlight and raise the Gnosis of any female cat who wears them. For every success the werecat rolls to attune with the fetish during a full moon, her temporary Gnosis rises by one. Willpower cannot be spent to gain automatic successes, and the Stone (and its Gnosis) works only by moonlight. By day, the cat has her normal rating, no bonuses. Each roll can be made only once per month, during the full moon, and any Gnosis spent is gone until next month. Most werecats attune themselves to the Stones and the moon by chanting a prayer to Seline and Gaia, holding the jewelry up in offering and thanksgiving.

Truth-Speaker Stick

Level 3, Gnosis 5

In many cultures, a person cannot speak in a formal setting unless he has been passed the speaking-stick, a token of recognition that keeps parties from shouting each other down. Supposedly, such insignia avert the rudeness that comes when passions are aroused. This fetish, the residence of a Truth-spirit, has other uses besides.

When an elder hosting a taghairm doubts a guest's sincerity, he may call out the fetish's spirit to protect against false testimony. A carved and decorated mahogany baton, the Stick goes from hand to hand as each person speaks in turn. As the Stick is passed around, anyone who holds it will have to speak

what he knows to be the truth, without embellishment or omission. If he does not, the Stick leaps into the air and starts bashing him in the head (no damage unless the Storyteller wants to make a point). Once the liar has been exposed and punished, the Stick sails back through the air to its owner, where it supposes that truth remains. If the fetish is surrounded by liars, it glows like an ember and tries to jump out of the owner's hands. If allowed, it beats every liar in the vicinity into bloody-headed submission. For obvious reasons, this aggressive fetish is left in its box when the owner herself needs to lie!

Silver Hakarr

Level 4, Gnosis 6

Like the klaives of the Garou, these silver hunga-mungas are dangerous to make and deadly to use. Ritual weapons used for the deadliest grudge battles, these many-bladed monstrosities have been crafted from raw silver and invested with War-spirits. A silver hakarr's owner suffers a one-Gnosis deduction from her usual total; her target suffers aggravated damage, plus the effects of silver if he comes from shapechanger stock.

Even the weapon's physical form is terrifying. Thick cutting blades project out from the handle in almost every direction, balancing out the weapon's heft and providing every side with a cutting edge. A strong combatant can throw a hunga-munga some distance. In its native Africa, this fetish is valuable enough; in the Americas, it's almost unheard-of except in legends. (The weapon is difficulty 6 to use, and inflicts Strength +4 damage; it can also be thrown up to the thrower's Strength x 3 in yards.)

• Colorado Taghairm

"...and that's where I got my name," Three Mountains concludes. The other cats clap or chuff their approval as he returns to the fire, still accustomed to the African heat. Barrister clasps Three Mountains' shoulder as he passes by, and the Simba returns the gesture. Violet scratches behind the werelion's ears as he sits, and he doesn't mind a bit.

"Any other tales to tell?" the Khan inquires. It's late, but no one's tired yet.

Rucksack Mary rises, her backpack in her hands. "Actually," she begins, "it's not really a story, per se, but I've got a question." Beside her, Raindance grimaces, resigned. "Me and Raindance here were on our way here when we met this guy in Arizona. He seemed like one of us, and he knew a lot of stuff, so we figured he was all right."

Barrister's annoyed. His tail twitches slightly but his voice is a purr. "What did you tell this man?"

"Well, nothing, really." The vagabond has faced much worse than this. "We all told stories, but that's all they were. You know, tahla, and he seemed to know what he was talking about. He was gone in the morning, though, so we knew he wasn't coming here. We didn't see where he went, but he left us this..." — she rummages in her sack — "...and we don't know what to make of it."

As Mary pulls out the Old Man's gift, the elder werecats groan. Several youngsters strain forward, unbelieving, as Barrister laughs a hearty booming sound. "I'm assuming," says Mary at last, "that you know what this is."

"Oh, yes," says the Khan. "I know it well."

"Then somebody please tell me," Mary replies, holding up the Old Man's empty skin, "who in hell can do this!?"



BASTET™



Nature: _____

Demeanor: _____

Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Expanded Background

Allies

Mentor

Contacts

Pure Breed

Jamak

Resources

Kinfolk

Secrets

Possessions

Gear (Carried) _____

Equipment (Owned) _____

Den Realm

Size _____

Location _____

Base Gauntlet _____

Description _____

Experience

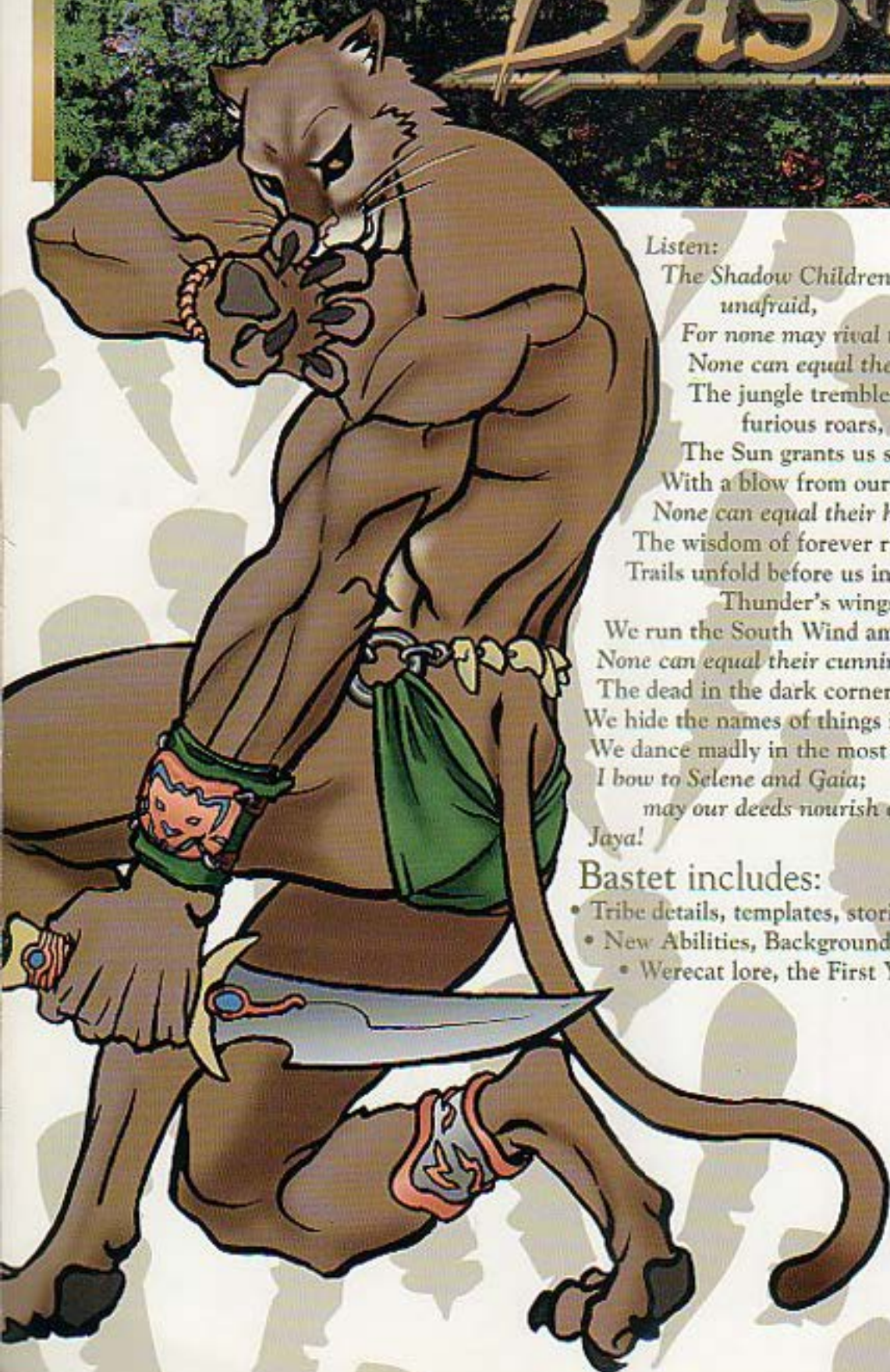
TOTAL:

Gained From: _____

TOTAL SPENT: _____

Spent On: _____

BASTET



Listen:

*The Shadow Children walk the twilight days
unafraid,
For none may rival them in their sleek majesty.
None can equal their ferocity:
The jungle trembles like smoke at our
furious roars,*

*The Sun grants us strength to slay the rain,
With a blow from our paw we shake the earth.*

*None can equal their honor:
The wisdom of forever rides behind our yellow eyes,
Trails unfold before us in the shadow of*

Thunder's wings,

We run the South Wind among the Stars.

None can equal their cunning:

*The dead in the dark corners whisper secrets to us,
We hide the names of things in mist-words and snow-speech,
We dance madly in the most hidden of places.*

I bow to Selene and Gaia;

may our deeds nourish our beloved relatives.

Jaya!

Bastet includes:

- Tribe details, templates, stories and characters
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