

"IF YOU AIN'T JUST A LITTLE SCARED WHEN YOU ENTER A CASINO,  
YOU ARE EITHER VERY RICH OR YOU HAVEN'T STUDIED THE GAMES ENOUGH."

— TERRENCE "VR RABBIT" MURRAY

# PARLOR GAMES

AN ADVENTURE FOR WEREWOLF: THE FORSAKEN  
USING THE STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

Written by: Ethan Skemp

Layout: matt millberger

Art: James Ryman

## STORYTELLING ADVENTURE SYSTEM

SCENES

8

MENTAL  
PHYSICAL  
SOCIAL

●○○○

●●○○

●●○○

XP LEVEL

0-34



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There are things in this world that come from somewhere else. Hungry things. They scabble in the dark places, reaching out to draw in prey. Sometimes it's human prey. Sometimes it's the People.

One of those things is reaching out even further now. It's built its nest somewhere unreachable. It's subtle and cunning, enough so to hide its own strength. And it is strong, and it is dangerous. But it made a mistake. It began to hunt on your territory. It started to take people that are under your protection.

Now it's time for you to do the hunting.

## INTRODUCTION

Werewolves hunt. Sometimes it's a straightforward process, wherein some threat arises in their territory and is quickly disposed in a dangerous but simple fight. Sometimes the hunt is but one strand in a complicated web of subplots and intrigues that runs through the whole of the chronicle.

This story kit is a prepackaged hunt, designed to be used either way. As Storyteller, you might run "Parlor Games" as a stand-alone scenario, perhaps as an entertaining diversion from the main plots of the chronicle or as a one-shot with characters designed specifically for this scenario. On the other hand, you might weave this story into the other main story threads, foreshadowing its events a few sessions before you bring the players into the first of its scenes and making the final fate of the Ladybird Room a major plot point in future sessions.

## TREATMENT

"Parlor Games" is a basic hunt story which sets the characters on the trail of a mysterious enemy that has been preying on humans uncomfortably close to their own territory. The pack may suspect that their prey is a materialized spirit, a Ridden or Host, but the exact details are left for them to uncover over the course of the hunt. With a bit of work, they trace their enemy to the Ladybird Room, a covert gambling den that attracts a dangerous sort of clientele.

The twist is that their quarry's lair isn't in the physical realm — at least, not exactly. The Ladybird Room occupies a "place that isn't," a small pocket tucked into the spirit world that has no physical counterpart. Sometimes the door to the Ladybird Room can't be found at all, because it doesn't exist in the material world.

The antagonist of this tale is an enigmatic underworld figure called Mr. G, or more rarely, Mr. Gustavus. However, the human-seeming Mr. G is only a skin inhabited by the Azlu that calls itself Kusthuthun (a First Tongue name meaning "the leatherworker"). Kusthuthun has a particular talent for mending and maintaining a single human skin, and has been living as Mr. Gustavus for a long time. More recently, the Spider Host took control of the Ladybird Room, which it found to be an exceptionally valuable resource. Because most denizens of the spirit world can't even perceive the space it occupies without entering through one of the doors, it is safe from Shadow

intrusion. Even better, humans go out of their way to find the place. It seems to be the perfect parlor, and oh so attractive to all the right flies.

The Ladybird Room has a certain reputation among some of the shadier elements of the city, and attracts dangerous men and women. Some of its clientele are jaded socialites, would-be celebrities or boardroom sharks looking for the illicit thrill of gaming with gangsters both old school and new. Among the various local criminal organizations, the den has a reputation as a neutral ground — a place where they can meet to discuss business, or simply to play cards with one another. Of course, most organizations would very much like a piece of the Ladybird Room, but Mr. G has been able to maintain neutrality through a combination of judiciously timed bribes and subtle violence. Most of the higher-ranking or more traditional gangsters avoid the place, but it's quite popular with the up-and-coming soldiers who enjoy an opportunity to size up or show off in front of their rivals without starting any "incidents."

The scenes of "Parlor Games" aren't linear. The characters can use multiple methods at their disposal to track the Azlu to their lair. The two most likely methods are listed here, but if the players devise some novel way of locating their prey, feel free to let it work as long as it seems reasonably plausible. The goal is to eventually let them track down their prey, but the choices they make along the way should alter the events of the story.

## A CHAPTER IN YOUR CHRONICLE

The events of "Parlor Games" should fit easily enough into your ongoing Werewolf chronicle. It's a straightforward hunt, with a nemesis that could feasibly exist in almost any setting save the deep wilderness, regardless of the local Uratha politics or balance of power. The exact motives for the pack to go on this hunt and the long-term consequences it has on the chronicle are left for you and your players to determine, in part through the game play itself.

Motive is, of course, mostly left to the players to determine. However, your knowledge of their characters lets you prepare for this more easily than we can. If you know that the pack's alpha has a particular hatred for the Pure, consider dropping the hint that the mysterious predator on their territory's fringe is taking payments from the Pure to target the pack's loved ones. Duty alone might be enough to motivate your players, but it never hurts to sweeten the pot by adding something a little more personal.

For the story to really connect as part of the chronicle, it should have consequences that linger on in future sessions. These should suggest themselves as you play the game, though you might think about some possible repercussions in advance. The Azlu are notoriously difficult to kill with certainty, and one or more might escape through Swarm Discorporation to return later and bedevil the pack. Even if the pack manages to permanently kill Mr. G and each of his henchmen, the Ladybird Room is an interesting piece of supernatural real estate that can easily provide future developments. Will the pack



claim it, and if so, who or what will challenge their ownership? If not, who or what might move in to take over?

And don't overlook the human element: the ordinary people attending the Ladybird Room may be witnesses to the characters' violence or otherwise provide a good recurring story hook later on. If you've already established a few human Storyteller characters that interest the players, consider having one (perhaps a Contact) show up at the Ladybird Room for an extra bit of interaction. Perhaps the amateur occultist with a crush on the pack's Ithaeur is there because she's heard about the rumors of its owner making a pact with the devil, or maybe the beat cop who turns a blind eye to the pack's vigilante activities is tagging along with a friend or partner because he's interested in a new poker venue. Such touches help make the story feel like an organic part of the chronicle as well as increasing player interest.

If you're running "Parlor Games" as a one-shot, or don't want to cast one of your established Storyteller characters as the victim, then you can use the provided character below for simplicity's sake. If running the story as part of an ongoing chronicle, you can even foreshadow this story's events by giving her a brief walk-on role in an earlier story. Plan on giving her no more than a line or two as "the waitress" or "the girl at the club," so as not to call too much attention to her. If the characters take an interest in her and engage her in conversation, then they're the ones proactively building a bond — one that will hopefully stir them to action when she meets a gruesome fate.

• **Megan Blaine** was a single woman in her mid-20s, still young enough to put off thinking about her future too hard but old enough to take responsibility for her life. She worked the lunch and afternoon shift at a typical yuppie-fare restaurant, went clubbing every night she could rationalize it, and got along only moderately well with her roommates. Her parents live on the other side of the state, and she was comfortable with the distance. She dated frequently, but tended to break off the relationship at the first sign of any real imperfection in her boyfriend, as something of a defensive measure. She liked playing poker, mostly in bars on "Texas Hold-Em Tuesdays" or the like. She had walnut-brown hair that she preferred to dye blonde, and wore a brand-new "perfect little black dress" to the Ladybird Room, where she hoped to have some fun gambling, maybe win a little money, and maybe meet a guy who was more winner than loser. Her roommates have no idea where she is, and hope she's met a new boyfriend and is crashing at his place. Her purse is in the front seat of the abandoned truck; among the items of note it contains are her ID and the playing card that got her into the Ladybird Room.

### BACKSTORY

Nobody can really say when the Ladybird Room first came into existence; it's impossible to tell whether it existed in some different form previously, or if it was spontaneously generated somehow shortly before it was discovered. However, it was apparently first discovered around the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, by a small-time racketeer named Jimmy Loughran. Jimmy was the superstitious sort, and when he realized that he'd stumbled across a place that sometimes would... go missing, he didn't tell anyone but his brother Dooley. The two of them used the unusual room as a hideaway from time to time, and eventually figured out most of the place's nuances. When Prohibition encouraged the brothers and their contacts to go into the bootlegging business, they decided to turn their secret place into a top-rate speakeasy. Jimmy called it the Ladybird Room, after his pet name for his fiancée.

After Dooley's death in a police shooting, Jimmy decided to find a new owner for the Ladybird room. He found a buyer in Miles Littleboy, an associate in the family business who was just superstitious enough to believe Jimmy's story. Jimmy claimed to have won the Ladybird Room in a poker game with a hollow-eyed man that he can only assume was the Devil, and that he wanted

## BACKGROUND & SET-UP

Before the story begins, a chain of events has unfolded:

- Gregor Rosetti, a regular at the Ladybird Room who is now spending time dealing at one of the tables there, met the victim of the piece at a nightclub and invited her (or him) to the Ladybird Room for an evening of gambling.
- Mr. G takes note of the newcomer, secretly abducts the victim after she is leaving the club for the evening, and devours her. He sends his underlings to dispose of the body in the usual way, by bagging it up and driving to the landfill.
- The underling sent to dispose of the body botches the job. While driving through the pack's territory, he notices one of their territorial markers for the first time. The spoor of werewolves triggers a deep racial memory of terror, and he abandons the truck and body out of fear of werewolves catching him with a corpse that they would take to be his handiwork. The truck stands untouched on the werewolves' property until they discover it.

### THE VICTIM

The most important question is whether or not you want to use a previously established Storyteller character as the victim of the piece, the corpse whose discovery sets the hunt in motion. On the one hand, it does mean you don't get to use that character again, and it may be hard to find a sacrificial victim who you don't have at least some future plans for further use. On the other hand, putting a known face to the victim has a much stronger chance of galvanizing the players into taking action, particularly if the players liked the character in question.



to sell in order to keep from going to Hell – the Devil had given him twenty years of prosperity, and Jimmy wanted to cash in his chips while he was ahead. Once Littleboy saw the supernatural nature of the Ladybird Room for himself, he had no trouble believing Jimmy’s tale.

The Ladybird Room changed hands three more times, always with some variant on the original story of “Jimmy Loughran won the place in a game with the Devil” being passed along to the new owner. However, the last owner (an aging loan shark named Cassius DeCavra) got a poor deal when he fell victim to the Azlu called Kusthuthun, or “the Leatherworker.” The Azlu had found its way to the club almost by accident, but realized the place’s nature upon entering, thanks to its sense of the Gauntlet and its webs. At closing time, the Spider Host manifested itself and devoured DeCavra and his bodyguards. But Kusthuthun was a clever one, and it soon realized that it had become the new owner of a potentially very lucrative resource.

For the last thirty-five years, “Mr. Gustavus” – or as he’s known to all but the most dedicated regulars, “Mr. G” – has reigned as the new owner of the Ladybird Room. He actually resides within the place-that-isn’t, slumbering for most of the time that the pocket space spends disconnected from the physical world. He has emerged to hunt only rarely over the years, partly out of sloth and partly out of the desire to avoid Uratha attention. It hasn’t always worked. Twenty-nine years ago, he was caught outside the Ladybird Room by a pack of werewolves who claimed the territory surrounding the Room (or at least the portal to it). The ensuing violence ended with both parties badly wounded, and half the pack dying of Azlu venom. The two sides agreed on a truce: both parties would withdraw to heal, and the werewolves would not later hunt down the Spider Host so long as it didn’t cross into their territory again. The secret of this truce died with the werewolf pack, and the pack that currently controls their territory – the players’ pack – has not been told that they have a dangerous Azlu lairing in and yet out of their borders.

The door to the Ladybird Room is always present, but it doesn’t always open. Rather, it can open, but the space behind is an empty space, a disused section of what was once a garment sweatshop. The space-that-isn’t comes into conjunction with the physical world for three nights each half moon (both waxing and waning, so roughly twice a month). At those times, the door opens into the otherspace that Loughran converted into a speakeasy so long ago. The night that the moon is exactly half is the night that the Ladybird Room opens for business; the nights before and after are nights that the Azlu take care of errands. Including hunting.

Kusthuthun doesn’t need to eat as regularly as a natural creature of pure flesh and blood might; it takes a victim once every month or two. Much of the time, the victim is pulled from the streets by his Jacks, just another homeless or runaway that ends up a missing persons statistic. Sometimes Kusthuthun develops a taste for softer fare, and has its lesser Azlu minions select one of the patrons (typically one who came alone, and who is not a regular) to follow

and abduct shortly after closing. The minions dispose of the corpse when the door opens again two weeks later, throwing it in a garbage bag and driving it off to the landfill.

However, this time the lesser Azlu made a mistake. The corpse of the latest victim wasn’t properly disposed of, and wound up where the wrong people could find it. And the wrong people did – a pack of Uratha. Your players’ pack.

The game is afoot.

### FITTING IT TO YOUR CHRONICLE

This story has a number of loose ends, intentionally so. They aren’t threads left open out of carelessness, they’re intended to be interwoven with the events of your chronicle. In most cases, they should require little work to tie off neatly, and the result should provide you with a strong integration between this story and the other stories of your own design. Answering the following questions should put you most of the way toward sizing the story to your chronicle.

- Who was the pack that struck a truce with Mr. G 29 years back? The events in the chronicle so far may offer some answers, in particular the means by which the players’ pack inherited the territory. If the area had been previously unclaimed, then it probably has been for some time; the previous pack must have been splintered or wiped out without anyone taking over. If the players inherited it from an older pack that retired or was recently killed, this may have been the same pack that knew about Mr. G, or simply another link in the chain of succession. Presumably all the members of the original pack to strike the deal with Mr. G are gone by now, but if one or more has survived, they may prove to be an interesting element in future stories involving the Ladybird Room.

- Who was the first victim? Was it someone the characters knew? When did he go missing? Did the pack first hear about his absence before they found the body? Do the characters know the victim’s family or friends, if any? If so, what can be learned from them?

### Placing the Den in Your Chronicle

The Ladybird Room doesn’t have to be focused on gambling. It can be tailored into another sort of covert vice club – a bordello can work very well, or a parlor for various illicit drugs (an old-fashioned opium den, perhaps, or a high-class “cocktail lounge” devoted to sampling the newest designer drugs. The scenario assumes that whatever vice is being indulged, it’s not depraved enough that the characters may decide to start tearing into the clientele out of righteous fury. If you want a more visceral approach, you can intensify the nature of the vices involved. This can increase the tension when the pack finds the Ladybird Room, but it can also be distracting – if you change the casino into an illicit sex club with sex workers who may be in the business against their will (illegal immigrants housed on-site, for instance), the players may be so distracted by the ugly nature of the place that the reveal of the Azlu owner becomes somewhat anticlimactic.



The Ladybird Room makes the most sense in an urban environment, probably downtown or in one of the city's older neighborhoods. Optimally, the area surrounding it would be fairly quiet on the nights that the door opens. An alley about a block's walk from an all-night parking garage or lot would be ideal. Mr. G prefers that the area outside his exclusive club be kept peaceful and unobtrusive, and those who are invited generally agree. However, the club can also be placed in an old building in suburbia, perhaps in the downtown of a small town that was folded into a greater suburban area.

Essentially, the Ladybird Room has to be accessible to its clientele, unobtrusive and in an area that plausibly could be seen as neutral ground to the more criminal elements that often gamble there. It shouldn't be too difficult to set up a place that plausibly meets all three criteria and also appeals personally to you. You can have the door be an ugly metal industrial door set into an abandoned factory, or seemingly the weathered wood door into an old mansion's basement half an hour's drive out of town. The scenario assumes that the neighborhood is quiet enough that the pack can get into a bloody fight with Mr. G's enforcers without attracting the police, but not so quiet that they can howl during that fight or use firearms without a silencer.

### SET-UP

Once you're comfortable with the background of the story, move on to considering the details that more directly affect the players' pack at the beginning of the story.

### PATRONAGE

This adventure assumes that the players' pack is self-motivated – like many a werewolf pack, they tend to pick their own hunts within reason. If your players are fairly new to **Werewolf**, though, they may not yet be as aggressive as they could be. If you want a “patron” or other motivator to set the characters on the trail more directly, the following ideas might help:

- The pack's totem (if any) makes an excellent Storyteller-controlled motivator. It has a vested interest in the pack's welfare, and is likely to be very defensive where new potential threats are concerned. It can encourage the characters to take an active hand in hunting down this new danger, particularly as it can't really go and take care of things itself.
- A werewolf from a different pack makes a reliable “patron” as well. Pick a werewolf from your chronicle that has enough of a sense of duty to want to see this presumed menace out of Shadow dealt with; he doesn't even have to like the players' characters all that much, just as long as he respects them. As the threat seems to concern the players' territory, werewolves of other packs have no real right to go deal with it themselves, and would probably keep to their own turf or neutral ground. Therefore, the prudent and respectful thing to do is to offer information (including delivering one of the devoured carcasses as evidence) and perhaps even assistance should the hunt spill over into his own territory, but to assume the characters can handle the situation on their own. It's their right.

- There's even the possibility of using a Pure werewolf or similar enemy in a roundabout way. If the players manage to intercept a communication (such as a spirit messenger) that indicates that the Pure have found evidence of this unknown factor and are planning to contact it to see if it will serve as an ally against the players' pack, they have added incentive to stop the alliance by finding the unknown themselves.

### THE PACK'S MOTIVES

Like most hunt stories, there's plenty of motivation built in for the players to get started. It's the Forsaken's implied duty to hunt down threats like the one that Mr. G presents, either out of a greater sense of responsibility or out of simple pragmatism. This motive makes for a strong start, but it's even better if one or more of the pack members have a personal stake in tracking down the Ladybird Room and finding out precisely what's going on. The following motives can add some extra spice to the hunt.

#### Pride

A werewolf's territorial instinct goes hand in hand with pride. If something is preying on the residents of a werewolf's turf, that's a direct challenge and an insult to boot.

#### Love

Even knowing that it might end in tragedy, many werewolves allow themselves to love, both romantically and in a family sense. If someone dear to the werewolf is victimized or endangered, the Uratha is likely to respond with the fury of ten angry mother bears.

#### Curiosity or Prudence

If knowledge is power, ignorance is weakness and vulnerability. Idle curiosity is one thing, but werewolves can hardly afford to be idle. Each strange new occurrence is a potential clue to an unseen enemy or to a resource that could strengthen the pack's odds of survival and growth. This strange new threat is no different. What are its strengths and weaknesses? Where does it come from? Where does it hide? And are there any more like it?

#### Wrath or Justice

This motivation is self-explanatory. Whatever is infringing on the pack's territory and eating the people under their protection needs to be dealt with. It's a simple matter of justice – and a werewolf motivated by wrath is prone to view vengeance and justice as conveniently the same thing.

#### Greed or Ambition

Territory is valuable. Once the pack figures out that their quarry is operating out of a place-that-isn't, some may realize that gaining control of such a place would provide them with an eminently defensible foxhole in times of trouble. However, gaining control of the gambling den itself has its own appeal. A lot of money could theoretically flow through the place on any given night of operation, and even werewolves can find use for money. It could



provide a means of cultivating new contacts among the people who come to gamble, or simply some extra wealth skimmed off the top.

### GATHERING INFORMATION

The story begins with the discovery of the victim's body, and the hunt moves from there. Although the characters begin ignorant of the Ladybird Room and its inhabitants, they may seek to learn more. Some of the various approaches to gathering this information are compiled here, so that you can draw from them as needed whenever the characters uncover a new tidbit of lore.

#### RESEARCH

The sort of research listed here involves largely mundane sources, and thus focuses on the Ladybird Room as it has entered local human lore or urban legend. Each roll takes about two hours to accomplish, including some travel time to visit libraries or watering holes where a character's cronies can divulge what they know. Don't let the characters spend any more time than this — their window for finding the Ladybird Room is only open for a limited time. If they insist on more research, bring in the Jacks (see "The Jacks," p. 36).

##### Intelligence + Academics

This research involves traditional library study and internet searches. Appropriate tool bonuses aren't enough to cancel out the incomplete nature of official records concerning the Loughrans and successive owners. The player makes the roll unmodified except for Specialties you deem appropriate, such as History or Research.

**Dramatic Failure:** Not possible; this roll can't be reduced to a chance die.

**Failure:** The character's research comes up empty. It doesn't look like people have been writing about this place.

**Success:** The character discovers the name "The Ladybird Room," referring to a speakeasy and gambling house run by a mobster named Jimmy Loughran during Prohibition. Loughran is said to have moved the establishment's location around regularly in order to throw off potential raids.

**Exceptional Success:** The character is lucky enough to come across a tidbit of information from a less than reputable source — someone posted an urban legend on their blog, or an old local interest book review goes over a book on strange places in the region, and off-handedly mentions the legend of a particular gambling den. The character learns the information given above, and also your choice of one tidbit of information from either the Manipulation + Streetwise or Intelligence + Occult results.

##### Manipulation + Streetwise

This method of information-gathering represents simple rumormongering and asking around. It's unlikely to turn up any supernatural information, but is the quickest and simplest way to find out what the right sort of people know about the Ladybird Room.

+2 The character has a suitable Contact, such as one in organized crime or involved with gambling.

-2 You're either on the list or not; those who are invited are encouraged to keep the place "private."

**Dramatic Failure:** Not possible; this roll can't be reduced to a chance die.

**Failure:** The character doesn't uncover anything useful about the club.

**Success:** The character learns the basic "word on the street" regarding the Ladybird Room — it's a gambling club that opens for business about every two weeks, said to be invitation-only, and it caters to high-rollers, including some from the Mob. The man in charge is called "Mr. G."

**Exceptional Success:** The character learns all the above information. In addition, he learns the following rumors (though not whether each one is true or not, or why; the notes on each rumor's veracity are for the Storyteller only).

#### RUMOR

• "Mr. G" is short for "Mr. Gustavus." He doesn't gamble himself. [True.]

#### RUMOR

• Sometimes you see celebrities at the Ladybird Room. Real big names; movie stars and such. That's why it's so exclusive. [False. Mr. G has no interest in inviting patrons of particularly high profile.]

#### RUMOR

• The password is a playing card. It has to be the right card, and they change that from week to week. [Partially true; the password is a card, but it has to be from the right deck rather than the right individual card.]

#### RUMOR

• The place doesn't have any permanent dealers; the owner tends to hire temps or get people who owe him money to pay it off with a bit of work. [True, and odd; this would be an ideal setup for an inside man to work a scam. Mr. G selects his dealers from those he can be certain he can dominate through absolute fear — and even in human guise, Mr. G can be very intimidating.]

#### RUMOR

• The Ladybird Room actually moves from city to city; they spend a week moving it, open it for a night, then move back the next week. If you go on an off-week, you'll just find an empty room. [Partially true; going on the wrong night leads to an ordinary empty room, but it doesn't move by mundane hand.]

#### RUMOR

• The Ladybird Room was built by a bootlegger way back in the day. They say he sold his soul to the Devil to keep the cops from ever raiding his place. [True, although the deal with the Devil was just the owner's fabrication.]



### Intelligence + Occult

This roll represents traditional occult detective work, which may involve poring through libraries or clove-scented bookshops. Nobody who has learned the actual truth of Mr. Gustavus has survived to write it down for posterity, but a few scholars of the occult have made some educated guesses that might provide a few more hints for the werewolves.

+2 Character has the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit

+1 Character has three or more dots of Streetwise

-3 Loughran did his best to keep the Ladybird Room's supernatural nature a secret from everyone except his brother and its buyer.

**Dramatic Failure:** Not possible; this roll can't be reduced to a chance die.

**Failure:** The character isn't able to find anything that connects the Ladybird Room to any useful occult lore.

**Success:** The character identifies the Ladybird Room as one of the various "weird places" from local lore. It's mentioned in the same sort of stories and pamphlets as other buildings or areas that are said to be haunted. Legend has it that the original owner won the establishment from the Devil in a poker game, and that the Devil sometimes appears in disguise to play there again — either to try winning back the establishment, or for other stakes.

**Exceptional Success:** The character learns the tidbit of information previously mentioned, as well as uncovering an additional two rumors of even more obscure origin.

### RUMOR

• One underground occult newsletter mentions the existence of a covert gambling den in the pack's city that has a strange reputation. The article compares the (unnamed) den as sort of a "modern-day Scholomance," a reference to the school out of Transylvanian myth where the Devil taught ten students black magic but always took the tenth student as his payment. According to the author, occult rumor has it that there is a private table where gamblers can play against the Devil himself (by invitation only, of course), but one of them is always taken directly to Hell that very night. [The truth is, of course, that the occasional patron vanishes into Mr. G's gullet.]

### RUMOR

• Another minor book on strange places lists the Ladybird Room as something of a "thirteenth floor," a place that appears on a full moon when the unwary can walk into a gambling den filled with lost souls trying to wager their souls back from the Devil. This description matches up with Uratha occult lore about sections of Shadow that can be entered only on certain occasions. However, the full moon isn't associated with these places as often as the crescent moon or half moon are. [The Ladybird Room, of course, appears on the half moon. The story about lost souls is only symbolically true, being an outgrowth of the "deal with the devil" legend.]

### DIVINATIONS

Certain Uratha have an interesting edge in information-gathering, the ability to catch some form of vision of the future. If a player uses such a power, you have the opportunity to offer more of a tease to raise the group's interest without necessarily spoiling all the surprises of the story. Here are some sample ready-made divinations to give your players, or to use as inspiration for crafting your own portents.

• **Prophetic Dreams:** A Cahalith may attempt to gain a prophetic dream regarding the events of this story. A sample dream might run something like one of these:

*As you sleep, you are wrapped in warm darkness, quiet at first. Then the sound comes, faint at first — a repeated gurgling noise, like a slow drain or someone drinking a milkshake in huge, gluttonous gulps. An image swims out of the darkness at you, of an immense man, or maybe a woman, vastly bloated and covered from head to foot in a pale garment stitched out of a thousand different scraps of leather and cloth. The material is wet and frothy near where his or her mouth should be, and constantly moving. As your vision moves downward, you see a corpse lying at the strange person's feet. Across the corpse's skin crawl dozens of tiny, round black beetles with minute diamond-shaped red markings on their wing covers.*

*A moth with the marking of a blood-red heart on each white wing struggles in a web. Its struggles draw a fat white spider with a black spade on its abdomen, which slowly approaches the moth and begins to devour it. (This clue is a more obvious hint to the Azlu nature of Mr. G, and should be given out only if you want the players to have that extra amount of warning.)*

• **Omen Gazing:** A character with the Omen Gazing Gift may also use it to gain a hint about the scenario. You can offer one of the following visions, or devise one of your own.

• *The streetlights' yellow illumination filters only partly into the alley. [Packmate] wrestles with what looks like a large and muscular human, the two of them locked tightly. [She/he] explodes into Gauru form and throws the man free, but there's a large and spreading blotch of darkness at [her/his] neck. You can feel your own neck ache in sympathy as [she/he] staggers, suddenly weakened by something dire.*

• *You see [packmate] in a dark room, barely lit by guttering candlelight. The light catches great gray shrouds that have been strung almost haphazardly across the room, criss-crossing the dark space like a huge unraveling knot. In a flash, [packmate] tenses and twists as something comes out of the darkness at [him/her], a tremendous blade, or scythe, or claw of mottled bone slicing down at [his/her] exposed neck.*





## OTHER SOURCES

We can't possibly account for everything your players might try over the course of the story. Werewolves have a tremendous variety of resources available to them, including some that you might not expect.

- Other packs in the area are as much in the dark as the players' characters are. They are unlikely to provide information that the players don't already possess, unless the characters are on good terms with a werewolf who specializes in one of the aforementioned forms of research. For instance, if the pack was previously established as being on friendly terms with an Iron Master Irraka with an excellent ear for what's happening on the street, he might have heard one or more of the rumors listed under the Manipulation + Streetwise approach above.

- Summoning a spirit for information is not likely to provide any great progress. The Ladybird Room isn't accessible or even visible from the Shadow, so no spirits have been able to clearly witness any of the Azlu's dealings. The Gauntlet is apparently higher than usual in the rough area of the Ladybird Room, though, something spirits might have noticed (but that they might not think to share with the Uratha unless directly asked).

- The pack may have friendly contact with other supernaturals, such as vampires or mages. In general, vampires are more likely to know details from the Manipulation + Streetwise avenue of research, and mages are more likely to know details from the Intelligence + Occult avenue. However, Mr. G has avoided contact with other supernaturals, so harder information is not available. (Unless, of course, you want to throw in an additional complication to the story – a vampire who has heard of the Ladybird Room and who wants control over the place, for instance.)

## THE LADYBIRD ROOM

The Ladybird Room is invitation only, though certain patrons are allowed to invite others. Like some casinos, it has its own house decks printed, and a patron must show a card from one of these decks at the door in order to gain entry. Mr. G will sometimes give a patron a few cards to pass on to friends. Most of the time, though, he gives them out himself in one of his rare club appearances outside the Ladybird Room, or dispatches some of his enforcers to pass out a few cards to likely prospects. The card's faces are of standard appearance, while the backs are an elaborate red-and-white design prominently featuring a ladybug with "spots" that look like the four suits.

The "password card" is actually a minor code, of sorts. Mr. G tends to give out kings and queens to the rich elite, and aces to potential patrons who come from organized crime. Number cards are "friend of a friend" invites, given to a patron who would like to invite a date or sponsor a new member. The jacks are tied to the bouncers (themselves also called Jacks); a person showing a jack at the door is either one of the Ladybird Room's bruisers, or invited personally by one of the help (which often marks them as a potential meal).

## CAST OF PLAYERS

The characters associated with the Ladybird Room tend to fall into one of two groups: management and clientele. The clientele may act as potential obstacles, victims or even allies. The management is a pack of rival predators with a surprising punch.

### THE LADYBIRD PATRONS

On any given night of business, the Ladybird Room has around 15–30 patrons – not a great number, but enough to be an inconvenience for the pack. Rather than list them all, a few of the more interesting sample personalities are presented. You may alter or add to this list as necessary; the pack may be more focused on finding Mr. G, but your players may well enjoy the tension of interacting with a variety of bystanders in the middle of a hunt.

The Ladybird Room's patrons are all ordinary humans. Some (the Dirty Cop, the Mob Soldier, the Russian Legbreaker) can use the Gangbanger or Police Officer templates from the **World of Darkness Rulebook** (p. 205). The rest are non-combatants, with two or possibly three dice in any combat pool and four to five dice in a dice pool representing their appropriate area of specialty. They are unlikely to pose a heavy physical threat to a pack of werewolves on their own, but they can make the situation much more dangerous for a careless pack. Any of them might get involved in a fight between the werewolves and the Azlu if driven mad by Lunacy, all are potential witnesses that could call for Harmony checks, and they might even come back as loose ends in later stories. They also, truth be told, represent an additional temptation – if the pack is running low on Essence before the final confrontation with Mr. G, the smell of a frightened human might trigger urges best left buried.

If your characters get involved in gambling themselves, each of these patrons should have roughly a 5-die pool for purposes of gambling; they're good players, but not exceptional. The exceptions would be the Grifter (who is quite superior, as noted below), and the Call Girl (who isn't taking part in the games herself).

- **The Dirty Cop:** Jason Barry was one of those people who joined the police not to help people, but to get power. He went on the take as soon as he could, something he feels is his just entitlement. He visits the Ladybird Room to watch the local criminals, and sometimes takes a particular payoff disguised as a "lucky win" at a poker game. Barry is a stocky man in his 30s, prematurely going bald. He may pose a problem to the pack by letting his sense of authority run away with him, demanding to know their business or harassing one of the females with the expectation that his badge will protect him.

- **The College Kids:** Four local college students have managed to score a group invite to the Ladybird Room. The four (Tim, Alex, Gwen and Elanna)



treat gambling like a serious hobby, and all have ESPN-fueled ambitions of someday becoming successful tournament players. However, they're gradually realizing that they're sharing tables with some dangerous people, and are getting increasingly nervous. They are likely to be severely affected by Lunacy if the pack tears loose, acting as a small mob rather than individually.

• **The Business Mogul:** Barbara Burke is a power player by trade. She runs her manufacturing business ruthlessly, and has had to; setbacks have compelled her to downsize more than once, yet she's pulled through each time. High-stakes games of power poker are her idea of relaxation — she can't stand leisure activities that don't "keep her sharp." Ms. Burke is a fit woman in her late 40s, with iron-gray hair in a conservative cut. She is likely to respond poorly to any members of the pack that seem too disreputable to belong in "her club." Although she isn't much of a direct threat over the course of this story, she is perceptive (6 dice Perception pool) and bulldog-tenacious (Willpower 6), which may make her one of those who sees or remembers more than she should have.

• **The Mob Soldier:** Nino Moscarello is one of the more dangerous kinds of criminal — young enough to pay little heed to his own mortality, and low enough on the totem pole to be willing to do whatever it takes to get higher up. He's not much of a romantic where the "family business" is concerned; he wants to be enough of a name that outsiders stop thinking of the Mafia as either Corleones or Sopranos. He doesn't have the creativity he thinks he does, and isn't likely to bring any innovations to the business. However, his drive to be the best has made him better himself in several ways; he's one of the better shots in town, and in good shape. Nino goes to the Ladybird Room to be seen. He likes it when civilians treat him with respect and fear because they've figured out they're sharing a table with a killer, and he likes looking a rival in the eye without a scrap of fear. Recently, Nino has been having a lot of relationship trouble, and he's in a terrible mood; he may fixate on a pack member as a potential outlet for his frustrations.

• **The Russian Legbreaker:** Josef "Joe" Razdobarin is one of the junior members of the local Russian Mafia. He was still a young boy when the Soviet Union fell, but has taken a great interest in learning all the "good old tricks" from his mentor, a former KGB agent who acts as a senior enforcer for the Organizatsiya. He frequents the Ladybird Room because he has a personal love for gambling and a professional interest in sizing up potential competition. Josef is a good-looking, dark-haired man in his late 20s who favors sunglasses and crisp, conservative suits. He is likely to mistake one of the pack members as a rival (owing to their predatory nature), and may unknowingly invite a werewolf to a game as a means of sizing him up.

• **The Grifter:** Harry Benton has had to move around a lot, mostly because sooner or later most people catch on that he wins a lot more frequently than he should. Harry cheats mostly via sleight of hand, taking advantage of his turn as dealer. He takes his turn at collusion now and again as well, but

had to ditch his last partner at the same time he moved to the chronicle city. Harry's simply here to play and make money, although he's contemplating making some sort of arrangement with local crime; he figures they could maybe use someone with his skills, and it'd be nice to have some added security (so to speak). Harry is a plain, slightly overweight man in his 30s with frizzy brown hair and a penchant for sports jerseys. If one of the pack sits down to play, Harry may try his usual tricks (dice pool of 7 for cheating purposes). He also has a keen eye (Perception dice pool of 7 dice); if he sees a character do something unusual or suspicious, he may notify someone like Nino Moscarello as part of his "getting in good with the local mob" scheme.

• **The Call Girl:** Beatrice Rodriquez answers to "Rosa" as a professional name. She is overall fairly content with her profession — there's the occasional client who is... less than a gentleman, but she knows there are working girls who have it much worse off than she does, and who don't have a nice apartment to go home to. She is present on the arm of another patron (Alex Ballard, a tech-industry VP who prefers the easy "girlfriend maintenance" of regular and easy cash payments), but joins in on some of the games if invited. "Rosa" is a good-looking and graceful Hispanic woman of about 22, wearing one of the best little black dresses money can buy. She presents a potential complication because she is not simply strong-willed, she's wolf-blooded; she has an effective Willpower of 8 to resist the Lunacy. She may provide interesting developments in future stories as the players try to cope with her knowledge and ensure her silence. Unfortunately, Beatrice has a strong dislike of violence and people prone to violence, which will greatly prejudice her feelings toward any werewolf trying to play peacemaker.

• **The Dealers:** Emmy Montague and Dominic White are both into Mr. G for a fair amount of money, and are paying it off by dressing in nice white pressed shirts and dealing Texas Hold 'Em. Neither one likes to discuss the details — how Mr. G brought each of them alone into the back room, and rested one heavy hand on their shoulder, and leaned up so close they could smell the acid in his breath, and told them a hideous story about what would happen to them if they decided to try and take advantage of his generosity. Nor is either one aware of just how much more hideous the reality of an angry Mr. G is.

Emmy is a pretty blond woman in her early 30s, single and with a nine-year-old daughter at home. She works at a preschool most of the time; she has dealt for three business nights. She remembers Gregor Rosetti, but assumes he must have paid off his debt. She is absolutely terrified of Mr. G, and dreads anything that might make him angry enough to make good on his horrible promises. Dominic has a Mediterranean complexion and black hair; he works in production at the local NBC affiliate station as his day job. He originally came to the Ladybird Room with intentions of maybe bringing something newsworthy out and getting more directly involved in the journalism side of TV, but now worries constantly about losing his job if anyone finds out the truth of his situation.



### GREGOR ROSETTI

**Quotes:** “Wh... So, uh, where’d you find that card?”

“Look, I don’t want to get into too much trouble here. And Mr. G, he’s real trouble. Why should I risk him... uh, getting angry with me?”

“Oh God. Oh God. I’m... I feel really sick. Seriously, I’m not lying! I... oh, God.”

**Storytelling Hints:** Gregor Rosetti is a fairly typical young urbanite, with a day job at a sporting goods store and a penchant for spending his nights carousing. He has been drawn into the events of this scenario by a series of bad losses at the Ladybird Room that put him deep in Mr. G’s debt. He took on a temporary position as a dealer to help pay those debts off, and recently he invited a new prospective player to the club. He got worried when his “guest” caught Mr. G’s eye. If he knew what actually happened to the luckless victim, he’d nearly die of fright.

Gregor is in the position of knowing enough about the Ladybird Room to be frightened, but not enough to realize what’s really going on. He suspects that Mr. G is some kind of sexual predator, and that he is capable of making people disappear when they cause too much trouble or when he’s done with them. He is terrified of being next. Desperate to find some sort of way out, he’s willing to believe that the pack is a group of undercover cops or syndicate hitmen if there’s a chance they can keep Mr. G from hurting him.

Though he doesn’t know it, Gregor was poisoned recently by one of the Jacks. The Azlu left its comfortable lair in the skull of its host body, crept into his apartment, and gave him a tiny nip on the back of the neck under Mr. G’s orders. The dose is gradually proving fatal. It was a mild dose that slowly takes effect, but the more agitated he gets, the quicker the poison spreads. He is likely to die within a few hours of contact with the players unless his condition is somehow diagnosed and treated — sooner than that if they stir him into a more emotional state. As nervous as he’s getting, this is almost certain.

**Description:** Gregor is in his mid-20s, handsome to the point of being almost pretty. He dresses more nicely than is sensible, owning a couple more silk shirts than he can afford and spending a bit too much on his haircuts. However, the slow effects of the poison on Gregor have taken the edge of his looks. He’s paler than he should be, and prone to sweat heavily. He often rubs at the large “bruise” at the back of his neck — actually the discoloration surrounding the small nick that injected him with Azlu venom.

#### Vital Traits

Gregor is quite average, never really motivated to excel at anything. Most of his Attributes are at two dots; his Manipulation is 3 (he’s a fairly oily personality), and his Stamina is currently at 1 (due to the effects of the Jack’s poison). His Willpower is 4, and his Health is currently at 4 due to the poisoning.

### THE JACKS (MR. G’S ENFORCERS)

**Quotes:** “Stay there. Do not move.”

“I don’t want to talk to you.”

“Wolves! Kill them, rend them, empty their veins!”

**Storytelling Hints:** The Jacks act as bouncers for the Ladybird Room, and are sufficiently tough and intimidating to keep even the more volatile visitors in line. Most of the regulars don’t have any idea how much more dangerous than that they actually are. They play off the werewolf protagonists in that they are predators that have themselves become the werewolves’ prey — much as the werewolves may become Mr. G’s prey if not careful. In the food chain, they’re a step above the human they bring to Mr. G or that they personally devour, and a step just below werewolves. However, they’re dangerous prey, particularly to a werewolf who foolishly chooses to confront them without her pack.

The Jacks fall into the role of a mid-level violent encounter — they’re not so weak that the pack can tear through them like tissue paper, but they’re not strong enough that they stand a heavy chance of beating the werewolves. They should be tough enough that the pack feels like they’ve been in a fight, but ultimately they’re meant to showcase how dangerous a werewolf pack is by being the kind of tough enemy that still isn’t up to Uratha standards.

Note that the Jacks have incomplete access to the memories of their host bodies through devouring their victims’ brains. They are generally able to pass for human easily enough, but one might not have any memory of a particularly important event or skill, such as forgetting a fiancée or what beer is. Their Skills are therefore lower in some ways than the Skills their victims possessed (a Jack may be a poorer driver than the trucker he preyed upon, due to incomplete absorption of the driving skill). They avoid contact with the people and places associated with their former lives, but still run the risk of giving away their unnatural nature to an observer who knows what to look for.

**Descriptions:** When on duty at the Ladybird Room, the Jacks seem to be typical underground bouncer fare — large, thick-necked men wearing dark suits with dark turtlenecks. Dark sunglasses are the definitive part of the uniform. Apart from their uniforms, the Jacks are of diverse ethnicity and appearance, reflecting the wide variety of host bodies taken; a Jack with the tattoos and shaved head of an outlaw biker may stand side by side with a large Hispanic ex-Marine. Mr. G calls each one “Jack” as if it were his given name, and the Ladybird Room’s regulars tend to appreciate the little joke.

The Jacks don’t willingly remove their sunglasses for any reason. If their glasses are knocked away, they reveal eyes that remain shut, crusted together to hide empty sockets — empty save for the tiny spiders that breed and cannibalize one another therein. Within the skull of each Jack nests a spider-like Azlu Crawler the size of a grapefruit, manipulating its dead human body like a vehicle.



**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2  
**Physical Attributes:** Strength 4, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 3, Manipulation 1, Composure 3  
**Mental Skills:** Investigation 1, Medicine (First Aid) 1, Occult (The Shadow) 2, Politics (Azlu) 1  
**Physical Skills:** Athletics 3, Brawl (Grapple) 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny (B&E) 1, Stealth (Stalk) 3, Survival (Tracking) 2, Weaponry (Stake) 2  
**Social Skills:** Empathy (Azlu) 1, Intimidation (Coldly Cruel) 3, Socialize (Ladybird Room) 1, Streetwise (Former Life) 2, Subterfuge (Pass as Human) 2  
**Merits:** Iron Stomach, Language: English, Strong Back, Toxin Resistance  
**Health:** 8  
**Willpower:** 5  
**Essence:** 3  
**Virtue:** Faith. Kusthuthun is a wise master. He knows what needs to be done.  
**Vice:** Wrath. How dare they endanger the den?  
**Initiative:** 6  
**Defense:** 3  
**Speed:** 12  
**Supernatural Tolerance:** 1  
**Aspects:** Toxic Bite, Wall Climb  
**Weapons/Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Punch	1(B)	
Bite	2(L)	9
Grapple	special	8

**Armor:** None  
**Mr. GUSTAVUS (KUSTHUTHUN, THE LEATHERWORKER)**

**Quotes:** “Gentlemen, ladies... please, you are disturbing my other guests.”  
 “Please, tell me how I may accommodate you.”  
 “<<You made me rip my skin. I will peel your own hides from your flesh for that.>>”

**Description:** Mr. Gustavus is immense, yet his skin still seems to be too large for his tremendous bulk – his face, hands and scalp are criss-crossed with faint wrinkles that make him seem more weathered than aged. He smells faintly acidic, like old cosmetics with all the artificial scents removed. His white suit smells new, but is somewhat ill-fitting (Mr. G has clothes purchased for him rather than visiting a tailor). He doesn’t give the impression of smiling so much as the corners of his mouth hitching themselves upward. He speaks softly, in a voice that’s almost breathy where one might expect it to be deep.

When free of its often-repaired human skin, the Leatherworker is a gruesomely asymmetrical creature. Like all Azlu of its size and ability, its true form

is something that could only fit inside a human skin with the aid of supernatural power. It moves about on five legs that barely hold its distended abdomen above the ground, and its bent cephalothorax sports four lesser arms (three on its left, one on its right) and one more massive arm, something like a fiddler crab. Each of its appendages ends in a jointed spearlike point, but it can unfold smaller chitinous “fingers” from each one to do fine work. Its mouth is a tangle of mismatched chelicerae and pedipalps, with two long glistening fangs. Its chitin is the color of yellowed ivory, which combined with its bloated bulk can give the impression of something more grublike than spidery from a distance. Ten bloody splotches adorn its abdomen in a pattern that matches the layout of its ten dark red eyes – a mirrored effect that is the only symmetry to be found on the Azlu’s form.

**Storytelling Hints:** Mr. G is particularly emblematic of one recurring theme of **Werewolf**, the monster in human skin. When disguised, he should behave “normally” enough that ordinary observers don’t have reason to suspect him as anything other than eccentric; his unaccented English is excellent, but he’s prone to the occasional odd turn of idiom. He is unfailingly polite even to his enemies while concealed, but out of prudence rather than good will.

Like most Azlu, the Leatherworker is driven by instinct. It is powerful and intelligent enough to pass as a human over an extended period of time, but at its heart it is wholly inhuman. The spiderlike elements of its mentality mimic those of spiders that spin and wait, not those that roam and hunt – it actually prefers to face enemies in its parlor, where its webs can constrict them and where it feels safest. The Ladybird Room is, to its mind, an extension of its own being – though, of course, the “back room” is the heart of its den and where it has the most confidence.

Kusthuthun isn’t foolhardy enough to take on an entire pack of werewolves by itself, unless they seem particularly foolish or weak. It will try for some advantage first, be it rallying surviving Jacks to its side or attempting to snare the pack in the webs beyond its trapdoor.

**Mental Attributes:** Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 4  
**Physical Attributes:** Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6  
**Social Attributes:** Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4  
**Mental Skills:** Academics 1, Crafts (Skin-Curing, Leatherworking) 4, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Azlu, the Shadow) 3, Politics 1  
**Physical Skills:** Athletics (Web Movement) 3, Brawl (Grapple) 4, Larceny (Windows) 2, Stealth (Lurk) 4, Survival (Urban) 2  
**Social Skills:** Empathy (Understanding Humans) 2, Expression (1), Intimidation (True Form) 4, Persuasion (Gentle) 2, Socialize (Making the Rounds) 3, Streetwise (Dangerous People) 2, Subterfuge (Playing Human) 3  
**Merits:** Brawling Dodge, Fast Reflexes 2, Giant, Iron Stomach, Language: English, Resources 4, Strong Back, Toxin Resistance, Retainer 5+ (the Jacks)



**Health:** 8

**Willpower:** 8

**Essence:** 7

**Virtue:** Prudence. Waste not, want not.

**Vice:** Sloth. Things have been going fine for a while; why bother with every little detail?

**Initiative:** 9

**Defense:** 3

**Speed:** 14

**Supernatural Tolerance:** 4

**Aspects:** Eviscerating Bone-Scythes\*, Gauntlet Webs, Pedipalps\*, Retractable Chelicerae\*, Skin-Worker\*, Swarm Discorporation, Toxic Bite, Wall Climb

**Attacks:**

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	2(L)	11
Body slam	3(B)	12
Bone scythe	3(L)	13
Grapple	special	10

**Armor:** 2/2 (Chitin)

• **Additional Limbs:** Kusthuthun gains extra balance and grappling ability from its surfeit of limbs. The Azlu gains a +1 modifier to all rolls involving arm strength (including brawling and lifting objects), and a +2 modifier to all rolls involving balance and running. These bonuses are lost if the excess limbs are removed.

• **Eviscerating Bone-Scythes:** Kusthuthun's outsized limb can be used as a single gruesome attack. If the Azlu spends one Essence prior to making an attack, the damage inflicted by a successful hit that turn becomes aggravated. If the Azlu misses with this attack, the Essence is wasted.

• **Pedipalps:** In its natural form, the Leatherworker has two large pedipalps flanking its mouth that can be used to fasten onto prey and draw them in. These pedipalps add a bonus of +1 to Bite and Grapple rolls when used. In addition, they can be used to inject a Toxicity 7 venom with a successful Bite attack; the Azlu has enough venom for three doses before it must rest and feed to generate more. The pedipalps cannot be used (either to modify attack rolls or as an attack on their own) without tearing the Azlu's stolen human skin.

• **Retractable Chelicerae:** The interior of Kusthuthun's mouth is a grinding collection of spider mouthparts, giving it a vicious bite attack. These chelicerae can fold back into the inside of the Azlu's head, however, allowing him to speak English without distortion.

• **Skin-Worker:** Unlike most Azlu, Kusthuthun can use its silk and delicate "fingers" to mend a torn and discarded skin, allowing it to pose as a single human almost indefinitely. Its skill also keeps the skin perfectly preserved and immune to decay.

## SCENES

Although "Parlor Games" details a fairly simple hunt, you should remain flexible where the scenes themselves are concerned. The players should feel comfortable actively hunting down the creature responsible for this strange murder, but they might prefer to take a more defensive approach instead. As a result, some scenes might be missed or move out of order – the pack may never go to meet Gregor, or they might move so quickly on the Ladybird Room that they don't encounter the Jacks who come looking for the truck and its gruesome cargo. Don't try to force the players' hand. If they skip a scene, that gives you more time to lavish on the others. If they miss a few bits of information, so be it; if you hand out success whether they've tried for it or not, they'll feel like the story is a simple railroad where they have no chance to turn things one way or another. Be flexible, and enjoy yourself. Everything else should then fall into place.

### PLOTTING

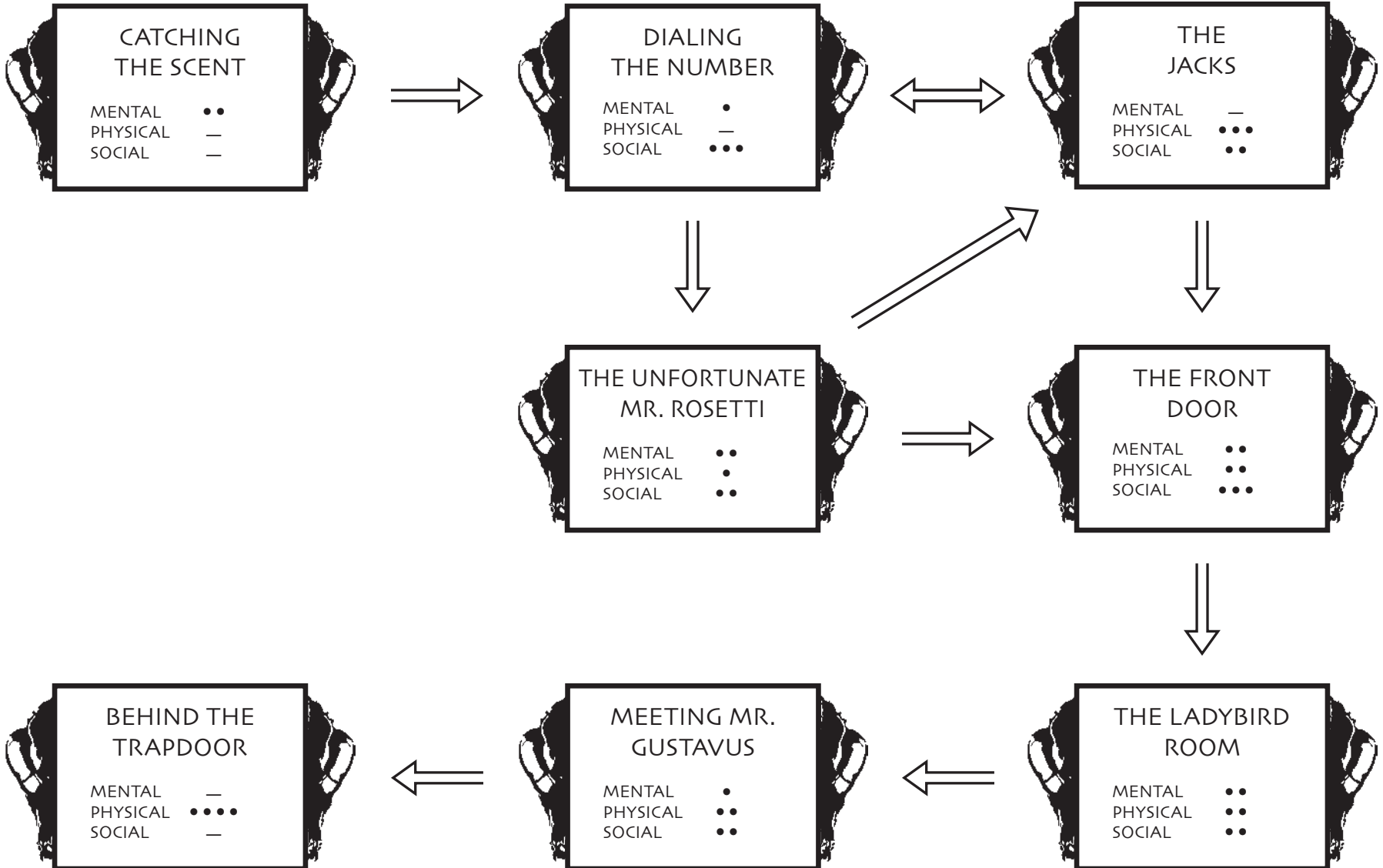
Keep cinema or good dramatic television in mind when running the investigation. Think of how a cop show or thriller cuts from scene to scene. Consider compressing the detail for a quicker pace. Don't describe the characters' actions on an hour-by-hour basis; cut to the meat of their actions. This is particularly important if one character is doing something apart from the rest of the pack. If an Ithaeur summons a spirit to interrogate it on the topic of their enemy, consider rolling the dice and beginning the roleplay at the moment of the spirit's manifestation. The first words you speak as the spirit might be "I have, perhaps, heard something about this thing that concerns you" rather than "What do you want?" This technique does require a bit more trust on the part of your players, though, as you're assuming certain actions on the part of their characters. Don't abuse that trust. Skip only the most obvious actions when starting a scene *in media res*, and be ready to back up if a player is uncomfortable.

### EXPERIENCE

The events of Parlor Games will, in all likelihood, play out over a single game session. At the close of the story, award each player one experience point for participation, plus additional experience as determined in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 216. The categories for learning curve, roleplaying, heroism, or wisdom are entirely dependent on your players' actions. Also implement the following bonuses:

- +1 Thoroughness: If characters successfully gained information from Gregor Rosetti and confronted the Jacks sent to recover the body, award one point for being thorough.
- +1 Danger: Unless the characters are sufficiently powerful that the Leatherworker wasn't much of a threat, they should receive one point for surviving the final conflict.
- +1 Success: Managing to kill Kusthuthun without causing a disaster (a massacre in the Ladybird Room, revealing the presence of werewolves to human observers) counts as a successful close to the story.

# PARLOR GAMES SCENE FLOW



# SCENE: CATCHING THE SCENT

MENTAL ••      PHYSICAL –      SOCIAL –

**Overview:** This scene starts the story in motion. While checking out a seemingly abandoned truck on their territory, the pack discovers a strange corpse, one that has had the muscles and innards removed while leaving the skin and bones largely intact.

**Description:** The actual location where the players find the truck depends on their territory. If the pack has claimed a largely rural territory, the truck is abandoned along one of the various thoroughfares; if their territory is urban, it has been left in an alley or possibly even in a park. Pick a location along a route that would have taken it to the nearby landfill or an incinerator; the location should also be near one of the various marks that the pack has left to announce to other werewolves that their territory is spoken for. Assuming that your players haven't meticulously mapped out their entire territory and pointed out each and every location where they've marked their borders, it should be easy enough simply to pick a location and decide that it's by one of their marks.

*The pickup is too damn nice for anybody to just abandon. It's last year's make, the kind of expensive vehicle that a lawyer might buy in order to shore up his sense of machismo. But there it is, door cracked on the driver's side, keys still in the ignition, that godawful pinging noise still going. There aren't any clothes or stickers or CDs or decorations. It doesn't even smell lived-in. If it weren't for the garbage bag in the back, you'd swear it just rolled off a factory truck.*

*You'd guess it's been here for less than an hour. Either nobody else has found it yet, or they've avoided getting too close for some other reason. It might be the latter – something about the scene makes the wolf inside you stir and pace. People don't act like this without good reason. Even now you can't hear any human voices close by.*

*There's a reason, maybe. This is a marked road – your mark, set out there to warn other werewolves that this is your turf. Whoever was driving this thing, they might have seen the mark. They might have recognized what it meant. And instead of turning around or speeding up and driving through, they stopped the truck and got out and left.*

*You're not yet sure what it means. But the wolf inside is awake, and it intends to find out.*

**Storyteller Goals:** Setting the scene. Here you describe the discovery that the characters have made, and invite them to learn more. Once you've described the initial setup, fill in more of the basic details – where exactly

on their territory the truck was found, what the area is like, what time of day it is (just before sunset is a good choice). Feel free to let the players describe the sort of mark they placed on the road to warn off trespassers. The players should get the impression that this unusual event could mean anything from a potential windfall to an impending threat.

This scene is largely about satisfying player curiosity. When they ask questions, be generous with the information (within realistic reason). You want them to find out as much as they can, so they have enough information to actively hunt and drive the events of the story themselves. But you also want them to feel as though they're earning the information. Provide evidence, but let them draw their own conclusions.

**Character Goals:** Learn what they can from the discarded truck and human remains, gathering any clues to who or what might have done this.

**Actions:** There are two major courses of action that are likely to occur to the characters when presented with this situation.

- **Examining the Scene:** The characters may go over the truck in some detail to look for more clues. As they're not really pressured for time and nothing is carefully hidden, you don't have to structure the investigation as a series of rolls if you don't want to. Let the players ask questions, and supply appropriate details from the list below – if a player asks about the license plate, there's no need for a roll to gather that the plate is local and the inspection sticker has expired.

You can, of course, move to an abstraction of the process if you want and the players seem bored with the idea, calling for a Wits + Investigation roll to gather all the relevant facts about the truck or the remains (depending on what the characters are looking at).

If the characters spend more than 30 minutes looking over the truck and/or the remains without moving to a different locale, a dark blue SUV pulls up nearby, containing the driver and a number of his associates. Move to the scene "The Jacks," below.

- **Tracking the Driver:** The pack may want to track down the driver who apparently abandoned the vehicle. The trail is relatively fresh, and imposes no penalties to the tracking roll. Other environmental factors depend on what the pack's territory is like; it's easier to track the driver along a dirt road than a concrete city street. If the pack is successful in tracking the driver, they find that he fled roughly half a mile before stopping to call for some friends. The pack catches up with the driver when he has met up with said friends. Move to the scene "The Jacks," below.

**Obstacles:** There are no real outside obstacles to this scene. Plenty of information is available to the characters, the burden is simply on them to look carefully for it.



**Aids:** Certain details will be apparent only to those characters using the full suite of a werewolf's senses. If a character shifts form or uses a Gift to gain a more lupine sense of smell, she can gather the scent-related pieces of information listed below.

**Details:** There are a number of details inherent to this scene, most of which you'll provide as answers to players' questions.

### The Truck

If the players decide to check with the authorities, no truck of its description or license plate has been reported stolen. (The pickup truck was given to Mr. G as a goodwill gift from one of his regulars in the chopshop business – something the players won't realize, of course.) Other details that may be apparent with careful observation include:

- The truck is dull black in color. It doesn't look like it's been recently washed, but it also doesn't look like it's been left out in the weather.
- There is a decided lack of personal effects in the truck. Even the glove compartment is empty.
- The license plate is local, although the inspection sticker expired two months ago.
- If the victim was female and carried a purse, said purse can be found jammed under the driver's seat.
- The bed of the truck is largely pristine; it doesn't have a bed lining, and it doesn't have the scraped paint to imply that it's been used to haul anything large and heavy. It hardly seems to have been used as a truck at all.
- The garbage bag in the back of the truck looks like it's about three-quarters full. It doesn't look evenly packed enough to be household garbage, though none of the jutting protrusions are sharp enough to cut through the material. If a player directly asks "Does it look like it's full of bones?" the answer is "yes."

### The Remains

Naturally, the characters can only investigate the corpse if they open the bag. If the victim was someone known to the pack, you may give each character a Wits + Composure roll to recognize the person from their empty skin and bones. There are many other details to be gleaned as well, if the werewolves are thorough enough in their investigation.

- It's hard to tell how old the remains are. The skin is dry and not very supple, but there's no real smell of decay. [The Leatherworker's toxins help preserve skin against bacteria.]
- The corpse is little more than skin and bones, still dressed in what appears to be nice casual clothes – a jacket and slacks or cocktail dress are most likely, whichever is appropriate. All muscles and internal organs, including eyes, are gone. [These parts were liquefied and consumed by the Azlu.]

- The corpse has a faintly acidic reek, something like artificial chemicals and something like smashed insects. [This is a lingering trace of the venom that liquefied the victim's organs and muscles.]

- The quality of the clothes matches what the pack knows of the victim's lifestyle (they're appropriate for the victim's income bracket, for instance). [They belonged to the victim, or were borrowed from a friend; the victim apparently was planning to go someplace fairly nice of his own free will.]

- The most obvious wound is a pair of grooved cuts below the sternum that meet in a rough "V" shape; the edges of the cuts are ragged. [This is where the Azlu's fangs bit into the body and cut a channel through the skin until they met.]

- The skin is bloodless. There are no marks of bruising or bloodstains. [The Azlu carefully drank all the blood and cleaned any loose morsels away.]

- If the characters go over the corpse meticulously, they may discover some minor abrasions along the outer arms. These are less obvious, due to the lack of blood. [The abrasions mark where the Azlu seized the victim with its outsized fiddler crab-like claw.]

- Tucked into a pocket, wallet or purse is a playing card, the 6 of hearts. A phone number is written on the front, along with the scrawled name "Gregor R."; the number is local. A character who is relatively familiar with playing cards (one with an appropriate hobby, or who has the Encyclopedic Knowledge Merit) would note that the card is not from one of the more common card makers such as Bicycle; the back design (ornate red and white featuring the ladybug with card suit symbols for spots) might indicate a specialty manufacturer, such as a casino that prints its own cards. [This is the password card that the victim was given and used to get into the Ladybird Room. The phone number is that of Gregor Rosetti, the man who gave the victim the invitation to the Ladybird Room in the first place.]

**Consequences:** Whatever the characters can learn from the truck and its burden will color the events of the hunt. This players may move from this scene to a direct confrontation with Mr. G's minions, or they may continue their detective work.

In addition, moving the truck or the body will attract the attention of the Azlu who come looking for it. Specifically, the Jacks will begin combing the area, and are likely to be highly agitated. Even leaving the truck but moving the body will make certain the creatures remain in the area until they've found it. In this case, it's likely that the characters will find out that some strange people are scouring the area where the truck was abandoned, and return to the area to find out more.



# SCENE: DIALING THE NUMBER

MENTAL • PHYSICAL – SOCIAL ...

**Overview:** This scene comes about if the pack calls the number on the playing card, to find out more about whoever is on the other side and his involvement in this affair.

**Description:** This scene takes place over the phone, and is mostly dialogue. The actual setting depends on from where a character makes the call.

- *The phone rings four times before it picks up. You hear quick, nervous breathing on the other end before a voice says “Ah... who’s there?”*

**Storyteller Goals and Tips:** This scene is quite short and sweet; essentially, it’s an opportunity for the characters to get information from somewhere other than the Jacks – in this case, Gregor Rosetti, a gambler in debt to Mr. G who was responsible for giving the victim an invitation to the Ladybird Room. Rosetti is very frightened, and casting around for someone to potentially protect him from Mr. G.

Give the characters an opportunity to talk Rosetti into arranging a meeting (moving on to the scene “The Unfortunate Mr. Rosetti”); if they fail, they might return to the possibility of an encounter with the Jacks, or simply proceed to the Ladybird Room if they already have enough information.

**Character Goals:** Find out what they can about “Gregor R.”, the person on the other end. Potentially arrange a meeting to learn more about why he gave the card to the victim, and what he might know about what’s going on.

**Actions:** Getting information out of Rosetti is difficult over the phone; he can’t be sure the characters aren’t in Mr. G’s employ. However, he can be easily convinced to meet with the players if he believes they have the muscle to protect him – legally or otherwise. If the characters are willing to play along with Rosetti’s assumption that they’re either cops or with organized crime, they can arrange a face-to-face meeting where they can ask Rosetti more questions about his relationship to the victim. He’s willing to give out that information to someone who might find it a good reason to take Mr. G out, but he won’t do it over the phone.

## PERSUASION

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment versus Resolve + Composure (4 dice) + equipment

**Action:** Contested. If the character fails to wring any information out of Rosetti, he hangs up. If the characters call back and try a different approach, the attempt suffers a -1 penalty.

**Obstacles:** Lack of a good cover story (-2)

**Aids:** Acceptable cover story (+2), promising to protect Rosetti (+2)

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** “*Oh shit! Shit shit!*” [Rosetti immediately hangs up and leaves his apartment, attempting to get out of town. He dies of poison half an hour later at the bus station.]

**Failure:** “*Look, I don’t know who you are or how you got this number, but if you call me again I’m calling the cops.*” [Rosetti hangs up.]

**Success:** “*Okay, look, I’ll tell you more. I don’t want to leave my place, you come here.*” [Rosetti gives his address to the characters.]

**Exceptional Success:** “*Okay, look. I’d rather talk face-to-face, but... yeah. I’ll tell you what I can.*” [Rosetti will provide what information he can over the phone. Use the information available in the scene below, “The Unfortunate Mr. Rosetti”.]

**Obstacles/Penalties:** The main obstacle to this scene is the initial lack of information. The characters don’t know the full name of the person they’re contacting, and can only guess at what role he played in this grotesque murder. An attempt to persuade Rosetti to divulge information over the phone or meet in person suffers a penalty of two dice if the character gives away his ignorance or openly denies being anyone that Rosetti thinks could be of assistance.

**Aids/Bonuses:** Rosetti really wants to believe that the characters are people able to help him out. Any approach that involves convincing him that the pack can keep Mr. G from coming after him receives a bonus of two dice.

**Consequences:** If the characters manage to convince Rosetti to meet with them, you can move on to the next scene, “The Unfortunate Mr. Rosetti.” If they were fortunate enough to get all the information he knows over the phone, they can proceed on to the Ladybird Room.

If the characters don’t convince Rosetti to meet with them, or they don’t think to use a phone book or other resource to track down his address and meet him face-to-face, then this line of investigation comes to an end. The characters can resume hunting along the trail left by the truck, moving on to “The Jacks” event, or if they already have gone through those events, perhaps on to the Ladybird Room proper.

Rosetti dies from the poison in his wound later that evening. His body isn’t discovered for three more days.



# SCENE: THE UNFORTUNATE MR. ROSETTI

MENTAL ..      PHYSICAL .      SOCIAL ..

**Overview:** The pack learns the address of the “Gregor R.” whose phone number is on the card, and pays him a visit. Depending on how they play it, this scene may be a simple and non-violent interrogation, or it may end in hysteria as Rosetti panics and falls victim to the poison in his system.

**Description:** Rosetti’s apartment is in a slightly cheaper neighborhood, slowly falling into disrepair. He lives in a one-bedroom suite and keeps strange hours; his neighbors see little of him.

*The apartment gives the impression of a resident that tries not to spend too much time at home. The walls are almost wholly bare, save for the all-too-occasional poster or print. A futon is the only piece of furniture in the main room, and the kitchen’s sole decorations are empty Chinese carryout boxes and fast food wrappers. A faint smell of male sweat hangs in the air.*

If Gregor expects the characters, he unlocks the door and takes the chain off shortly after confirming that they’re the ones he spoke with on the phone. He doesn’t ask them to sit down, but paces nervously in the kitchen while the conversation unfolds, sweating more profusely as the topic turns to the disappearance of the victim and what he knows of Mr. G.

If the pack is visiting Rosetti without any sort of forewarning, he assumes the worst. He can be talked down at this point, but he’s frightened and panicky, and will succumb more quickly to the poison in his veins.

**Storyteller Goals:** Here the goal is to build the tension associated with the Ladybird Room, as well as give the players additional information to point them in the right direction. Rosetti can provide more information about the place and Mr. G, but he is unaware of many of the key facts of the story, specifically the supernatural elements.

The poison in Rosetti’s veins is not meant to be used as a means of preventing the characters from gaining information they would otherwise fairly earn. Rather, Rosetti’s death (if not somehow prevented) is meant to heighten the tension and raise more questions about what’s really going on in the Ladybird Room. Let the characters get what information they can fairly earn out of Rosetti; don’t have him drop dead just to keep them in the dark.

**Character Goals:** Meet with Gregor and get what information they can out of him. Optionally, the characters may attempt to save his life if they recognize that he’s been poisoned.

**Actions:** This is likely to be a social encounter. Although a dice pool is provided, the interrogation of Rosetti can be handled without dice if you and your players are comfortable with resolving the conversation through roleplaying alone.

Meeting with the pack agitates Rosetti, unfortunately accelerating the effects of the poison in his bloodstream. He loses one Health point per minute of conversation as the poison speeds up through his system (the poison is lethal damage). Attempting to intimidate him or otherwise terrorizing him (such as by breaking down his door) is particularly detrimental to his health; he begins to lose one Health point per turn rather than per minute. If subjected to the Lunacy, Rosetti goes into immediate cardiac arrest and dies one turn later.

## WINNING ROSETTI’S TRUST

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment versus Resolve + Composure (4 dice) + equipment

**Action:** Contested.

**Obstacles:** Lack of a good cover story (-2)

**Aids:** Acceptable cover story (+2), promising to protect Rosetti (+2)

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** “Oh God, you’re not really... You’re working for him, aren’t you? You are!” [Rosetti becomes panicked, assuming the characters are in Mr. G’s pocket. He begins to lose one Health point per turn rather than one per minute.]

**Failure:** “I... I don’t know who you are, but I think you better go on and leave. You aren’t helping things.” [Rosetti can still be talked into sharing his knowledge, but he is sullen and gives out information sparingly. He is more likely to succumb to poison before revealing all he knows.]

**Success:** “Yeah. Look, here’s what I know.” [Rosetti opens up to the characters. He reveals all the information below.]

**Exceptional Success:** “Man, am I glad to hear that from you. Yeah, let me tell you what I can.” [Gregor actually calms down somewhat, which gives him a few more minutes to live and to share information. He loses one Health point every five minutes.]

The following facts are things that Gregor will share with the characters. Some of his observations are inaccurate, but he isn’t trying to lie.

- He first went to the Ladybird Room two months ago, after hearing about it from “a guy I used to talk to, a... businessman”. Gregor racked up a bad debt there in only two visits.

- He was taken into the back room to meet Mr. G, a massively fat man who offered to let him work off some of the debt as a house dealer.

- Gregor didn’t like the way Mr. G carried himself. “He felt... I dunno, like some kind of pervert. Like a child molester or something. Gave me the creeps. I swear



THE UNFORTUNATE MR. ROSETTI

PARLOR GAMES



he was giving me the eye, only not obvious... he wasn't trying to make sure I knew. He was just checking me out."

- He met Mr. G's latest victim at a club between Ladybird Room shifts. Gregor admits that he was hoping to impress him/her with the invitation, and maybe score later.
- He suspects that the victim caught Mr. G's eye, in a sexual way; he remembers one of the Jacks approaching him/her and speaking privately. "The bouncers— Mr. G calls them all "Jack," some kind of private jokes — they tend to do the cleaning up as well. Us dealer-types are let go early. [He/she] stayed later than I did, so... I don't know.]
- Rosetti knows the way to the Ladybird Room, the dates it opens for the next couple of months, and about the card-password system. He has a spare deck of cards he can give to the characters to let themselves in.
- He confirms that some of the local criminal element likes to hang out at the Ladybird Room. They don't get into it with each other; the place is some kind of neutral ground. (Of course, if the players don't act as though they already know this, he may get suspicious of who they really are.)
- He assumes that because of Mr. G's connections with the criminal element, that's why people go missing. Some of them might piss off the wrong people at the club, but some might be "disappeared" because Mr. G called in a favor.
- If asked about the bruise on the back of the neck, he admits he doesn't know how it got there. He suspects he slept on it wrong or pulled his neck while asleep or something. He also waves away any mention of his ill health, saying he's been tired and stressed lately.
- If told that the person he invited to the club was murdered, Rosetti begins to panic, accelerating the poison in his veins as described above. If told specifically about the strange nature of the murder — that only skin and bones was found — his panic gets worse. He suspected he was dealing with a bad man, but not some kind of monster.

#### SAVING ROSETTI'S LIFE

If Rosetti loses his last Health point to the poison in his veins while the pack is present, he goes from pale to chalk-white and falls to the floor, making choking noises. A character who tries to find out what's wrong with him can make the following roll to diagnose the trouble.

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Medicine + equipment

**Action:** Standard

**Obstacles:** Supernatural venom (-1)

**Aids:** Previous exposure to Azlu venom (+2)

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character misdiagnoses Rosetti as suffering from a drug overdose, likely amphetamines.

**Failure:** The character is unable to satisfactorily determine what's wrong with Rosetti.

**Success:** The character identifies the bruise on Rosetti's neck as some sort of unusual wound that's been envenomed, but cannot accurately tell what sort of venom was used. At a guess, it seems to be a hemotoxin rather than a neurotoxin.

**Exceptional Success:** The character recognizes the wound as inflicted by some sort of supernatural spider-like creature, probably an Azlu. She also can determine that the venom delivered into the wound is something like a hemotoxin, but seems to be targeting Rosetti's internal organs and breaking down their tissues.

If a character attempts to treat Rosetti for poison, you can use the system for healing wounds (**World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 61). Rosetti has a dis-used first aid kit in his bathroom, which would eliminate the "lack of tools" penalty. However, the unusual nature of Azlu poison makes it more difficult to treat than a spider or snake bite, imposing a -3 penalty to the roll.

#### SEARCHING THE APARTMENT

If the characters decide to search Rosetti's apartment for clues, perhaps after he dies of poison (or even after they kill him, depending on their actions) they have a chance of finding one or two items of interest.

**Dice Pool:** Wits + Investigation

**Action:** Extended (3-8 successes); each roll represents five minutes of searching.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character discovers a wall calendar with a date three days from now circled; perhaps something to do with the Ladybird Room. [The date is Gregor's mother's birthday.]

**Failure:** The character finds nothing of particular interest, but can keep trying.

**Success:** The character discovers one of the pieces of information provided below.

**Exceptional Success:** The character makes two discoveries from those listed below.

The following tidbits are arranged in order from easiest to most difficult and obscure to find:

- An opened pack of cards with the signature Ladybird Room design sits on the kitchen counter by the microwave and Rosetti's keys. Several cards are missing; if the characters check, the six of hearts is one of them.
- A small Post-it note by Gregor's bed lists a series of dates. A successful Intelligence + Academics or Occult roll will reveal that these dates correspond with the half moon.





- There's a small bloodstain on Rosetti's pillow, perhaps matching the bruise on his neck.

**Details:** The key details of this scene are Rosetti's worsening condition, which you might reveal as you find dramatically appropriate.

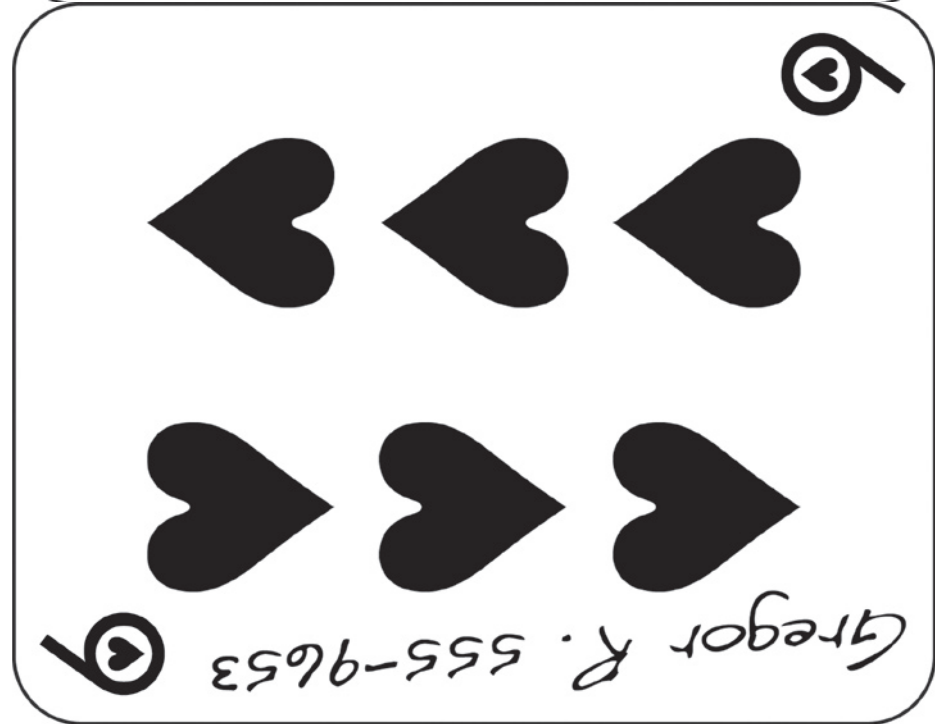
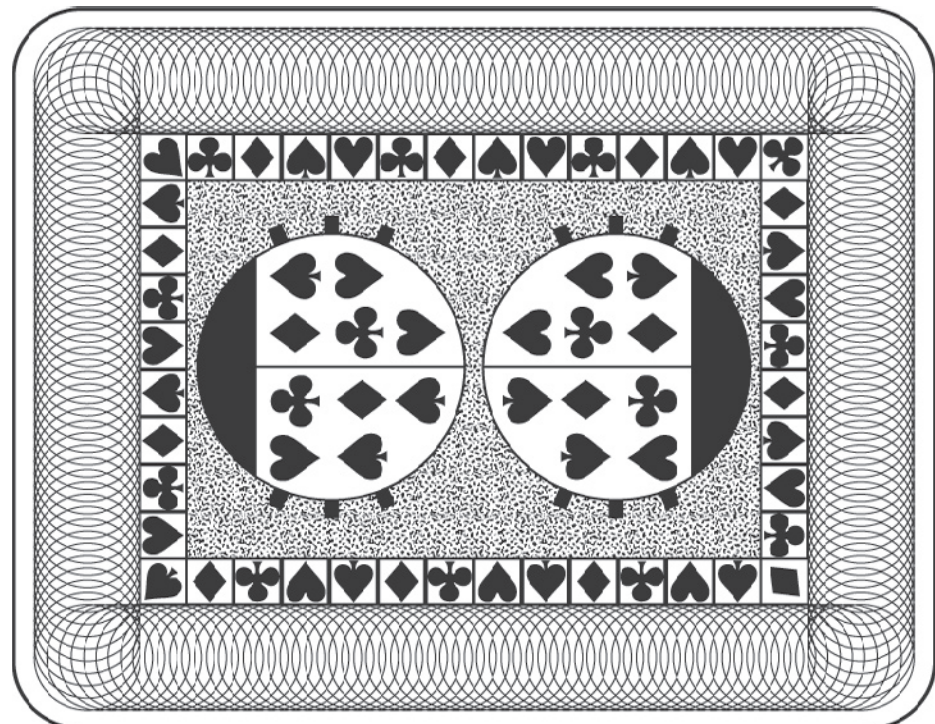
The sweat on his forehead glistens as his brow furrows. He grimaces as he puts one hand to his belly. "Unh... ow. Sorry. What was I saying?"

He looks at you with eyes wide as a deer's, his breathing just a touch shallow. His scent is a mix of stale sweat, faded deodorant and a touch of blood on his breath.

*The last of the color drains from his face, and his breath rasps out. He falls to one knee, then both, one hand reaching out for furniture that isn't there to steady himself while the other knots in his shirt. His head hits the floor with an ugly thump.*

**Consequences:** The final fate of Gregor Rosetti, tragic though it may be, may not greatly affect the hunt. The characters may choose to dispose of his body somehow in order to cover their trail – which isn't a bad idea. If the characters take no precautions to minimize the chances that they can be connected to Rosetti's death, they may find themselves targeted by a police investigation in later game sessions.

If the characters somehow manage to save Rosetti's life, this good deed is unlikely to affect the events of the story, but might have other rewards. Rosetti may become a contact for the pack – he's not tremendously skilled, but he does keep his ears open at local clubs. Working at a sporting goods store isn't glamorous, either, but you never know when you might need a store to be conveniently unlocked at night.



# SCENE: THE JACKS

MENTAL – PHYSICAL ... SOCIAL ..

**Overview:** This scene occurs when the minions of Mr. G come looking for the truck they abandoned, and specifically the corpse within. However, they're not subtle enough to avoid the attention of the pack. This scene provides the pack with their first taste of action against the denizens of the Ladybird Room, as well as an additional dose of monstrous supernatural presence.

The pack may encounter the Jacks by tracking the driver of the abandoned truck, or they may run into them later.

There should be one Jack per member of the pack, plus one more (the driver). You can adjust the numbers higher or lower, depending on how strong the players' pack is and how much you want this encounter to challenge them.

**Description:** The Jacks come looking for the truck in the early evening. The pack may become aware of the Jacks' presence in several ways – they may be warned by a spirit that they have befriended, they may have been keeping an eye on the truck (or the area in which it was parked), or a local human contact (or wolf-blood) may mention the “weird-looking guys who just came through... like the mob, or Secret Service or something.”

*Several large men in dark suits, with matching dark turtlenecks and heavy dark glasses, stand along the roadside. They push out their chests and step toward you in an aggressive stance, their fingers curling and uncurling almost nervously. “We want our truck,” one says in a slightly slurred voice.*

**Storyteller Goals and Tips:** This is a perfect opportunity to play up the experience of fighting like werewolves. By fighting in shapeshifted form, the players have an excellent opportunity to eliminate the enforcers without making enough of a ruckus to alert the authorities – claws and fangs make much less noise than firearms.

If the characters haven't moved the truck, feel free to work it into the violence as a prop, which gives a stronger sense of scene and a little bit of dramatic irony. Combatants might be slammed into the sides. Windows or windshields break; a sideview mirror snaps off when a body is thrown against it.

**Character Goals:** First and foremost, to survive against the Spider Hosts. A secondary goal is to wring more information out of them about their lair.

**Actions:** This scene is most likely to erupt in violence. The Jacks don't have the creativity to argue their way out of the situation convincingly, and they have an instinctual hatred for the Uratha (they guess that the characters are werewolves based on their colleague's account of seeing the territory

marker). Negotiation may drive them to attack in a fit of impatience. If the characters admit that they've found the body, the Jacks definitely attack.

Once the combat is finished or avoided, the pack may attempt to interrogate one of the Jacks to find out more about them and their lair. Although the Azlu are quite recalcitrant, they also believe in self-preservation. A properly intimidated (or tortured, if the pack is particularly savage) Jack will admit that there are more Azlu in their lair, and can be persuaded to divulge the location of the Ladybird Room and how to get in. A sufficiently thorough interrogation will also encourage the Jack to reveal that there is an elder Azlu called the Leatherworker overseeing the den, one that masterminds the human-skin masquerades and directs the crawlers. If the characters ask them about the name “Gregor R.” on the card, the Jacks admit that he was one of the patrons, and are able to provide the last name Rosetti, but know nothing more about why the card has his name and number on it (and are too unimaginative to guess).

An especially silver-tongued character might even be able to strike a friendly deal with one of the Jacks, offering freedom and perhaps even the chance to devour the elder Azlu's soul-shard in exchange for the Jack's assistance. This is an exceptionally difficult task, given the inbred hatred each Azlu holds for the Uratha – but it could be done.

## INTERROGATION

**Dice Pool:** Strength/Presence/Manipulation + Intimidation + equipment versus Resolve + Composure (5 dice) + equipment

**Action:** Contested. If the character fails to wring any information out of the Azlu, he or another character can try again using a different Attribute. Each attempt after the first grants the Azlu a cumulative +1 bonus (maximum +5) on its dice pool.

**Obstacles:** Azlu stubborn hatred for the Uratha (-4, default)

**Aids:** Violence (+1), threats made specifically against the Crawler's spider form rather than the host body (+2)

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** “You are ignorant. And weak. I will yet watch you die.”

**Failure:** “You are not wolves, you are pale shadows who rush toward a light that will devour them. I do not fear fangs that do not know where to bite.”

**Success:** “Enough! Yes, there are more of us... we have been granted a colony, and given bodies. Go and see for yourself. Kill the humans that sit in our parlor, if you will; murder them as you murdered us ourselves so long ago. Or maybe you can purchase their safe passage – would you offer up your own? That might be sufficient.” [The Jack divulges directions to the Ladybird Room.]

**Exceptional Success:** A strange, glass-edged scream comes from the man. “No! No! Not again! Stay your fangs, Wolf-God! Do not tear this poor wretched woman apart! Ahh... hkk... You want the elder, don't you? The Leatherworker? [ thrusts a playing card at the werewolves ] Here! Show the sign at the Ladybird door, hunt the



*Leatherworker! It is your prey, not this poor little one!" The man's jaw hangs open, loosely working, as a wet chittering rolls out from its throat. [The Jack is utterly terrified, and will do exactly as the werewolves command, including leading them to the club or giving directions.]*

**STRIKING A DEAL**

**Dice Pool:** Presence/Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment versus Resolve + Composure (5 dice) + equipment

**Action:** Contested. If the character fails to strike a deal, another character can try to rephrase the deal. Each attempt after the first grants the Jack a cumulative +1 bonus (maximum +5) on its dice pool.

**Obstacles:** Azlu stubborn hatred for the Uratha (-4, default); the pack has killed more than one Jack (-2); character doesn't conduct the deal in fluent First Tongue (-1)

**Aids:** Character makes a peace offering of food (+1), character offers the Jack the opportunity to devour Mr. G's corpse and shard (+2)

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** *The man's human mouth falls open in what seems like a strangling wail until you realize that the spidery thing inside his skull is attempting to laugh.*

**Failure:** *"Miserable wolves, to so hate and fear rival hunters. Your tongues are lies. I will not anger my own kind for you. If they devour you, then they would devour me for having brought you there. If they fail to devour you and your wrath consumes them, you would turn on me. I will not help you. I will only anticipate looking on your husks."*

**Success:** *"You... yes. I see. I will trust you, for I am too small for you to concern. So small, no threat... the ones that are threats, you should kill them, yes. I will show you the way."* [The Jack leads the players to the Ladybird Room and shows them the sign to get in, but remains outside while they conduct their business.]

**Exceptional Success:** *"Yes! It is perfect! I lead you to the den, you tear the Leatherworker apart! I will serve the wise wolves in this, and they will grant this tiny, insignificant one a boon. You will not sorrow in your choice!"* [The Jack will be helpful in any way it can short of fighting Kusthuthun; it may distract other Jacks at the Ladybird Room, or assist in clearing the gambling den of its patrons.]

**Details:**

The Jacks will mostly try to grapple and then bite their opponents, the elongated chelicerae of the skull-riding Crawler stabbing down through the roof of the host body's mouth and into a victim. The chelicerae retract as the Jack pulls away from its victim (or vice versa), the Azlu trying to hide them if possible. If a Jack uses its Toxic Bite power successfully, the sensation might be described as follows:

*The man's teeth close hard on your skin, though they aren't sharp or strong enough to cut deep. As your muscles tense reflexively to tear free, you feel a sudden stab in the center of the bitten area, like sharp nails being driven into your flesh. A blast of numbing pain quickly follows, carrying nausea with it. Something feels wrong with your blood, and your heart flutters.*

When a Jack's body is killed, the small Azlu within may remain hidden in hopes that the werewolves will overlook it, or it may break open the skull like a hatching egg and scurry away in fear. If a werewolf manages to kill a Jack with an exceptional success on her Brawl roll, she may reveal their enemies for what they are.

With a swipe of your claw, you tear the top of the man's skull off, your talons digging into the oddly resistant tissues underneath. He topples with a sigh, and as his head bounces off the ground, a small tide of dead spiders pours out of his cranial cavity.

**Consequences:** Victory over the Jacks gives the characters the opportunity to interrogate any prisoners (as above) and examine the bodies of the fallen. Each Jack carries no personal ID, just a roll of cash (usually five \$100 bills) and a playing card from the Ladybird Room's house deck (always a jack, with the signature Ladybird Room back design—red and white with a prominent ladybug whose "spots" are the four playing card suits).

It's possible that the pack may not interrogate the Jacks to learn more, assuming that the few they've encountered are responsible for the killing that began the hunt. They may decide to finish the hunt here. If so, let them. On the next half-moon, though, a new wave of Jacks appears in their territory, this time deliberately hunting the pack down. You can let the next two weeks pass largely offscreen, though it's recommended that you include one or more scenes relevant to the downtime in order to put the players at their ease and improve the narrative. It's best to let the characters spend a little time dealing with loved ones, parlaying with rival packs, attempting to dissuade curious humans or otherwise being involved in the various dramas that populate a werewolf's life. Simply cutting to the second attack two weeks later sends the message that the events of this story are more important than anything the players want to do, which isn't true. You do want a dramatic resolution to this particular story, but it's better drama to properly pace the attacks and show a little more of what's at stake in the interim.

If the Jacks win this fight, they will likely rein in their bloodlust and drag the pack off to meet Mr. Gustavus. The pack may awaken after their regeneration to find themselves wrapped in silk in Mr. G's hidden den — a bad situation, but at least they still have a chance to extricate themselves. They might also throw the pack into the river (if one is handy), nail them into a dumpster or otherwise try to hastily dispose of them in a way that allows the pack a second chance to escape an ugly situation... at your discretion, of course.

# SCENE: THE FRONT DOOR

MENTAL .. PHYSICAL .. SOCIAL ...

**Overview:** This short scene takes place when the characters find the Ladybird Room and attempt to get inside.

**Description:** The door into the Ladybird Room is in an otherwise unremarkable alley.

*The alley's brick walls are stained dark, though the smell of the city isn't as strong here. A thick metal door is set into the right wall toward the alley's end, watched over by a large, scraggly-bearded man in a dark suit with black turtleneck and opaque black sunglasses. He keeps his arms crossed as you approach. The door itself is unmarked.*

**Storyteller Goals:** This mini-scene is meant to tease the players just a bit by hinting at what's on the other side of the door. It can also help you gauge how the players are going to approach the final leg of the hunt; if they tear the bouncer apart, you know violence is likely going to erupt sooner rather than later.

**Character Goals:** Simply to get inside. The level of subtlety by which the pack accomplishes this goal is up to them.

**Actions:** There are numerous ways to get past the guard (another Jack, an Azlu crawler in the skull of a human body) – distracting him, using social skills to talk him into admitting the pack, or even killing him outright. If a character reveals herself as a werewolf in some way, the Jack tries to pound on the metal door four times, the code for “Wolves at the door!” This warns the other Azlu inside the Ladybird Room.

## TALKING THEIR WAY IN

**Dice Pool:** Presence/Manipulation + Persuasion + equipment versus Resolve + Composure (5 dice) + equipment

**Action:** Contested. If the character fails to convince the doorman, another character can try to rephrase the deal. Each attempt after the first grants the Jack a cumulative +1 bonus (maximum +5) on its dice pool.

**Obstacles:** Goes against strict orders (-2, default)

## Roll Results

**Dramatic Failure:** “You... you are not human.” [The Jack pounds on the door four times.]

**Failure:** “I don't care. You can't come in. Go away.”

**Success:** “I... I suppose that makes sense. Go on in.”

**Exceptional Success:** “Oh! I... I must not have recognized you. I apologize! Please go in.”

**Obstacles/Penalties:** The Jack on guard duty is not particularly clever, but it's stubbornly loyal to Mr. G and has its orders not to let anyone in without the proper card or Mr. G's explicit permission. Players receive a -2 penalty to any attempts to persuade it to let them in. It cannot be bribed with money, having little use for that, and it cannot be seduced, having no sexual drive (much less a human one).

**Aids/Bonuses:** If the players have deduced that the playing card is a password and show an appropriate card (either that found on the body, or a card taken from one of the Jacks) to the doorman, they will be automatically admitted. The Jack on guard duty isn't savvy enough to detect that the characters are werewolves unless they do something obvious to give it away (such as showing up in Dalu form).

**Details:** The Jack on guard duty was once an outlaw biker before his “possession,” and has a number of tattoos under its turtleneck. It owns only the clothing on its back.

The door looks like any other industrial-style metal door; it could be a warehouse or a kitchen or a sweatshop on the other side, for all you know. It's hinged to open outward.

**Consequences:** If the pack manages to get past the doorman without causing a ruckus, they have more freedom to roam the Ladybird Room without being recognized for what they are.

On the other hand, if they showed their hand too early (so to speak), Mr. G is forewarned, as are his enforcers. The pack will be marked as werewolves as soon as they enter, barring some unusual precaution (such as finding another group of patrons to enter first). If so warned, Mr. G will arm two of the Jacks with silver knives which he has kept tucked away for such an occasion, making them far more dangerous. (The silver knives are not already distributed because Mr. G hasn't actually had to deal with werewolves for years.)

## THE GAUNTLET

The wall between worlds is very thick around the Ladybird Room. Although the place-that-isn't is a supernatural location, which normally implies a weaker Gauntlet, it is its own pocket realm with near-impenetrable walls. In addition, the Azlu in residence has spun its Gauntlet webs to keep unwanted pests from discovering its secret parlor. As a result, the Gauntlet imposes a -4 penalty to all appropriate rolls.

# SCENE: THE LADYBIRD ROOM

MENTAL .. PHYSICAL .. SOCIAL ..

**Overview:** This scene occurs when the characters enter the Ladybird Room in order to find their prey. This is a fairly free-form scene, as the characters might spend some time socializing or gambling with the patrons, looking around the room for details, or even getting into a fight with more of the Jacks (or even some of the mortal patrons). The scene is likely to end when the characters come face-to-face with Mr. G and begin the climactic confrontation.

**Description:** The Ladybird Room's main portion is made of concrete, though masked with thick carpet and cloth. The walls are covered in what looks like old red velvet, marked with a pattern of black dots. The wall opposite the door has a rich burgundy curtain across it, concealing the door to the back room.

*The room gives an impression of being aged, yet with a quiet strength underneath. The walls and floor are a deep red that is still rich, darkening to burgundy and then black in the corners where the soft light doesn't reach. You smell layers of cigarette and cigar smoke clinging to the velvet curtains – curtains that don't seem to cover actual windows. Soft music, something classical, plays from behind the massive hardwood bar. You'd guess there's maybe two dozen patrons gathered around the tables, and four more of the bouncers in dark suits. At the nearest table, the players look up at you as you step closer into the room. Most flinch, probably not even realizing they're doing so, and quickly go back to their cards.*

There are five playing tables, each one with a portion of the room's patrons. A large hardwood bar runs along the north wall, and a few patrons nurse drinks there between games. The furnishings of the room are antiques, well cared for but slightly worn. The tables and chairs are made of heavy, dark wood. The chandeliers are electric, but it's uncertain what their power source is; no owner of the Ladybird Room has ever had to pay an electric bill to keep the power turned on. The lights dim slightly every night at midnight, with a faint buzzing noise, but the source of this peculiarity is likewise unknown.

The metal entry door (Durability 3, Structure 8) has a push-bar lock on the inside, allowing it to be opened without a key from this side while still requiring a key on the outside. One Jack bouncer stands near it; he has a key to lock it from this side. Another of the Jacks tends bar (where the selection is limited to beer and straight liquors), a third stands near the entrance to the back room, and the fourth is stationed along the south wall.

At present, there are 22 ordinary humans in the room, most patrons, but two are dealers for the two Texas Hold 'Em tables. These dealers (Emmy Montague and Dominic White) aren't permanent employees, for obvious reasons;

they're paying off a small amount of their debts by dealing for Mr. G, much as Gregor Rosetti did. This is Emmy's second night dealing, and Dominic's first.

**Storyteller Goals:** This scene is near the climax of the adventure, but the tension can still rise without exploding into violence. The characters should have some opportunity to mingle with the patrons of the club, perhaps partaking in a card game, if they so choose. This scene is largely to give the players a chance to mix socialization (positive or negative) with investigation. Once they start to get impatient or complacent, you can have Mr. Gustavus emerge to begin the next scene.

**Character Goals:** The pack's obvious goal is to identify the supernatural creature that runs the Ladybird Room. A less obvious secondary goal is to clear the ordinary patrons out of the den. Doing so will allow the pack to confront Mr. G without running the risk of injuring bystanders, dealing with a situation driven out of control by a large group of Lunacy-crazed humans, or having human witnesses to Uratha behavior.

**Actions:** The players have many options open to them at this point. Most likely, though, they'll attempt to mingle with the patrons in order to learn more or even participate in some gambling themselves.

## SOCIALIZING

The characters may try to mingle with the human guests in order to learn more about the establishment and its proprietor. Several sample patrons are given above, under "The Ladybird Patrons." Describe a few likely sources of information, and let the players decide who they want their characters to talk to, and what their approach will be. This action can simply be roleplayed out if you and the players are interested. It gives the characters a chance to interact with others in a fairly peaceful environment for a change of pace, although the tension of being close to their enemy's lair may color the interaction.

If a player would rather roll to find out how much information they're able to casually gather, use the following system.

**Dice Pool:** Manipulation + Socialize + equipment

**Action:** Standard. Each roll represents fifteen minutes of chewing the fat with an appropriate patron or dealer (themselves patrons doing a bit of "community service").

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** "What are you, a cop? Fuck you. I came here to play. Hey, bouncer! This guy's holding up our game!" [The character offends one of the patrons, who asks the bouncer to remove the character.]

**Failure:** "Shut up and play if you're going to play." [The patron is uninterested in chatter.]

**Success:** "Yeah, Mr. G's the name of the guy who runs the place. You don't see him out here too much." [The patron engages in some mild table chat, but doesn't offer more than the basics of common knowledge about the Ladybird







Room: Mr. G's name, the password card, and such tidbits that all patrons would know.]

**Exceptional Success:** "Heh. You're all right. Yeah, I've met Mr. G. Big guy. Little weird, but, you know, probably got to be eccentric to run a place like this. Must be tight with both sides of the law, that's what I heard. Anybody gives him trouble, he has a talk with them and they don't bother coming back." [The patron warms to the character, and may even reveal some personal information; a gangster might admit to the organization or family that looks out for him, for instance.]

**Obstacles:** Any Social penalties due to Primal Urge; acting overly suspicious (-1 to -3)

**Aids:** Finding something in common with a potential source of information ("You guys go to State? Excellent, I went there too! Professor Hallberg still there?"; +1); spending money on drinks or deliberately losing a few hands (+1)

**MORE JACKS**

A few more of Mr. G's Azlu enforcers, the Jacks, are on duty at the club. (Typically four, but you may want to modify the numbers to increase or decrease the challenge for your players.) They are not likely to recognize the characters on sight as werewolves, but if the pack becomes too rowdy or gives some sort of sign of their Uratha nature, the Jacks will quickly become involved.

If the pack has become rowdy or violent, but could still be mistaken for human, the Jacks attempt to deal with them as they would any other troublesome customer. They try to take the character by one or both arms and escort him outside, where they then are allowed to indulge their taste for violence by beating the troublemaker senseless. Sometimes they get a little excited and drag their problem patron someplace secluded (a nearby parking garage, for instance) to devour him. Mr. G forbids this kind of behavior with serious regulars, but the pack isn't in that position. This could prove trouble for a single werewolf, unless his pack follows him out.

If the characters reveal themselves as werewolves in some way without driving the clientele into a panic, the Jacks are likely to request orders from Mr. G. Their instinct is to kill the Uratha, but they are capable of realizing that an open fight would ruin the Ladybird Room's potential for drawing more flies — either the supernatural secret would be out, or they'd have to kill every human in the room. Neither is really acceptable. If provoked beyond reason, the Jacks may initiate combat anyway, but otherwise they seek Mr. G's counsel, who tells them to bring the pack into the back room.

On the other hand, if the Jacks have been forewarned of Uratha presence by the code knock, two will carry silver knives taken from the back room. They watch the pack like hawks to determine their intent. If the pack looks as though they're just here to play, the Jacks allow them to do so and leave peacefully. If they show more interest in the club owner or show signs of being here on a hunt, the Azlu instead invite the characters into the back room (anticipating a fight, no less).

"Excuse. Mr. G would like to speak with you and your friends. Please come with me."

"I said Mr. G wants to speak to you. Do not be difficult."

Finally, if the pack shifts form and begins a fight in full view of the human clientele, the Jacks jump in to engage the werewolves without hesitation. The game is up anyway, and everyone will have to die before the colony moves — they just need to kill the werewolves first.

**GAMBLING**

One or more of the werewolves may wind up taking part in the games at the Ladybird Room, at least for a little while. It's up to you to decide just how much time and attention you want to devote to the games. A poker game could easily play out hand-by-hand, with a separate contested roll for each deal of the cards. A quicker approach is recommended for the course of this story, however; the threat of the Azlu should always be at the pack of the werewolves' minds, and the pack shouldn't get that relaxed. The following system for gaming is much simplified, but should be sufficient to quickly resolve whether a character loses or wins big.

Each roll represents anywhere from a single hand to half an hour of play. The base equipment bonus is the overall strength of the character's hand or hands, which may be anywhere from -3 for garbage to +3 for something virtually unbeatable. If summing up several hands' worth of play in a single roll, assign an equipment bonus of -1, 0 or +1, as the luck tends to even out (roll a die: 1-3 = -1, 4-7 = +0, 8-10 = +1). When playing out a single hand, the luck can be more dramatic. You might roll five dice to determine bonuses as above, adding together all the results (for example, a 1, 5, 8, 9, 9 would be the equivalent of -1, 0, +1, +1, +1, for a total result of +3: a killer hand by any standard). If you and your group are familiar with the rules of poker, you might even deal out actual cards as appropriate and assign bonuses based on how the prop cards fall.

You can add complexity in the form of more equipment bonuses. A deck of marked cards adds a +2 bonus to the person who knows how to read the marks, for instance.

**Dice Pool:** Intelligence + Composure + equipment versus Intelligence + Composure + equipment.

**Action:** Extended and contested.

**Obstacles:** The odds are never all that good. There is a flat -3 to -5 penalty to gambling, depending on the complexity of the game and the odds of winning. At the Ladybird Room, poker is the game of choice (five-card stud and Texas Hold 'Em are the most popular variants), at a -4 penalty.

**Aids:** The characters can gain circumstantial bonuses for cheating, skilled bluffing or a good eye for reading an opponent. These three are handled as follows: Cheating is Wits + Larceny contested by Intelligence + Composure (to spot the cheat); bluffing is Manipulation + Subterfuge contested by



Intelligence + Empathy; and reading an opponent is Intelligence + Empathy contested by Manipulation + Subterfuge. Success on one of these stratagems grants an additional +2 circumstance bonus to the roll; failure, however, imposes a -1 penalty.

**Roll Results**

**Dramatic Failure:** The character bet big when he should have pulled out. He loses anywhere from half the money he has on him on up – he may even have bet more than he’s carrying and wound up with an ugly debt to his opponent. If the character was cheating, he is caught in the act.

**Failure:** Luck isn’t with the character, or maybe he didn’t read his opponent successfully. The character loses some money appropriate to the time spent and the stakes; anywhere from three to ten times the ante amount is appropriate.

**Success:** The character comes out ahead, and makes some modest profit appropriate for the time invested and the level of stakes. If playing for nickels, he probably gets a dollar or two ahead; if the ante is \$50, he may have made a couple of hundred bucks.

**Exceptional Success:** The character wins big in dramatic fashion – bluffing down his opponents with nothing better than a pair of twos, or drawing a straight flush over his rival’s full house. Depending on the stakes, he might win a remarkable amount of money. His opponents may suspect him of cheating.

**VIOLENCE**

It’s always possible where the Uratha are concerned for things to end in violence. If a fight breaks out in which the werewolves do more than simply brawl in Hishu form, perhaps due to Death Rage, things will become very bloody.

The Jack nearest the door first attempts to lock it in order to keep any potential witnesses from escaping. Mr. G’s ultimate contingency plan, if forced to abandon the Ladybird Room, is to kill all witnesses and set a fire to burn the bodies and the furnishings to cover their tracks. The other Jacks fight with all their power to overcome the Uratha.

The human patrons, of course, are likely to be driven temporarily mad by Lunacy. Some attempt to stampede to the exit, while others might try to confront the werewolves like cornered rats. Most patrons will be very typical: Brawl pools of 2 or 3, Health 7, Willpower 4. Others may have more improved Traits, as mentioned above. The fight can be as complicated and detailed as you choose to make it mechanically – from a storytelling perspective, though, it’s sure to be a whirlpool of panic and frenzy. Two dozen people sealed in a room with a pack of werewolves... the results aren’t going to be pretty.

**Consequences**

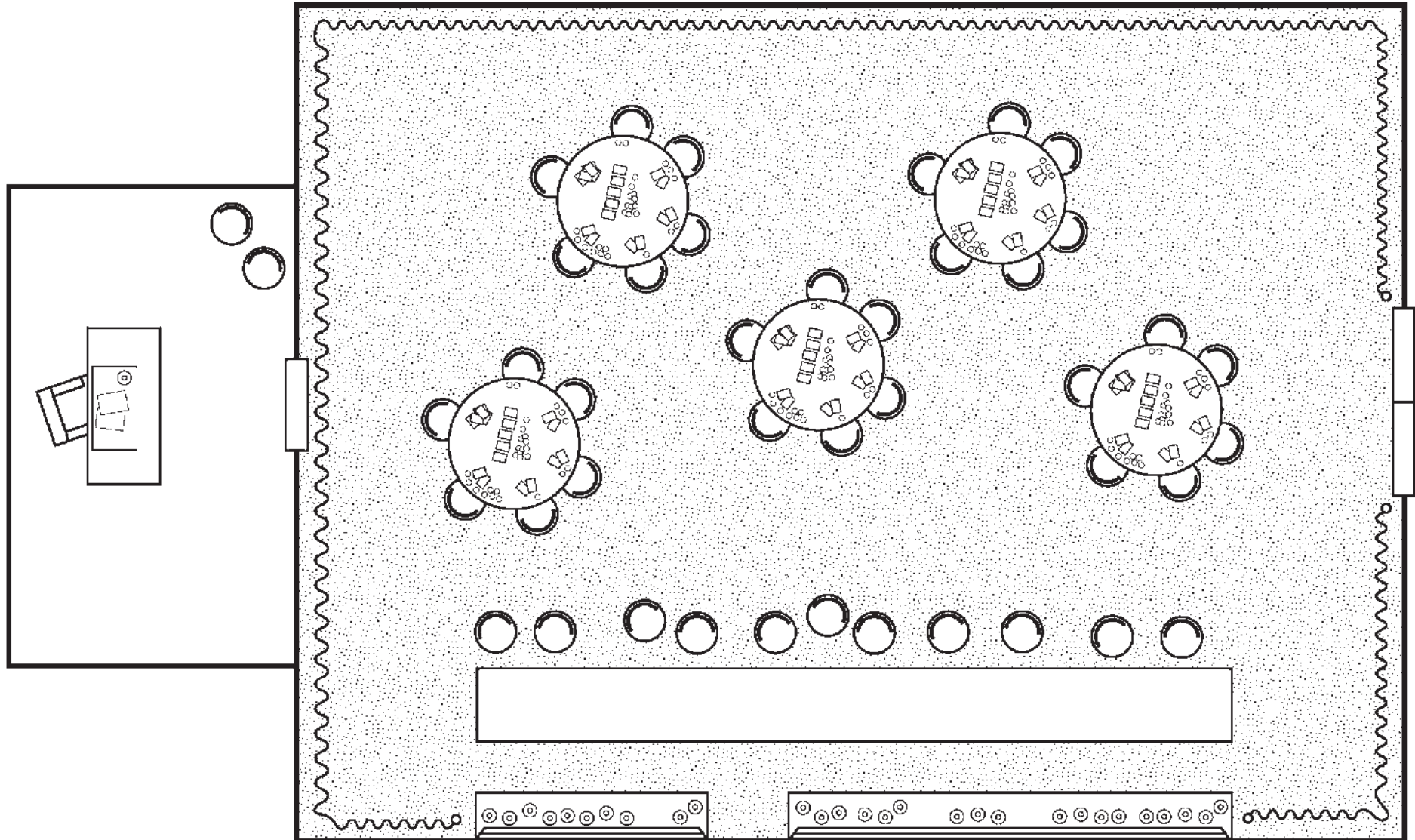
The way the characters act during this scene determines the circumstances under which they first meet Mr. G: peacefully or violently, having revealed their nature or kept it secret.

If the characters haven’t revealed their werewolf nature by the time they meet Mr. Gustavus, he is less prepared for them. He will meet with the group alone, rather than arming a pair of Jacks with silver knives and having them stand guard during the meeting.

If the pack resorted to full-bore bloodshed, there are likely consequences beyond this story. While the Lunacy may protect the characters from exposure to some degree, it’s not perfect; there’s an excellent chance that one or more of the patrons will remember enough to pose a problem down the road. Even if all the witnesses were killed, that simply poses a new set of problems. The authorities begin looking for missing persons, and the various criminal syndicates who might have lost a soldier or two also make their own inquiries.

NORTH

# THE LADYBIRD ROOM



# SCENE: MEETING MR. GUSTAVUS

MENTAL •

PHYSICAL ••

SOCIAL ••

**Overview:** The pack finally comes face to face with Mr. G. This is most likely to happen when they are invited into the back room by a Jack or when they force their way there. The scene is a chance for the characters to roleplay interaction with their enemy before coming to blows. It allows you, through Mr. Gustavus, to explain a bit more of what's going on before the final reveal (of the Azlu's hideous true form).

**Description:** If the characters meet Mr. Gustavus in the back room, the following text can be used to set the scene.

The oaken door behind the heavy velvet curtains opens into a small, darkened room lit by a pair of old-fashioned kerosene lamps. Worn, somewhat dank-smelling burgundy carpet covers half the floor, but the large, elaborately crafted desk toward the rear of the room rests on bare concrete. A pair of small chairs matching the chairs of the main room stand against the wall.

- The desk drawers are half-full of decks of cards in the house brand. Mr. G keeps the two silver knives in his possession in the left-hand top drawer.

**Storyteller Goals and Tips:** Build the tension even further before the final showdown between the pack and their Azlu prey. Allow the players a chance to converse with Mr. G and gather what information they can from the horse's mouth. The scene is likely to end in violence. The Leatherworker was born hating the Uratha and has had many years to stew on that hate. Both sides of the conflict likely anticipate the opportunity to shed their human skins and tear into one another.

If there are any to spare, a Jack or two may escort the characters into the back room. Their purpose is mainly to delay the pack if violence breaks out, so that Mr. G can escape to his den.

**Character Goals:** Identify the author of their problems to their satisfaction – then prevent him from causing more problems.

**Actions:** The tension comes to a boil in this scene, as the players get a chance to look over their enemy and begin some cordial (or not so cordial) opening conversation.

Even if not warned beforehand by a Jack, Mr. G will recognize the characters as werewolves before long. He has had sufficient experience with the Uratha in the past to recognize the little “tells” that give away their wolf nature.

Mr. G will lie as much as he can to cover his activities, for as long as he thinks he can get away with it. He has a pool of 7 dice to attempt these little subterfuges. A wary character can attempt to roll Wits + Empathy or Wits + Subterfuge in a contested roll against Mr. G to determine if he can tell if the Azlu is lying or not. This roll is made at a –2 penalty (Mr. G's skin is not his own, and his mentality is not a human's, therefore he can produce misleading “tells”), but any character who feels suspicious enough to ask for a roll may do so.

Without any other information, Mr. G can't be sure if the characters are cops, tied in to organized crime, or supernatural themselves; he anticipates the worst, but hasn't had to fight werewolves in a long while, and so that isn't the first possibility to leap into his mind. His initial conversation is evasive but polite, attempting to draw out their true motives without revealing any of his own secrets.

- “Yes, I am Mr. Gustavus, and this is my establishment. And who are you? I don't recall inviting you.”
  - “If you've had any trouble with my employees, I apologize. However, in this line of work, and with the sort of clientele I enjoy, it is necessary to employ dangerous persons to ensure a peaceful evening of entertainment. I'm sure you understand.”
  - “Yes, the cards are meant to keep the club exclusive. My clients prefer it that way, as do I.”
  - “I do remember this person. But I don't see why you connect my establishment with this tragedy.”
  - “Mr. Rosetti struck me as somewhat of an erratic personality. I was perhaps too generous to allow him to work off a portion of his debt... but I do like to consider myself a fair man.”
  - “I can assure you, no matter what you have heard, I would never take liberties with a customer. I am a gentleman, after all.”
- If the pack has knowingly revealed themselves as werewolves, Mr. G treats them with great caution. It will attempt to strike a similar bargain to the original pact of non-interference, but expects that such a thing is unlikely.
- “So. Wolves, as the saying goes, at my door. What is it you want? Perhaps some sort of mutual arrangement? I have made such before, and am willing to do so again.”
  - “What sort of arrangement? Oh, a little thing, to be sure. You do not enter my parlor again, and I do not enter your own territory. We each respect one another's domain.”
  - “One human brings you out here? Surely such a thing is beneath your notice.”
  - “I do not know why I should apologize. The human died here, in my parlor. This is not your territory, but mine. Humans are plentiful enough for all of us. Why cause hostilities over such a thing?”
  - “Be careful when you threaten me. I am not one of those crawlerlings, so small I can hide in a man's skull. I am greater and older than that by many lives.”
  - “No more pleasantries, then?”



Once it comes down to violence, roll initiative as normal. If Mr. G acts before any werewolf gets a chance, he upends the desk with one hand, while his other arm splits into a pair of insectile limbs that open the metal trapdoor underneath the desk. He attempts to slide through the opening and fight the werewolves in his parlor proper, while any Jacks that might be in the room delay the pack. It's possible, however, that the pack may make this impossible, in which case the Azlu tears his stolen human skin like brittle paper and fights them.

**Obstacles/Penalties:** If the characters got into the Ladybird Room without the doorman using the warning knock to tell the other Azlu that werewolves were coming, Mr. G has not distributed the two silver knives in his keeping to a pair of Jacks, and they're still in his desk.

**Aids/Bonuses:** Using the desk as cover to fight the Jacks (+1), improvising one of the kerosene lamps as a weapon (+1)

**Details:** If a character has an opportunity to closely scrutinize Mr. G's skin (preferably without his noticing), or if she makes an exceptional success on a sight-based Perception test, she may gain the additional information:

*After a moment, you notice that the wrinkles criss-crossing Mr. G's skin seem rather to be miniscule scars, the epidermis sagging slightly to either side of the old mark.*

The "scars" are in fact the places that Mr. Gustavus' stolen skin has torn previously when Kusthuthun has torn its way free, then carefully restitched the hollow skin back together.

When pressed to abandon his human skin, Kusthuthun shreds it entirely, trusting in its ability to remake it (perhaps with a few fresh scraps of skin from his victims to replace the most damaged areas.

*The white cloth of the fat man's suit buckles and rips, and his pale skin comes apart like ancient paper. His right arm explodes outward into a massive crablike pincer, multiple insectlike legs tear their way free from his lower limbs, and his face utterly comes apart into a pulsing, wriggling mass of chelicerae.*

**Consequences:** If the meeting with Mr. G takes place in the back room, there are few social consequences to worry about. The insulation between this room and the main area muffles sound, and the humans outside (if they have been left in peace) will hear little enough to panic them. The consequences are largely physical – whether or not the characters are wounded or at a disadvantage when they pursue the Azlu down the trap door, or if they're able to stop him from fleeing entirely.





# SCENE: BEHIND THE TRAPDOOR

MENTAL – PHYSICAL .... SOCIAL –

**Overview:** This scene is triggered when the pack opens the trapdoor to Kusthuthun's den and enters, most likely in pursuit of Mr. G.

**Description:** The initial description comes when the trapdoor is opened.

The trapdoor comes open only reluctantly. Gummy strands stretch and snap along its edges. The air from beneath slowly seeps out, carrying with it a scent of faded, ancient decay. The space below is largely dark, with bolts of some ivory-colored material catching the dim yellow light.

The initial view of Kusthuthun's den is this:

*The floor beneath your feet is cold concrete, faintly moist and thick with the faded ancient scents of human corpses and bitter insect acid. The only light in the room comes from a pair of guttering candles that hiss and pop messily. Huge ropes of webbing criss-cross the dank space, leaving gaps that would require a person to duck, bend or leap through. Scraps of desiccated human skin hang here and there from the ropes like dead leaves.*

**Storyteller Goals:** The final fight with the Leatherworker should showcase the fury of **Werewolf**. The characters have the advantages of human intelligence and supernaturally potent animal savagery – so does their enemy. The den would be an ugly and terrible place to die, so the characters fight for all they're worth.

Kusthuthun will attempt to strike out of the shadows, potentially immobilizing or hindering one werewolf at a time, but it's in the pack's best interests to drag it to a clear section of room and outnumber the Azlu.

**Character Goals:** Survive the conflict with Kusthuthun, preferably by putting an end to him.

**Actions:** If the Azlu has led the pack into its den, it intends to fight them there. The end result is a combat scene, with the pack against the Azlu, and potentially against one or more Jacks to even the odds. Unless the characters have gone out of their way to suggest that they might be able to reach an arrangement with the Azlu, the fight is to the death, with no quarter asked or given: the Leatherworker believes (perhaps rightly) that the Uratha cannot be talked out of sparing its life, and its self-preservation instinct is drowned out by the tides of a million years of hate.

**Obstacles/Penalties:** The webbing that fills the Azlu's den inhibits the characters' movement. Characters suffer a -2 penalty to any dice pools that involve quick physical movement – attacking, running, tumbling and so on. Despite its bulk, Kusthuthun can move freely throughout its webs without being subject to any of the penalties.

**Aids/Bonuses:** The webs are considerably flammable. If exposed to open flame, the webs catch fire and burn away in the space of a turn. Anyone in a

thick patch of webbing will take one point of aggravated damage unless they succeed at a reflexive Dexterity roll. The webs are consumed after a turn, leaving nothing but warm ash; the fire will also die out unless it is given more flammable fuel.

**Details:** The room is roughly thirty by forty feet, with a twelve-foot ceiling; most of the open space is dark, and Kusthuthun has plenty of room to maneuver in the shadows to strike from an unexpected direction. The room has concrete walls, ceiling and floor, with no exits apart from the trapdoor. It is part of the place-that-isn't. Punching a hole through the wall in some way might disrupt the ability of the Ladybird Room to appear and disappear, grounding the place in the physical world permanently.

Kusthuthun sleeps in the northeast corner of the ceiling, in a large webbed cocoon. There is no furniture in the room, only the webbing and a few candles in the southeast and northwest corners. The candles are actually made of rendered human fat, another of the Azlu's personal craft projects. Although it's not an obvious detail, there are no webs within five feet of any candle (a potential hint as to the webs' flammability).

While fighting here, Kusthuthun acts like the old monstrosity it is. Its limbs scythe out from the darkness as it tries to catch a werewolf and scissor him in half in its oversized claw, or draw him in for a gruesome embrace punctuated with an injection from its greasy pedipalps. It occasionally gurgles something hideous in the First Tongue: *"Dogs of hate, I will make myself whole again with your flesh." "Your skins shall be my cloth, your talons my needles, your tendons my thread!" "Khhhhkkhhkk! You... wounded me? I will fill your blood with pain from moon to moon!"*

Once Kusthuthun has been reduced to 0 Health, it disincorporates.

*The monster's pallid bulk twists and slaps into the concrete floor. Its many limbs twitch feebly, drawing back and forth against the cold concrete with soft scraping noises. Its mouthparts explode in a final burst of motion, then stiffen and curl against its cephalothorax. Cracks run through the greasy chitin, then its carcass simply comes apart at the seams, a rush of dead gray spiders spilling from the openings. Its shell also begins to fall apart, and then there is nothing but a tremendous mass of dead arachnids poured across the damp floor.*

Any Jacks that joined in the fight with Kusthuthun that are still alive to watch the Leatherworker fall apart go into a fear frenzy and attempt to flee. They offer only mindless, incidental resistance to the pack, and can be easily chased down and torn apart (although they may make it into the club proper or even outdoors if the pack is slow to pursue).

**Consequences:** Victory here allows the characters a chance to tear their enemy apart. The pack may also choose to spare the Leatherworker's life. This act of mercy may win them a new ally for a time, but Kusthuthun will always be watching for a chance to betray them to destruction without any potential retribution. Also, unless the characters are careful to destroy all the spiders and find the single living spider that huddles in the pile, Kusthuthun may return at a later date – much diminished, but still alive.



PARLOR GAMES  
BEHIND THE TRAPDOOR

# AFTERMATH

Once the story comes to a close, it's time to provide some denouement. If you ran Parlor Games as a one-shot, you can end the session with a final scene appropriate to the path the story took – the pack walking out through the bloody mess of the main room, laying a packmate who died in the final conflict to rest with a Funeral Rite, or even a shot of the lone spider who survived their attack catching another spider and feasting on it. The mood should fit the story's outcome; if the pack lost half their members, it will be much more melancholy. Even so, consider ensuring that something about the last scene showcases one of the positive results of the story – a tribute to the bravery of the werewolf who died valiantly, or one of the pack catching a glimpse of one of the patrons a week later, going safely about her business. While the catharsis of tragedy is reason aplenty for many groups to roleplay, the players shouldn't feel as though they're being punished for taking part in the hunt. Go for a truly downbeat ending only if your players genuinely derive entertainment from their fictional characters' suffering (which isn't necessarily as masochistic as it might sound).

If you integrated Parlor Games into an ongoing chronicle, then the repercussions will last longer than a closing scene. Naturally, the players' actions determine all the most important consequences of the story. Mechanically, the characters are of course due some experience points, and some may have to make Harmony rolls. There are plenty more roleplaying considerations to come in future sessions.

- **Losses:** It's entirely possible that one or more of the pack has died. The story isn't brutally lethal, but Azlu are dangerous creatures, especially with their supernatural toxins and Kusthuthun's bone-scythes. Any Contacts, loved ones or other Storyteller characters associated with the fallen might ask questions about her fate.

- **Surviving Azlu:** Thanks to their Swarm Discorporation power, one or more of the Azlu might have survived, albeit in much-reduced power. They are sure to have a grudge against the pack, particularly if Kusthuthun survived. Of course, their reduced power makes a physical confrontation much less likely in the immediate future – evolving into another human-sized hybrid form takes time. They are also likely to have lost some degree of mental capacity, although they probably remember the faces of the werewolves that nearly killed them. Still, they're out there, and probably inclined to make trouble for the pack once they get another suitable human “vehicle.” Of course, if one or more Azlu escaped essentially intact, such as one of the Jacks fleeing rather than fighting, then the pack has a more immediately dangerous enemy on their hands.

- **The Human Cost:** Depending on how the players handled the obstacle of the Ladybird Room's human patrons, they may have made some new en-

emies, some new friends, or both. If they confronted Mr. G in the main room, either they have caused a serious possible breach of secrecy or they've killed so many people the local authorities have no choice but to investigate. Excessive “collateral damage” or surviving witnesses to a werewolf rampage. will likely get the pack in hot water with the other Uratha of the city, as they've endangered the law of *The Herd Must Not Know*.

- **Claiming the Ladybird Room:** If the characters decide to establish a claim to the Ladybird Room, how do they plan to enforce that claim? Do any of them decide to actually move into the room, given that one can only enter and leave on nights of the half moon? What purpose will they put it to – will they close down the gambling parlor and convert it into a safehouse, stockpile or larder, or will they keep the place running with the intention of making money and connections?

If the latter, the pack may have quite a long road ahead of them, depending on how they dealt with Kusthuthun. If there was open bloodshed in the Ladybird Room, it will take time and effort to get the right kind of patrons seeking out the casino again, to say nothing of discouraging unwanted attention from the police or certain savvy media sorts.

There are benefits to claiming the place-that-isn't, of course. The pack may with careful management be able to increase one or more members' Resources by a dot, within reason (from one dot to two dots is far more likely than going from four dots to five). They also will find themselves becoming more visible figures in the local nightlife (to say nothing of the underworld), which is a mixed blessing at its best.

Keeping the Ladybird Room will also be a strong potential source for future subplots or story hooks. Other supernatural creatures may come sniffing around, and not just things out of Shadow or the Hosts. One or more vampires might hear about the place's change of ownership and decide to put in their own competing bid. Mages are also likely to be drawn to investigate the supernatural room, particularly if the players' actions have meant that the local legend has just been shocked back into the local consciousness.

- **Rejecting the Ladybird Room:** If the pack decides not to bother with the Ladybird Room, something else probably will. It might be more Hosts, or a Ridden that is able to track down the gateway somehow. And as mentioned above, other supernaturals may well investigate this bit of local color. The characters may find themselves making a deal that allows a new tenant to use the room as long as he promises to behave (and maybe offers tribute), or they may simply have to drop by now and again to eject undesirable squatters. They might even try to find a way to seal it off or prevent it from appearing again – not an impossible task. Either way, the Ladybird Room can provide more subplots and story hooks for as long as your troupe finds it to be an interesting addition to the chronicle.

## SCENE: CATCHING THE SCENT

MENTAL ..  
PHYSICAL -  
SOCIAL -

### HINDRANCES

There are no real outside obstacles to this scene. Plenty of information is available to the characters, the burden is simply on them to look carefully for it.

### HELP

Certain details will be apparent only to those characters using the full suite of a werewolf's senses. If a character shifts form or uses a Gift to gain a more lupine sense of smell, she can gather the scent-related pieces of information listed below.

STs

Describe the discovery that the characters have made, and invite them to learn more.

PCs

Learn what they can from the discarded truck and human remains, gathering any clues to who or what might have done this.

## SCENE: DIALING THE NUMBER

MENTAL •  
PHYSICAL -  
SOCIAL ...

### HINDRANCES

The main obstacle to this scene is the initial lack of information. The characters don't know the full name of the person they're contacting, and can only guess at what role he played in this grotesque murder. An attempt to persuade Rosetti to divulge information over the phone or meet in person suffers a penalty of two dice if the character gives away his ignorance or openly denies being anyone that Rosetti thinks could be of assistance.

### HELP

Rosetti really wants to believe that the characters are people able to help him out. Any approach that involves convincing him that the pack can keep Mr. G from coming after him receives a bonus of two dice.

STs

Give the characters an opportunity to talk Rosetti into arranging a meeting.

PCs

Find out what they can about "Gregor R."

## SCENE: THE UNFORTUNATE MR. ROSETTI

MENTAL ..  
PHYSICAL ..  
SOCIAL ..

### HINDRANCES

**Winning Rosetti's Trust**  
Lack of a good cover story (-2)

**Saving Rosetti's Life**  
Supernatural venom (-1)  
Previous exposure to Azlu venom (+2)

### HELP

**Winning Rosetti's Trust**  
Acceptable cover story (+2)  
Promising to protect Rosetti (+2)

**Saving Rosetti's Life**  
Supernatural venom (-1)  
Previous exposure to Azlu venom (+2)

STs

Build the tension associated with the Ladybird Room, as well as give the players additional information to point them in the right direction.

PCs

Meet with Gregor and get what information they can out of him.

## SCENE: THE JACKS

MENTAL -  
PHYSICAL ...  
SOCIAL ..

### HINDRANCES

**Interrogation**  
Azlu stubborn hatred for the Uratha (-4, default)

**Striking a Deal**  
Azlu stubborn hatred for the Uratha (-4, default); the pack has killed more than one Jack (-2); character doesn't conduct the deal in fluent First Tongue (-1)

### HELP

**Interrogation**  
Violence (+1), threats made specifically against the Crawler's spider form rather than the host body (+2)

**Striking a Deal**  
Character makes a peace offering of food (+1), character offers the Jack the opportunity to devour Mr. G's corpse and shard (+2)

STs

This is a perfect opportunity to play up the experience of fighting like werewolves.

PCs

Survive against the Spider Hosts.  
A secondary goal is to wring more information out of them about their lair.



## SCENE: THE FRONT DOOR

MENTAL ..  
PHYSICAL ...  
SOCIAL ...

### HINDRANCES

The Jack on guard duty is not particularly clever, but it's stubbornly loyal to Mr. G and has its orders not to let anyone in without the proper card or Mr. G's explicit permission. Players receive a -2 penalty to any attempts to persuade it to let them in. It cannot be bribed with money, having little use for that, and it cannot be seduced, having no sexual drive (much less a human one).

### HELP

If the players have deduced that the playing card is a password and show an appropriate card (either that found on the body, or a card taken from one of the Jacks) to the doorman, they will be automatically admitted. The Jack on guard duty isn't savvy enough to detect that the characters are werewolves unless they do something obvious to give it away (such as showing up in Dalu form).

**STs** Tease the players just a bit by hinting at what's on the other side of the door.

**PCs** Get inside.

## SCENE: MEETING MR. GUSTAVUS

MENTAL ..  
PHYSICAL ...  
SOCIAL ...

### HINDRANCES

If the characters got into the Ladybird Room without the doorman using the warning knock to tell the other Azlu that werewolves were coming, Mr. G has not distributed the two silver knives in his keeping to a pair of Jacks, and they're still in his desk.

### HELP

Using the desk as cover to fight the Jacks (+1), improvising one of the kerosene lamps as a weapon (+1)

**STs** Build the tension even further before the final showdown between the pack and their Azlu prey.

**PCs** Identify the author of their problems to their satisfaction — then prevent him from causing more problems.

## SCENE: THE LADYBIRD ROOM

MENTAL ..  
PHYSICAL ...  
SOCIAL ..

### HINDRANCES

#### Socializing

Any Social penalties due to Primal Urge; acting overly suspicious (-1 to -3)

#### Gambling

The odds are never all that good. There is a flat -3 to -5 penalty to gambling, depending on the complexity of the game and the odds of winning. At the Ladybird Room, poker is the game of choice (five-card stud and Texas Hold 'Em are the most popular variants), at a -4 penalty.

### HELP

#### Socializing

Finding something in common with a potential source of information (+1); spending money on drinks or deliberately losing a few hands (+1)

#### Gambling

Bonuses for cheating, skilled bluffing or a good eye for reading an opponent. Cheating is Wits + Larceny vs. Intelligence + Composure; Bluffing is Manipulation + Subterfuge vs. Intelligence + Empathy; and reading an opponent is Intelligence + Empathy vs. Manipulation + Subterfuge. Success grants a +2 bonus to the roll; failure imposes a -1 penalty.

**STs** Give the players a chance to mix socialization (positive or negative) with the investigation.

**PCs** The pack's obvious goal is to identify the supernatural creature that runs the Ladybird Room.

## SCENE: BEHIND THE TRAPDOOR

MENTAL -  
PHYSICAL ...  
SOCIAL -

### HINDRANCES

The webbing that fills the Azlu's den inhibits the characters' movement. Characters suffer a -2 penalty to any dice pools that involve quick physical movement — attacking, running, tumbling and so on. Despite its bulk, Kusthuthun can move freely throughout its webs without being subject to any of the penalties.

### HELP

The webs are considerably flammable. If exposed to open flame, the webs catch fire and burn away in the space of a turn. Anyone in a thick patch of webbing will take one point of aggravated damage unless they succeed at a reflexive Dexterity roll. The webs are consumed after a turn, leaving nothing but warm ash; the fire will also die out unless it is given more flammable fuel.

**STs** The final fight with the Leatherworker should showcase the fury of **Werewolf**.

**PCs** Survive the conflict with Kusthuthun, preferably by putting an end to him.