

PREDATORS™

the World of Darkness®



WEREWOLF

THE FORSAKEN™

PREDATORS™

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WORLD OF DARKNESS® CREATED BY MARK REIN-HAGEN



ONE VENGEANCE

The girl was crying blood.

She wept silently, scarlet tears running red tracks down her pale cheeks, and she made no sound above her whispery breathing. A moment's trembling was followed by more of the stinging pain she had felt earlier. She was cutting herself again, and again her guardians took note of the injuries. They were talking now, but the girl knew they were not speaking to her, only about her... and the thing that was inside her.

The stinging pain felt good. It dulled the agony that flowed through her body with every beat of her heart.

"Sweet Heaven, she's doing it again. I thought you took the knife away from her."

"I did. She's using her fingernails this time."

Stronger hands, the hands of her guardians, held the girl by her wrists. The stinging lessened, but the agony inside her blood returned with vicious force. Her guardians did not understand the delicate balancing of her pain.

"Look, she's... made... more of those runes. Not just the ones on her cheeks but here, too, on her forearm."

The girl knew her female guardian was close to tears again. In some strange way, she felt pleased by this. With that realization, something inside her stirred and writhed through her mind like a serpent. It, too, was pleased at the female guardian's grief. It was pleased with everything — saturated and content with the girl's pain as well as the emotional hurt of her guardians.

"What do these markings mean?" The female guardian spoke then, running her fingertip along the symbols the girl had carved into her own skin. They had been precise and neat at first, when she had used the kitchen knife to score the soft surface of her flesh. When her guardians had taken the knife out of her grasping hands, her fingernails left ragged scratches rather than precise cuts.

The male guardian (perhaps he had been her father?) also came to look at the fresh markings.

"I don't know what the newest ones mean. I know the one on her cheek means 'sacrifice' and this one on her neck means 'eternity.' I have no idea about the others." He took a deep breath. "I think they're magical in some way."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because it hurts my eyes just looking at them."

The girl knew that it was because the runes in her flesh were holy — sacred signs that meant something to the serpent-thing inside her. Both the signs themselves and her pain were holy to the thing inside her head.

"I can't take any more of this." The female guardian said in sudden anger. "I'm going to gather the pack."

"They're just as new to all this as we are. I told you, none of us know how to... exorcise... whatever it is."

"Someone will. Someone in one of the experienced packs outside the city. They'll know what to do."

"We are *not* leaving the city. It's hard enough to fight whatever horrors are running around our estate at any given time. We are not leaving the protectorate just to get killed by our own kind when they decide we're not worth helping."

The female guardian stood anyway, and walked to the door of the small room. The girl watched her stand in the doorway, and then felt the unwanted touch of the male guardian's hand on her own.

"I'm staying here, honey. I'll keep you safe."

The female guardian spoke through tears. "You stay here and watch over her. I'm going to call the others, and we'll track the pack that run outside the city. The ones we met two months ago. They had a pretty old Ithaeur, and he's the best chance we have to save her. She's your daughter, and as good as mine. We have to try."

Daughter. The word sounded alien to the girl's ears. The serpent-thing inside her head smiled at the thought of one of the guardians leaving, and made the girl wave her hand in farewell. The spirit spoke through the girl's lips in the hissing voice of a snake-like demon.

"Bye, Mommy."

•••

The werewolf ran. For a couple of heartbeats, white sneakers pounded **onto** the dry earth as she sprinted away from the screams. It was one of her packmates screaming — screaming her name. For a moment, the wrenching cry hung in the still air before sinking into uneasy silence. Then, once again, the other screams began. It was her whole pack dying back there. Still the werewolf ran.

The sneakers became clawed paws, two feet became four and the wolf ran as though her heart would burst. Another scream shredded the night air, echoing with alien resonance through the metal and concrete labyrinth of the industrial estate. The screamer's identity was lost in the pain-wracked cry.

She had not found the other pack. She had found nothing but danger and death in the spirit wilds surrounding the city. Even here in the Shadow reflection of the industrial complex, there were faded, dying tree-spirits

that moved like crooked old men and reached for her. Any comparisons to lecherous elders were instantly banished as they lashed out with their razor sharp branch-claws. She leapt aside and ran on. There was no thought of destination, no cohesive plan of escape. There was only the bitter, chilling sense that what was killing her pack would soon be coming after her. She howled as she ran, though her hammering heart and heaving lungs broke the wolf-cry as it left her throat. It was less a call for help and more of a cub's pining for its mother.

Something unseen, with the force of a horse kick, thundered into her ribs. Winded and unbalanced, the she-wolf lost her stride, crashing to the ground. As she struggled to raise herself on four trembling legs, she caught the coppery scent of her own blood. Pain bloomed like a living thing in her side, spreading out into her body like a rapid cancer. She whined piteously as she turned her head to see the source of her pain: an arrow, silver-tipped by the acidic feel of it, stuck out from her ribs at a crazy angle. Who could be so mad...? As she took hesitant steps forward, her paws shivered at the intensity of the pain. The silver tip scraped maddeningly against the bones of her ribs. Even through the agony, the she-wolf could think of nothing more than fleeing the scene where she'd left her packmates to die.

She scented the approach of others, but lacked the strength to run.

"And who are you, little wolf? Going somewhere in a hurry, whoever you are. Let's stop a while and talk about a small concept known as territory."

The human words rang eerily in her wolf-mind, but she understood their meaning. She yelped as the arrow was unceremoniously yanked out of her body. Immediately the pain lessened, though it remained a constant, pulsing ache. With great effort, she shifted to her natural form, and lay on the ground, panting through clenched teeth. She looked through teary eyes at the four figures that stood around her in a half-circle. One of them spoke.

"Manners are such a simple thing to remember, yet so often they go unused." He stepped closer, looking down at the woman on the ground. The speaker had lightly tanned skin and black dreadlocks that hung to his chin. He wore faded jeans and a nondescript white T-shirt, but in his hands he carried a long, slender klaive bow.

"My dear," his sarcasm caustic, "This is the part of the conversation where you introduce yourself. And after the pleasantries are behind us, you can explain why the hell you are **on** our hunting ground."

Standing unsteadily, she held a hand to her bleeding side, covering the hot blood flow with her palm. She spoke her pack name, as formally as she could manage through teeth gritted so savagely together.

"I've been looking for you." She said in a small voice. "My pack and I, we've been looking for you for hours. We... I... need your help."

The four figures, two men, a woman and a teenage boy she now realized, looked at her dispassionately.

"You've found us." The woman said with a raised eyebrow.

"What did you wanna find us for? What help d'you need?" The teenager's curiosity was overcoming the derision written all over his face.

"My stepdaughter, there's some kind of spirit inside her, and..."

The dreadlocked man, clearly the pack alpha, waved a hand sharply. "Forget that right now. Where's your pack?"

The injured woman looked back the way she had fled, casting her eyes over the spiritual reflection of what had once been a forest, and was now an abandoned industrial complex. There must have been a great wealth of emotion invested in such a place for it to have manifested in the Shadow.

The pack turned their heads as one and followed her gaze. The dreadlocked leader blinked once and said, very quietly, "Oh. Fuck."

• • •

The pack moved slowly past the ghostly echo of a factory. The injured woman and the teenager had shifted into Dalu form. The man and the woman of the pack loped along silently in the wolf form, stopping every few moments to **sniff** at the ground or the air. Only the dreadlocked leader remained in his human shape, keenly watching his surroundings and clutching his klaive bow in his fists. A steel-tipped arrow was nocked, ready to be drawn and fired at the first sign of danger. The factories and warehouses were deathly quiet, beyond the malicious whisperings of a few fading nature-spirits that somehow clung to life in such a place.

"How much further?" the pack alpha whispered to the werewolf that stood next to him. He noticed with a twinge of guilt that the arrow wound in her side still trickled dark blood. In answer, the huge figure merely pointed a clawed finger straight ahead. The leader raised his klaive bow, but did not pull the string. The injured werewolf stepped ahead of the others. Her worry for her packmates overrode most of the fear she had felt up to this point.

There was evidence of struggle outside the cavernous warehouse. Red splotches marked where the blood of her packmates had fallen. Several larger pools of blood, still wet but no longer warm, told tales of where her brothers and sisters had died. While the area was devoid of any corpses, there were several messy trails of smeared blood leading across the tarmac and into the large, dark warehouse ahead.

The bodies had been dragged inside.

"How many were in your pack?" The leader's sarcasm was gone now. Even in human form his Rage beat down his fear, and his face looked set in stone.

The word came awkwardly to the woman's throat, and sounded like distant thunder. "Five."

The pack looked at the five trails of smeared blood that led into the darkness.

• • •

"It's okay, honey. She'll be back soon."

The girl ignored the repeated mutterings of the male guardian. Runes of pain and suffering ached like an acid alphabet on her skin. It did not feel good by any means, but she felt complete, covered in holy sigils of agony. The serpent in her brain was everywhere inside her now. Her fingertips were raw and blackened, and her fingernails had broken off. Her arms and legs throbbed with hot pain from all the wracking spasms. She could feel the serpent swimming through her heart and making it hurt with each pounding beat.

"She'll be back real soon, honey. Don't worry. Not much longer now."

"The mother will be too late." The serpent-thing said with the girl's lips. "This host is pregnant with pain now. I grow satiated on its suffering. Soon it will crack into pieces and break like a used shell."

The male guardian stood and stared at the girl. A thousand emotions flashed across his face, yet none took hold. His own hands began to shake.

"Get out of her." It was almost a threat.

"Soon I shall do as you say. Perhaps then I shall bond with you, yes?" The girl choked and laughed, sounding like she was dying of lung cancer.

"Get out of her. Please." It was not even close to a threat. It was simple begging.

"Soon."

"Get out of her!"

The girl choke-laughed again and didn't stop for some time.

• • •

The warehouse was a scene from Hell.

Blood-red cobwebs, each strand as thick as an index finger, layered the walls and floor, and ran in thick arcs across from wall to wall.

There was little exposed floor or wall space at all, so dense were the scarlet webs that decorated the huge room in seemingly haphazard and random patterns. A dozen cocoons dotted the web structure at irregular intervals. Each was the size and shape of a person. One was on the ground, a body bag made of red cobwebs, while the others were stuck to the walls at various heights.

"That one there. Look, it's not finished."

The pack jerked at their alpha's sudden words.

"Sorry." Even in the presence of this alien architecture, he half-smiled as he pointed. "That one there."

All eyes turned to see. One of the cocoons against the wall was incomplete, still revealing the head and left arm of the man inside. He was obviously dead, head rolled back on his neck, eyes staring up at the cobwebbed ceiling.

The alpha used his free hand to run his fingertips through his dreadlocks.

"Was he one of your pack?" he asked hesitantly.

The injured Uratha trembled a moment, before throwing her wolf-head back in a howl of devastating volume. The cry echoed around the warehouse with deafening force, causing the other wolves to flinch away and the alpha of the pack to slam his hands over his ears.

• • •

"Get out of her!"

The male guardian was losing the inner struggle against his fury, and began to change. He grew tall and hairy, massive with muscle. Claws glinted in the reflected moonlight that came through the window. The girl had never liked seeing her adoptive parents shift, but her eyes were caked with drying blood and she could barely see past her own nose. She hadn't blinked in over five minutes. She couldn't anymore.



The girl was beyond movement now. Agony ran through her body instead of blood, and the scar-runes split her flesh whether she raked at her skin or not. Her life, such as it might be, was now measured in minutes. The girl shivered, her face set in a serpentine grin as she fell into another set of violent convulsions.

The towering werewolf roared at everything and nothing, shaking the lights and windows with the monstrous howl. As the colossal roar died down, the wolf-man was breathing in deep, heavy grunts. He looked down, near-blinded by Rage, at the form of his daughter.

She was dead.

He roared again as he pushed himself into the second world, and the barrier between the two realms trembled with a mourning father's fury.

• • •

The spider-human hybrid was the size of a horse. With a chattering, whispering hiss, it launched from the dark ceiling and landed squarely on one of the Gauru werewolves below. Eight arachnid legs, each as thick as a man's thigh, clacked and clicked on the stone floor as the creature wrapped four muscled human arms around the prone werewolf.

Howls and screams broke out as the pack reacted. The Gauru, pinned by the incredible weight of the creature, yelped like a puppy as the gigantic black-skinned monster bit down hard. Greasy, moving mandibles caressed the werewolf's shoulders and neck as the massive fangs sank into meaty flesh.

An arrow lashed through the chill air and broke against its smooth chitin skin. One of the two wolves was shapeshifting up into the war form. The other had fled in terror.

The Azlu took a second to swallow the mouthful of bloody flesh it had ripped from the now-poisoned werewolf, and launched into the air again. Above the milling, frightened wolf-changers, it watched from its web for a heartbeat, before dropping on its next prey.

The dreadlocked alpha watched as the huge creature smashed down **onto** another of his pack, pinning the werewolf under the immense weight. The beast's first victim, with a massive bite taken out of his back, had shifted into his human form and was writhing in spasms. Drool and froth foamed from his clenched teeth. The alpha sent another arrow at the spider-thing, cursing as this one also broke against the creature's skin.

The multi-limbed horror reared like a horse, raising two of its thick, segmented legs. As the alpha drew another arrow and nocked it, he realized in horror that the two spider forelegs were bleached-bone, jagged blades. These two sword-limbs hammered down into the prone werewolf, drilling savagely into his body and moving like saws through the yielding flesh. The werewolf's scream echoed around the warehouse like the music of Hell itself.

The alpha let fly with his final arrow. This one flew true, taking the creature in the largest of its eight blue

eyes. Screaming like a wounded bird of prey, the arachnid monster scuttled back, away from what remained of the pack. The alpha felt his blood boiling as he changed into the war form. At his side, the woman he'd shot earlier was the only other survivor of the spider-thing's assault. At their feet, two of the dreadlocked man's pack lay still, mutilated and savaged in death.

Instinct took hold, and the two werewolves charged as one. They roared and struck at the creature, slashing out with bared claws and snapping with powerful jaws. Brittle chitin skin, like that of an insect, broke and cracked under the furious onslaught. Thick, yellow blood gushed up, turning the air thick with the smell of cancerous flesh.

The creature roared a final time; the sound emerging from its throat was a woman's scream. The werewolves still struck out at the monster, lost in fury.

Rather than striking hard, chitin-clad flesh, the alpha found himself clutching two handfuls of tiny black spiders. They swarmed over his arms and chest, biting, biting, biting. The female werewolf had gone to bite the dying creature, and was choking on a mouth and throat-full of the small, black arachnids.

Of the massive spider-thing there was no sign, but around the two werewolves, thousands of tiny spiders swarmed closer.

• • •

The enraged werewolf tore into the Shadow reflection of his daughter's bedroom.

There, slowly rising from the bed, was the image of the pain-spirit that had murdered her. It resembled a child's skeleton with snakes for internal organs and the slitted eyes of a cat.

It laughed, even in the presence of the werewolf that towered above it.

"How does it feel, wolf-man? How does my revenge feel?" It had the voice of a hundred hissing snakes. "You come to the Shadow and sweep it clear of whatever displeases you. You slay and destroy whatever life you decide does not suit your tastes. You hunt the spirits of pain and suffering, killing them because they do not bow to you."

"No talk." The werewolf stepped closer, and the room pulsed with his insane anger. "You die now."

"Indeed? We shall attend to that presently." The little skeleton-thing nodded. "But is the lesson learned, wolf-blood? How does it feel to be hunted and tortured, simply because you are disliked by those who share your world?"

The werewolf moved like lightning, lashing out with his clawed hand. The spirit squealed as it was smashed against the wall.

The werewolf came closer again, growling in the First Tongue.

"Tonight. You sleep. In Hell."

The spirit grinned.

"Your pain pleases me, shapechanger. Let us get this over with so I can enjoy it all the more."

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INTRODUCTION

"THE MOST MERCIFUL THING IN THE WORLD, I THINK, IS THE INABILITY OF THE HUMAN MIND TO CORRELATE ALL ITS CONTENTS. WE LIVE ON A PLACED ISLAND OF IGNORANCE IN THE MIDST OF BLACK SEAS OF INFINITY, AND IT WAS NOT MEANT THAT WE SHOULD VOYAGE FAR."

— H.P. LOVECRAFT, *THE CALL OF CTANULAU*

The werewolves have much to fear.

They frequently war with each other; the Forsaken battling against the Pure, fighting viciously over causes and beliefs that are held tight with the convictions of millennia. In the midst of this unstable balance, the Bane Howlers carve their wretched influence. And then, there are the threats born of the flesh and the Shadow to deal with: dangers that are often poorly understood and awe-inspiring in their horror and power.

While any werewolf can call upon his fury and bitterness at the Fall and concentrate it into killing Rage, there are creatures out in the physical world and the Shadow Realm that mere claws and anger cannot always conquer. There are foes that Gifts and spirit magic may fail against. There are monsters that stalk the dark places of both worlds, and spectral enemies that steal the lives of men and women, perverting them into twisted mockeries of themselves.

When the werewolves look outward, out past their own conflicts, out past the threatening presence of the Pure Tribes, out past the sanctuary of their packs, their caerns and their uneasy moots and alliances... then the other enemies of the Uratha are revealed. Some of these creatures cling to the shadows of distant dens in Shadow. Some walk the streets of the world's cities wearing human skin like stolen clothing.

If the Uratha run the boundaries of their protectorates in honor of Father Wolf, then they are going to come up against enemies infinitely more fearsome than wandering sorcerers or hungry vampires. Out in the spirit Wilds, negotiation with the local spirits can break down into butchery and slaughter over a single misunderstanding. On city streets and in the wilderness between such settlements, the werewolves must deal with the sinister presence of the Beshilu and the Azlu: two spirit-born races that also lay claim to supernatural heritages and the territorial rights of rival predators. The Spider Hosts and Rat Hosts, known collectively as the *shartha*, bear no love for their wolf-blooded enemies and hold ancient grudges of their own.

Predators is a book designed with these themes and images in mind. It is the primary antagonist sourcebook for **Werewolf: The Forsaken** and handles the most significant inhuman enemies of the Uratha, while assisting Storytellers in coming up with ways to present these antagonists in their own chronicles.

"WE'RE BEING HUNTED..."

What is it to really be *hunted* by another creature? The Uratha, as exemplary predators and gifted warriors, are secure in their skills and hunting ability. They are a race bred for the hunt, and their wolf-hearts exalt in the success and harmony of the kill just as their human-minds rejoice in predator's pride. As such, the werewolves are masters of playing the hunter, stalking prey, and moving in for the kill with fangs and fury and claws.

But what of those creatures out there that have skills and powers of their own: abilities and talents that allow them to turn the tide on the werewolves and hunt the hunters? Anything that can stalk one of the Uratha and be confident enough to close in for the kill has to be fairly sinister in its own right, purely by virtue of the prey it has chosen. And what if these creatures are content to hunt an entire pack of Uratha? What malevolent creatures exist in the werewolves' territories, hidden and waiting to be discovered like the foul insect life under a rock, or the single, corrupted fruit that slowly sours the rest of the batch? The children of Luna and Father Wolf have a right to their pride and to a predator's sense of superiority.

But so do the things that hate them.

CONFLICT

Between enemies, sooner or later it always comes down to conflict. The Uratha are savage protectors, atoning for the sin of their ancient patricide. The one thing they are *never* short of is enemies.

Conflict is important to werewolves, but not because they are mindless killers and revel in unnecessary bloodshed. The Forsaken believe they have taken a grave and noble responsibility upon their shoulders, and fighting their enemies with clawed fury is often the best way to fulfil their promise to

cleans the Shadow Realm and protect the physical world. They walk in their murdered father's footsteps, healing the ravaged Shadow and guarding their territories with unrivalled ferocity. The safety of those they love is often directly dependent on just how well they go about the millennia-old promise to atone for their actions in the Fall. The desire to protect and provide for those we love is a powerful emotion and easily understood by most people. When that protection and safety can only be bought with anger and blood, then it becomes all the more precious.

The creatures and entities presented in this book threaten that hard-fought safety. The spirits within the Shadow, humble and mighty alike, must be placated and honored if they are beneficial — and removed or destroyed if they stand in the way of a secure protectorate. The Spirit-Ridden, humans plagued and possessed by spirits, can rend the sanctity of werewolf territory apart by their very presence as they irrationally spread their influence, feed their alien powers and further their unknown agendas. The Beshilu, crazed and chaotic, undermine the workings of everyone and everything they touch. They rip holes in the Gauntlet, threatening to bring the sickened Shadow into the realm of flesh, causing a flood of spiritual contagion. The Azlu, coldly vindictive, prowl both sides of the Gauntlet and strengthen the barrier between the worlds, making it difficult for the werewolves to even reach into the spirit world. When the Azlu call off this task, they take to the darkness of the human cities, hunting the Uratha for revenge and the Essence in their very blood.

Conflict threatens every aspect of a werewolf's life, and very, very little of such violence is trivial in nature. Some Uratha may enjoy conflict; there is much to be said for the purity of falling into a killing Rage and ripping apart your blood enemies with your own claws. But any enjoyment the Uratha may feel is secondary to the overriding truth behind the conflict in a werewolf's life. Easy or challenging, ferocious or calculated, bloody or clean — the conflict is often necessary. The Uratha have the duty of a murdered father to uphold and the lives of their loved ones to preserve.

That said, the antagonists presented herein do not always need to be confronted with righteous anger and a lethal outlook. Conflict can mean more than just physical violence, and there are many ways to make an opponent bend to your will. Negotiation and compromise are sometimes options, even between sworn foes. The chapters take each antagonist in turn and present Storytellers with ways in which they can use these creatures in their games, with the possibilities running the gamut from outright onslaught to sincere negotiation.

COMBAT

Combat, perhaps the most obvious and immediate form of conflict, definitely has its place in **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, for the reasons already mentioned and many others. There will always be those werewolves who revel in their killing power, just as there will be those who regret the murders they have committed over the course of their lives. Combat itself should not be a plain, repeated process of rolling dice and clocking up Health levels of damage against the enemy. Indeed, it is a great disservice to the ferocity, the passion, and the sheer dynamics of the way werewolves fight to treat it so blandly.

When the Uratha sharpen their claws and cry out the howls of the hunt, they do so for very real reasons. Danger is near. Death is approaching.

If the creatures out in the darkness cry back with answering roars, then that is all the more reason to treat the combat with added flair and tension. The creatures presented in **Predators** are not a standard, dollar-a-dozen list of enemies that the Uratha blithely deal with. When they meet these sinister threats, the fighting should be handled with as much visceral, savage pathos as possible.

THE INTENT OF THIS BOOK

Predators is not designed to serve as a comprehensive catalogue of “bad guys.” In short, it is not a Beasts Bestiary or similar listing of antagonists to throw at the players in alphabetical order when they reach a certain degree of killing competence.

Instead, this book deals with an easily misunderstood aspect of the Uratha lifestyle: the near-constant threat of violence and warfare that looms over their lives. While this is an antagonists book, it is designed with the idea in mind that the antagonists within are opposed to the werewolves for perfectly valid reasons of their own. The Uratha may know these reasons and return the sentiment with nothing but hatred. In other cases, the werewolves may not understand why the creatures hold such an enmity, and see only that the existence of such animosity threatens the stability of their domains. The theme of werewolf conflict is to overcome the challenges presented, no matter the cost.

BUT I WANT TO PLAY A ...

There are certain creatures and races in this sourcebook that could seem applicable as player characters. Perhaps their motivations are easy to sympathise with, and they have interesting powers and abilities. Perhaps your group would like the challenge brought on by playing an all-Ridden

game, for example, or taking the roles of a small gathering of Azlu, fighting against the dominance and ruthlessness of the local Uratha.

While the authors are not going to arrive at anybody's house and excommunicate a group for doing this, it should be noted that the intent of **Predators** is to present chronicles of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** with credible, sinister and interesting antagonists. Hence, there are certain sections of this book that are unsuitable for detailed character creation and not balanced carefully enough for the protagonists' roles, but perfectly complete for in-depth Storyteller use.

While an all-Ridden chronicle could have the makings of a great game, the limits of word count and the overall intent of this sourcebook run contrary to presenting the information in that manner. If you're up to filling in the blanks, go right on ahead; just be aware that some tweaks are inevitable when turning antagonists into protagonists.



CHAPTER BREAKDOWN

Chapter One: Denizens of the Shadow reveals many of the spirits that call the darkest reaches of the Shadow Realm home. Of all the creatures presented within this sourcebook, many of these ephemeral beings are paradoxically the most open to potential negotiation, and the most alien and fearsome enemies the Uratha may face in battle. Some might serve as potential allies, bound into service as totems or *engum*; others may prove dire rivals for control of the Shadow.

Chapter Two: The Spirit-Ridden explains the sybaritic relationship that is the bonded existence of the human and spirit pairings known as the Spirit-Ridden. Possessed by unearthly spirits, these altered men, women and children can struggle to deal with their loss of control, or embrace their spiritual dominator and surrender to its will. New tools for building a greater variety of Ridden antagonists are provided, as are a number of sample Ridden for out-of-the-box use.

Chapter Three: Blood & Spirit: The Hosts details the presence of the Azlu and Beshilu in Uratha territories. The chaotic, unpredictable tactics of the Rat Hosts seem born entirely to plague the lives of their werewolves, while the sinister, malicious Spider Hosts wait in the darkness, feeding and growing stronger as human-spider hybrids, while weaving the Gauntlet ever thicker. This chapter also reveals the three scarcer but no less sinister *shartha*: the Srizaku, Razilu and Halaku.

Chapter Four: Horrors of an Ancient Age presents some of the most mysterious creatures of the World of Darkness. Unnatural blasphemies that never should have been, these entities are not spirit, *shartha* or Ridden, but something else entirely. Those that still exist are incredibly rare but significantly powerful echoes of an ancient, lost age.



WHAT ABOUT THE PURE?

The Pure Tribes aren't in this book, no. A treatment of the Pure is beyond the scope of this book. The antagonists presented here are individuals that are part of no greater society — spirits don't keep a code of laws, Hosts don't tell one another stories handed down through the generations, and the Ridden don't maintain a system of government. To do the Pure Tribes and their hidden society justice, they need an entire book of their own. And rather than devote a chapter's worth of space to material that would be redundant with a Pure Tribes sourcebook, **Predators** focuses on material that won't become redundant with other releases.

However, a book about the antagonists plaguing the Forsaken wouldn't be complete without at least a little advice on the tribes who rejected Mother Luna's blessing. To that extent, here are a few tips on how to get the most out of your Pure Tribes antagonists without revealing the full scope of their culture.

- The Pure are to the Forsaken as movie werewolves are to humans. In a way, they are far closer to the cinematic werewolf — they are implacable hunters who treat the protagonists as prey animals. Just as werewolves represent, in part, the terror of a natural world that hates and attempts to devour humanity, the Pure represent the hatred that the Shadow's "natural order" holds toward the Forsaken. Though each Pure werewolf is an individual, and has a personality other than "pure evil," they are still the wolves that hunt in the night — not rivals, but predators.

- The Pure break their young. The culture of hate that feeds the Pure Tribes could not be sustained in such numbers if the Pure let their new recruits view all sides of the story equally. The initiation rites of the Pure are punishing ordeals meant to break the will of the young, only to be rebuilt according to totem and pack. To an extent, each Pure werewolf has been forged into a soldier for the party line through a ritual of abuse and spiritual intercession. The purpose of this initiation is not simply to engender hate for the Forsaken, it's to strip the recruit of any last "illusions" of humanity so that he can better accept the elders' teachings of what he really is.

In the process, the recruit also learns the story of patricide and paradise lost — the original sin that ruined a perfect world, and how that world will never return so long as the sinners still live in it. When the three great wolf-totems of the Pure affirm this dogma, it is all too easy for the battered and weary initiate to believe.

- The Pure both gain and lose from their spirit pacts. A Pure Tribes pack is on better terms with the spirit world than the Forsaken, due to their spirit pacts of allegiance. The Pure's pack totems are more powerful and primal, their fetishes are often more brutal and they have more spirits bound into their service. Though they have low Harmony as the Forsaken

understand it, the Pure Tribes' spirit pacts still allow them to use rites and fetishes effectively. However, they are also subject to more potent bans, and their rejection of Luna has cut off one avenue of power to them. The Pure's utter refusal to use silver almost certainly comes from one of these two limitations. Certainly they have no moral qualms against murdering one of the Forsaken as a society — something else must keep them from using such a potent weapon against their hated brethren.





CHAPTER 1

DENIZENS OF THE SHADOW

The room was thick with sickly sweet smoke that burned her eyes and nose until her whole face was leaking. She bowed her head, covertly rubbing away the tears and mucus with her sleeve under the guise of a reverent gesture.

Across the room, Elias caught her eye as he slipped into place at the back of the crowd. He pulled the rough-spun fabric of the cowled robe further down to shadow the bestial features of his Dalu form. Fortunately, the rest of the room hadn't noticed. They'd noticed nothing but the faintly glowing column of blue-white smoke that rose from the copper brazier on the table at the center of the room. Every eye in the room was on the winding mist — every eye but those belonging to her pack.

So far, this had been easy. Too easy. Dana didn't like it when things appeared to be too straightforward. It inevitably meant they were in for an unpleasant surprise.

Near the center, a man stepped forward, and the room fell completely silent. Beneath his hood, the priest's face was a roadmap of deep-set wrinkles, and, when he spoke, shadows crept across them like an army of spiders.

"The time is upon us!" As if conjured by his exclamation, the red coals within the brazier began to glow more brightly. "Tonight, our devotion is repaid! Tonight, He joins us!" As the priest's words rose, so did the light from the fire, until it was almost blinding.

Dana tensed, grateful that the long sleeves of the acolyte robes they'd taken cover in went a long way toward covering her pack's Dalu musculature. Elias would have preferred to just force their way in and do what needed to be done, but she'd pointed out that intercepting a few of the followers on their way to the meeting would provide them with not only disguises but also information. They'd discovered the right lies to tell to gain entrance to the building, and more than they'd expected about the spirit these idiots were worshipping.

"I guess their oracle didn't warn them about us," she thought to herself, flexing her fingers in anticipation.

As if pushed by an otherwise unfelt breeze, the smoke rising from the table began to curl around itself, gathering into thick bands that grew more and more solid. Within seconds, the ephemeral smoke had coalesced into a hooded figure with a bowed head. The shape appeared to stand in the glowing brazier, still semi-translucent, but otherwise unmistakable to any of the acolytes in the room.

"He is here!" For a moment, Dana couldn't tell whether the priest was triumphant or terrified. Then, as the summoned spirit shook off its cowled cloak, all doubt fell away.

Bare-skulled, the lower half of the spirit-creature's face was a maw filled with row upon row of pointed fangs that gleamed like a thousand shards of glass. Its skin had been ripped away, revealing an overly muscled parody of human form wrapped in what appeared to be a long cloak of fleshy feathers. The spirit stretched, and the room was filled with the sound of meat ripping and the stench of blood as it unfurled the wings that had been wrapped around it, revealing a thousand eyes that looked out in every direction along the breadth of its macabre wingspan.

In front of Dana, a young man dropped to his knees, clutching his chest. The shaking acolyte tore open his robe, revealing a glaring eye like those on the oracle's wings staring balefully forward from the center of his chest.

"This is why we are here," Dana thought as the oracle-spirit grabbed the priest, drawing him near. It thrust a pair of fingerlike tentacles into the startled man's eyes, and his body began to convulse. In front of her, the robed acolyte fainted, his body hitting the floor at the same time the priest's did.

As one, the pack leapt forward.

COME, YOU SPIRITS THAT TEND ON MORTAL THOUGHTS, UNSEX ME HERE, AND FILL ME FROM THE CROWN TO THE TOE TOP-FULL OF DEAREST CRUELTY!

— LADY MACBETH, *MACBETH*, ACT I, SCENE V

STORYTELLING SPIRITS

DARK ANIMISM

Almost all living organisms, plant or animal, have the potential to cast a spirit reflection in the Shadow Realm. This spirit represents the essence of the thing itself and mirrors, in the spirit world, the nature of the object or creature in the material world. To say that something has an awakened spirit means that in a sense, the object exists in both worlds at once. A potential spiritual version of every living thing can be present in the Shadow, even if it is represented by only a tiny unawakened mote — that is, unless it's devoured by another spirit. The exception to this rule is humanity and their supernatural cousins. No sentient humanoid manifests a spiritual representation in the spirit world while living, although a humanoid may appear as a ghost in the physical world after death. Human “spirits” (or souls) simply do not manifest in the Shadow unless the individual finds a way to travel there.

As well, objects, locations, elements and even ideas can manifest a spiritual resonance in the Shadow. Some, like the myriad variations of the spiritual representation of air or the concept of darkness, are indubitably timeless. Others, like the spirit of plastic or of the Statue of Liberty, are fairly new additions to the Shadow.

If it were a perfect world, the Shadow would be a place of unsurpassed beauty, wonder and nobility. But the world is imperfect. Beauty is still present in the Shadow Realm, but wonder and nobility are skewed by the obsessive self-interest of spirits largely incapable of considering anything but their own drives. It is a dark reflection of a shadowed world, still breathtaking in its own way — but the magnificence of what could have been is lost forever.

THE NATURE OF THINGS

Very weak spirits have little to no consciousness or self-awareness. Tiny, mindless motes, these spirits are as small and prolific as insects in the material world, and usually solicit about as much attention as a swarm of mosquitoes or flies might. As motes grow in power through the consumption of other spirits or the acquisition of Essence, they slowly edge closer

to sentience. Once a spirit reaches the power level of a Lesser Gaffling, it becomes aware of itself — it “thinks.”

But how does a spirit think? And what limits do its thought processes (or instinctive feelings) have? All in all, spirits have fewer options than other intelligent creatures. Spirits are actions. They are what they do — and vice versa. A deer-spirit forages, runs from predators and manifests all the other qualities of deer. Its thoughts and words remain within the parameters of the creature it represents. As they grow in power, they come to understand more of the world around them, but a deer-Gaffling cannot imagine being a hunter or a burrower, regardless of the deer-spirit's intelligence. Nor can an anger-spirit of any stripe be talked into feeling remorse for the actions it inspires. It simply is the embodiment of anger, and manifesting that wrath is what it does. Spirits do not know how to think “outside the box.”

Unlike the Uratha or humans, for that matter, spirits do not have freedom of choice. A bird-spirit cannot suddenly decide to act as if it were a bear-spirit. Neither can it forget its goals and purposes, or choose to set them aside. When forced to gradually change to exist, spirits can grow in strange directions, but it is not within spiritual nature for a dog-spirit to suddenly decide to behave as a glass-spirit or a wind-spirit to take on the characteristics of the Stone Choir. When circumstances force spirits together of totally different idioms, the result is often unfortunate — a magath.

All spirits do, however, have some basic aspects in common.

TYPE

Though spirits may demonstrate some individuality, they also share many common qualities, according to type. Two pine tree-spirits, especially those that are young or very low in power, might only have slight differences in appearance or personality. As spirits grow more powerful, however, they begin to manifest more traits that Uratha identify as personality. Inevitably, by the time they have reached the

ranks of Greater Jagglings or Minor Incarnae, spirits will have taken a name for themselves. A potent Jaggling of a river is no longer content to be “a river-spirit”, but instead calls itself “Uhrum Everwinding” or “Towndrowner. “Spirits that are strong enough to serve as Uratha’s pack totems are not generic and faceless but specific powerful individuals with their own quirks, goals and identity.

This, in a sense, has to do with the symbolic nature of the spirit-world. The Shadow holds reflections of many things, including ideas. Thus, a bat-spirit might find its nature influenced as it grows in power, perhaps affected by the idea of a bat as a harbinger of good luck — or by the superstition of a blood-drinking monster. Human belief is by no means the primary determinant of the sort of “aspects” a spirit might hold, but it is still one of the factors contributing to the great variety of the spirit legions.

GROWTH

All spirits have an impulse to grow and survive and manifest their nature. Tree-spirits may begin as tiny sparks of being within individual trees, but as the tree in the physical world grows, so, too does the spirit. If the spirit exists by consuming forest-Essence or absorbing the Essence of other trees, it refines itself, becoming more “tree” as it grows more powerful. If it exists solely on Essence gleaned from pine trees, it may become more the epitome of a pine or of evergreens in general. It might become more generically a spirit of the very concept of “tree” from feeding on other forest-Essence, such as might happen if it were courted by (and bribed with Essence from) an oak grove-spirit. Similarly, a dog-spirit may become more “doglike” as it gains strength by absorbing dog-Essence, or it may become more oriented to the aspect of “hunter” by consuming a variety of prey-animal-spirits. It may also, if driven by circumstance, begin to hunt outside its “natural” prey, an act that is not without consequences. A dog-spirit that, when driven into an industrial area of the spiritual cityscape, absorbs predominantly technology-related Essence may find its thought process becoming more logical and less predatory, while it begins manifesting circuitry patterns in its fur. In time, this creature may become one of the outcast magath.

MEMORY

Spirits remember, if imperfectly. They retain knowledge not only of their individual past, but also they share in a pool of memory passed along from spirit to spirit. To some extent, each tiger-spirit knows what other tiger-spirits know, although these “species” memories are not complete or clearly manifested. Similarly, when one spirit absorbs or consumes

another spirit, its memory incorporates shards of the memory of the spirit it has consumed in an abstract form. This can cause problems for werewolves who, after one spirit encounter has gone badly, seek out other spirits of the same kind. While the new ones are not likely to know the exact insults slung or blows thrown, they will likely be aware that this Uratha has a bad reputation among the city-sewer-spirits, and may not be as likely to negotiate themselves.

APPEARANCE

Not a physical species, spirits are not uniform in shape. A spirit’s appearance can reflect its general status and power level. Most Gafflings tend to have a simpler form; if they’re spirits of nature or artificial objects, they tend to appear as somewhat abstract and slightly off-kilter versions of their material counterparts. As spirits grow in Rank, they also tend to be able to customize their appearance more, even gradually becoming able to manifest themselves in different forms of their choice. Incarnae are almost like ancient gods, taking whatever form suits them so long as it speaks about the heart of their nature.

Of course, abstract spirits are more fluid in appearance. A pain-Gaffling might look like a jagged chunk of rusty metal or a fleshy homunculus with angry, infected wounds. It might not be able to alter its own appearance, and it may be similar in form to several other Gafflings of the same type, but it doesn’t necessarily look like all other pain-Gafflings.

Generally, a trained observer can tell the rough power level of a spirit by observation; more powerful spirits are typically larger, more elaborate in form and even “more solid” in appearance. Otherwise, the Storyteller has full rein to have spirits appear as diverse as suits the needs of the game. The Shadow always has a new surprise in store for the Uratha, and no werewolf can ever claim to have seen it all.

IMMORTALITY

Despite their desire to grow and powerful instincts of self-preservation, spirits do not have a mortal’s fear of “death,” a trait that can complicate Uratha-spirit negotiations. Unlike humans, who feel the burden of mortality as they age and grow more conscious of the fragility of their existence, spirits have no concept of finality apart from being utterly consumed. When a spirit is “killed,” either in the material world or the Shadow Realm, it merely re-forms some time later in the reaches of the Shadow. Spirits can be destroyed, but this is usually not the case. Spirits that are consumed by other spirits prolong their existence through submersion in a greater being — a form of immortality.

MEETING WITH THE SPIRITS

Werewolves, being half-spirit themselves, are inextricably tied to the Shadow Realm. Inevitably, their paths will bring them into contact with the spirit world, whether they like it or not. The eldest and wisest Uratha know that no matter how many times a werewolf has passed through the Gauntlet or how well they believe they know the spirits, there are always surprises and always dangers. The spirit wilds are never “safe,” not for werewolves and not for the spirits. This is the first lesson new Uratha learn when traveling to the Shadow. Sometimes, it is their last lesson.

THE NATIVES

In the World of Darkness, the spirit world is the dark reflection of the material world. When Storytelling the Shadow, Storytellers should emphasize the unfamiliar and uncomfortable nature of the werewolves’ surroundings. Create environs that will make players aware that their characters are immersed in a world where everything is less clear and more intense than in the material world. While the World of Darkness is a sinister and violent place, the Shadow Realm is the distillation of that world with the concentrated Essence of both life and death played out around the Uratha who travel there. It is a reflection seen in clouded glass.

One of the first things a werewolf must learn when dealing with spirits is that almost any encounter with a spirit has the potential to erupt into violence. Spirits are naturally hostile toward werewolves, and will act on their antipathy if they feel they can get away with it. However, Uratha who approach all spirits as eminent enemies will quickly find that such an attitude to be a major obstacle to maintaining the spiritual health of their territories, not to mention making it almost impossible to learn Gifts or find patronage for their pack. Simply treating all spirits as hostiles does not work. To deal effectively with spirits, werewolves must be well armed with as much knowledge as possible of the spirits they are encountering and with the strength to negotiate verbally or physically when the situation demands.

THE LEGEND OF FATHER WOLF

Both Forsaken and Pure claim that part of the reason the spirit-world has turned its back on the Uratha is that the spirits remember the death of Father Wolf. It’s a good theory, but it hasn’t been proven. It may never be.

There are precious few spirits that can claim to be as old as the world, and few of those can claim that they have seen the aeons turn without undergoing change themselves. Even if a given mountain-spirit has survived as long as the stone it reflects, it has likely done so by devouring other spirits in turn throughout the millennia, and the spirits it absorbs into itself also change its sense of perception. Even if the mountain-spirit claims to remember Pangaea, it’s unclear whether the spirit speaks true or if its collective “memories” have begun to substitute wishful thinking for fact. What’s more, a spirit’s perception of the world is entirely colored by its purpose and by its capacity for understanding. It’s next to impossible to find a spirit that is an impartial observer; a murder on a street corner might only be noticed by spirits that somehow gain or lose from the process, and even they are unlikely to notice “insignificant” details such as the appearance of the victim.

Even Incarnae are certain to have very skewed perceptions of the whole affair. The Firstborn each tell a different story of the death of Father Wolf — and some werewolves (in particular, Ghost Wolves) note that the Firstborn have much to gain from furthering the party line and little to lose from telling lies they can’t be caught in. Other Incarnae are generally hostile to the Uratha, and might lie out of spite. That is, if they could be reached at all — Luna, the legendary mother of the entire Uratha race, has not granted a werewolf a personal audience at any point within known history. The legend of Father Wolf remains just that: perhaps true, perhaps allegorical, perhaps just a construct of faith.

FIRST CONTACT: GREETING THE SPIRITS

The Shadow is the spirits’ home, and when Uratha cross the Gauntlet in order to deal with a spirit, they must realize that they are on another’s turf. This is important if the intention of the meeting is hostile, because the werewolf will not have the “home court advantage.” But it becomes even more important if the Uratha hopes for a peaceful interaction with the spirit. When greeting a spirit it hopes to negotiate with, a werewolf needs to proffer the proper amount of respect. Too little deference will anger the spirit, while too much may be taken as an indirect insult.

Nor is dealing with spirits in the material world any easier. A large part of the Forsaken’s self-appointed duty is to ensure that denizens from the spirit world do not interfere excessively in the physical one. This puts werewolves and spirits that are manifesting

in the material world at uncomfortable cross-purposes, hardly the best environment for positive encounters. As well, if the Uratha summons a spirit to the physical world, the spirit may resent being called across at the werewolves' behest, even if it has its own goals on the material side of the Gauntlet. The spirit may well demand that the summoner and his pack perform an even more complicated chiminage to atone for the inconvenience.

From the first moment of the encounter, Uratha must keep in mind the type of spirit they are meeting and greet them accordingly. Fire-, lightning- or electricity-spirits, for example, experience events at a much greater rate than slower beings such as stone- or structure-spirits. They do not tolerate lengthy speeches or long-winded pleas. The quicker the Uratha can voice both his greeting and his reason for seeking out the spirit, the more likely the two are to find common ground.

Spirits of trees, turtles and other slow moving creatures usually expect that any transactions in which they take part mirror the languid nature of their existence. Long expositions, flowery introductions — sometimes including genealogy — and formal deliberations demonstrate that the spirit's timetable is acknowledged and respected.

Trickster-spirits should be met with good humor and a great deal of tolerance for being made the jibe of the spirit's prankish nature. Urban-spirits expect the brevity and efficiency of short conversations; cyber-spirits prefer to conduct their business in "sound-bites."

OFFERINGS: BURNT OR OTHERWISE

Regardless of the nature of the encounter between the Uratha and the spirits, gifts are never considered out of order. The best tactic is to come prepared, whether you wish to ask the spirit to teach a Gift, to inhabit a fetish or to provide information or assistance.

Again, it is important to know the spirits you deal with in order to know what kind of gift — or chiminage — to offer. Fire-spirits usually want burnt offerings — sometimes something relatively easy to give, such as burning incense, but other times their requirements are more stringent — holding one's hand in a fire until blisters form, for example. Arson-spirits are more likely to want even stronger forms of fire-based chiminage, perhaps demanding entire buildings sacrificed in their name.

Most spirits appreciate gifts of Essence. In the Shadow, Essence is a universal currency. Even if a werewolf neglected to spill his blood as an offering to a war-spirit, he may still be able to save the meeting with a large enough gift of Essence.

Once the introductions and the opening offerings are out of the way, the Uratha can settle down to the hard business of bargaining with the spirits. This is never an easy task. To say that spirits are not overly fond of the Uratha would be a drastic understatement. Some spirits see them as busybodies and self-appointed peacekeepers, while most feel uncomfortable with the Uratha's double nature or association with the Lunar Choir.

Uratha may parley or negotiate with spirits for many different reasons, and each reason has many possible approaches.

- **Information** — When attempting to gather information from a spirit, werewolves should make certain that the spirit receives recompense commensurate with the facts provided or rumors confirmed. Sometimes, Uratha can simply trade information with the spirit — knowledge of where a number of weak spirits congregate (a handy source of Essence for hungry spirits) in return for the location of the nearest Rat Host nest, for example. When the Uratha can tell the spirit nothing of importance, Essence usually sweetens the pot and may win the cooperation of the spirit. A canny or hostile spirit might require a more complex favor from the werewolf, such as undertaking a mission on its behalf or on the behalf of its material-world counterpart.

- **Gifts** — Although spirits have the ability to teach Gifts to werewolves, few of them are willing to do so without significant recompense. Spirits must be paid in some way to teach their Gifts to the Forsaken. While some spirits may accept token gifts of Essence in exchange for sharing the knowledge of a particular Gift, others demand the performance of services before they deign to teach any of the People. Uratha desiring to learn Gifts from the spirits should first of all try to find the most willing spirit possible — the chiminage will be cheaper and the experience less painful. If a werewolf must learn from a more hostile spirit, he should be prepared to pay accordingly, not only in Essence, but in services rendered and in a properly contrite attitude.

- **Pack Totem** — Acquiring a spirit to act as pack totem requires its own special approach. The werewolf leading the search for the spirit is frequently the pack's Ithaeur (if any), though other pack members must participate in this endeavor, as it will affect them all. The deal made with the spirit ultimately benefits both parties; the totem-spirit offers the Uratha pack support and binds them together in a manner that totem-less packs simply cannot achieve. In return, the spirit has access to some of the Essence from the pack and gains the pack's protection, if needed. The negotiations

involved in acquiring a pack totem are generally forceful without being completely abusive, and the methods used in convincing the spirit to accept the offer vary according to the type of spirit. The tales of the bindings of the Firstborn are the archetypal examples of acquiring totems; just as Death Wolf had to be bound with occult rites and Black Wolf had to be stalked to its den, each spirit must be subdued in the appropriate fashion. In most cases, the werewolves must prove to the spirit that they are capable of abiding by its ban, that their goals and perspectives are in harmony with that of the spirit and, ultimately, that the spirit would rather be allied with their strength than set against it.

- **Assistance** — From time to time, the Uratha may need to call upon the spirit-world for aid. In such circumstances, the werewolves should be prepared to make whatever concessions may be necessary to gain the spirit's assistance. When in the role of petitioner for the service of a spirit, werewolves must be aware that if they do not succeed, not only will they not receive the help they need, but their enemy may receive unasked-for assistance from the resentful spirit. Gifts of Essence, promises of future service and other forms of chiminage should be proffered willingly. In this, as in all spirit negotiations, the spirit involved must be convinced that its assistance will be of benefit to the spirit itself as well as to the werewolves.

- **Fetishes** — Spirits act as the energy source for fetish objects. In order to create a fetish, the Uratha must convince, coerce or wrestle a spirit into the object. This is rarely easy. Many spirits do not want to be confined any more than a human being or werewolf would volunteer to be imprisoned. Uratha must convince them that powering a fetish is desirable, usually by promises to invest Essence regularly in the fetish, thus feeding the spirit. Some spirits, particularly weaker ones, are fairly easily convinced to enter a fetish, since doing so prevents more powerful spirits from consuming them.

WHEN THINGS GO WRONG

Interactions between werewolves and the spirits often go awry. Spirits may resent the presumptuousness of the Uratha in asking for anything when the insolent curs try to shepherd the spirits against their will. They may also be insulted by a poorly prepared werewolf who has inadvertently said or done the wrong thing.

When negotiations between werewolves and the spirits reach meltdown, violence often results. Before this happens, however, experienced Uratha may find a way to salvage a bad situation or at least exercise damage control. Apologies are always in order (even if the offense is fabricated), especially when a spirit

claims to be insulted. Unilateral gifts can sometimes placate an angry spirit, allowing both parties to back out with their honor intact. Sometimes, however, only physical combat can suffice to settle disputes.

SPIRIT THEMES

Encounters with spirits may develop along the lines of one of several sub-themes that focus specifically on the fickle, volatile relationship between the half-spirit Uratha and the incorporeal creatures of the spirit wilds. A few of these sub-themes are presented here. You may find these adequate for your **Werewolf: The Forsaken** chronicle or they may spur your thought processes to create other challenges for your players to overcome.

THE HUNT

Werewolf: The Forsaken revolves around the hunt. The book's primary conflicts usually involve the clash between predator and prey, a battle in which werewolves may fall into either role. Stories involving the spirit wilds should also contain an element of the hunt. The Forsaken, apex predators by nature, may hunt spirits to replenish their own Essence, or to protect the boundaries of their territory from those who would intrude upon it. But it is not a one-sided situation. Every spirit in the Shadow preys in some way on other spirits. Some even hunt across the Gauntlet, and the strongest of these are not afraid to turn their attentions on the Uratha as well.

THE JOURNEY

Another theme particularly appropriate to a spirit-based chronicle deals with travel through the spirit wilds. While the land of Shadow loosely mirrors the material world, any Uratha who assume that traveling from one place to another within the spirit domain will be a simple matter should be quickly re-educated as to the mercurial and often malevolent nature of these lands.

Any encounter in the spirit wilds will result in contact with the denizens who dwell therein. And, inherently, the vast majority of those encounters will be hostile. Some spirits may harbor personal or family hatreds of the half-flesh wolflings. Others may have been set as guardians by mundane or spiritual individuals who claim the territories the werewolves are crossing. Still others may know (or assume) that the traveling Uratha have a more specific goal, either to attack them or to stop them in their spiritual objectives, and the pack may find themselves the target of a pre-emptive spiritual attack. Even the most shrewd and diplomatic werewolf may find herself involved in combat when a seemingly simple negotiation goes awry.

Traveling through the spirit wilds often means the werewolves will be fighting their way from one

place to the next. The Shadow is not a safe place. It should never be portrayed as the Uratha version of the Happy Hunting Ground, where all spirits are either peaceful prey or benevolent mentors for the powerful and popular Uratha. Those werewolves who choose to journey through the Shadow based on this misconception are never allowed to reach their destination without learning otherwise.

THE QUEST

Whether to atone for some wrongdoing within the pack or against the spirits, or to test the mettle of newly discovered cubs, werewolves eventually enter the Shadow Realm with a goal in mind. Sometimes that goal is cultivating the spiritual side of their home territory, driving out or destroying elements that are detrimental to the pack's habitation there. Other times, a pack may seek to gain strength, challenging themselves against the harsh reality that is existence in the spirit wilds. Rumors of powerful items lost in the Shadow may lure others on a quest, while werewolves who have broken some part of the Oath of the Moon may travel into the Shadow on a mission of atonement. It's easy to think of straightforward heroics when the word "quest" is heard, but even the archetypal Grail Quest had horrific elements such as having to cross a bridge that was the sharpened blade of a sword. A quest into the Shadow is equal parts

ordeal and sacrifice, often undertaken for reasons no more noble than trying to ensure a pack's survival.

When the theme of a story is "the quest," each Storyteller-controlled character encountered may play a role vital to the success or failure of those making the mission. Spirits are most often antagonists, whose own goals motivate them to prevent the questing characters from achieving their objective. Occasionally, when previous relationships have been formed that are beneficial to the spirits, or when the Uratha are able to bargain, bluff or bully the spirits into lending aid, they may serve temporarily as allies that can provide the Uratha with necessary information, aid or other assets.

THE LESSON

Despite their general hostility to werewolves, spirits possess the knowledge of Gifts, an invaluable asset to the Uratha. When properly motivated, a spirit can teach appropriate Gifts (ones related to the spirit's influence and abilities) to werewolves, and most can be coerced to do so. However, spirits can make challenging mentors or impossible taskmasters, depending on their attitudes toward the petitioning werewolf, and the process of locating the proper spirit and persuading it to act as a teacher is part of the lesson, something many werewolves do not realize until after the fact. As already mentioned, the vast



majority of spirits do not begin encounters positively disposed towards Uratha. The werewolves, however, may be able to influence or change the spirit's feelings by appropriate actions and offerings. The lessons in humility and politeness a werewolf must learn in order to gain the spirit's favor are often as important to the Uratha's growth as the Gifts themselves.

Along with the Gifts they can teach, spirits can also play a significant role in werewolf life as patron totems. Whether the werewolves are seeking the tribal patronage of one of the Firstborn wolf-spirits or the more personal patronage of a spirit to serve as their pack totem, spiritual mentorship is one of the most important reasons for Uratha to interact with spirits. Due to the nature of the totemic relationship, it is also one of the most challenging as totem-spirits should not (and in the case of the Firstborn, perhaps cannot) be merely intimidated or bullied into their patronage. Instead, efforts must be made to investigate the nature of these spirits, negotiate with them in a manner suited to their natures and, finally, maintain a positive affiliation with them, sometimes the most challenging stage of the relationship when the mercurial spirit-nature is taken into consideration.

THE DUTY

The Forsaken carry a heavy burden. If any beings have the obligation to police the boundaries of the physical and spirit worlds, it must be the werewolves. And, although the Gauntlet helps separate the spirit wilds from the material world, there are still those beings from each side that intrude in the other. It is the Forsaken's self-appointed duty to prevent this from happening, to whatever extent they can, policing spirits that try to influence too heavily the mortal lands. This curries the Forsaken no favor in the spirit-courts, where they are often seen as meddling half-breeds dealing in matters they cannot fully understand.

Nor are the spirits the only culprits the Forsaken must concern themselves with. Within the physical world there are also those that, by one means or another, meddle in the Shadow for their own benefit. In such cases, spirits may seek out the Uratha, overcoming their hostility to seek aid from the very werewolves they detest. Some Forsaken see such an occasion as just another way to fulfill their ancestral duty. Others use it to its fullest potential, bargaining harshly with the needy spirits for future favors.

THE PURE

The Pure Tribes have a markedly different relationship with the spirit-world than do the Tribes

of the Moon. As a general rule, the Pure have more willing allies among the spirits than the Forsaken do, and they have compacted with primal, even monstrous spirits that would never agree to the same pacts with one of the Forsaken. This is one of the things that keeps them competitive, even without the blessings of Luna — they simply have more allies.

However, this shouldn't be taken as actual friendship. The Pure's many spirit totems treat them with similar revulsion and contempt; they simply find the pacts that the Pure have sworn to be sufficiently to their liking. The terrible chimeric spirit that serves as a Pure pack's totem has extracted a potent blood oath from its "children," one forged in mutual bloodthirst. The totems and spirit allies of the Pure frighten the Forsaken — but it can be safely assumed that they terrify the Pure just as much.

CUSTOMIZING SPIRITS

The spirits detailed in this chapter represent only a small sampling of the denizens of the Shadow that the Uratha may encounter. Each entry in the Bestiary above represents only a single example of a particular spirit at a particular power level. In truth, most spirit types run the gamut of ranks, from lesser Gafflings to greater Jagglings and beyond. Storytellers should feel free to use these examples and the spirit-creation information on page 279 of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** to customize spirits to suit their game's needs.

As well, Storytellers should feel free to embellish the descriptions given here. Regardless of similarities in type, choir or descant, no two spirits should be absolutely identical. Each spirit should come across to players as unique and individual, with its own characteristics, strengths, weaknesses and motivations. One Gaffling might be better-fed than another of the same type, or under greater environmental pressure, which can color its reactions more than werewolves might expect from such barely sentient entities.

There are myriad ways in which spirits differ, all of which can be utilized by adept Storytellers to ensure that every spirit is not a clone of the one before. Even the most astute Uratha should always be kept guessing when they meet a new spirit — even if they have encountered similar spirits previously. A few of the techniques for customizing spirits are presented here.

BANS

While each spirit is held under at least one ban, two similar spirits will not necessarily share an identi-

cal ban. For example, one oak-spirit may vulnerable to axes, whether physical or spiritual. Another oak-spirit may succumb to an attack from the supernatural powers of a blight-spirit or to a fetish containing such. Still another may be bound to not harm anyone who carries an acorn on her person. The bans that spirits carry from the beginning of their existence are almost always tied in theme to their spirit type; however they may also encounter circumstances that add additional levels to their restrictions.

In the course of play, spirits may acquire additional bans. A werewolf may bind a spirit and forbid it to do something or compel it to perform some task. For example, a computer-spirit might be compelled to provide information to any werewolf when asked, while another computer-spirit might not be allowed to pass through the Gauntlet unless invited by the Uratha. These bans are in addition to the spirit's original ban and represent actions that occur during game sessions.

APPEARANCES

Spirits exhibit a tremendous range of variations in appearance. While the descriptions given in the Bestiary represent some of the most common examples of images that a particular spirit may project, they should not be held to be the only forms a spirit can appear in. As well, within each description is the possibility for vastly differing details, and Storytellers should feel encouraged to flesh out those details in such a way that their players form strong, visual images of the spirits they encounter. No two fire-spirits look exactly alike, for example. One may appear as a white-hot flame, floating a few feet off the ground and roaring with elemental fury. Another may appear as a huge bonfire feeding off a pyre of massive logs that crackle and snap with volatile sparks.

Nor are all of the humanlike forms of spirits completely consistent, even within a single choir or descant. One water-spirit taking a vaguely humanoid form may have matted kelp where it understands humans have hair and lustrous pearls where eyes would be. Another may take on a more "fleshy form," something like a person but with scaled skin encrusted with coral and the wrong number of webbed fingers and toes.

Animal- and plant-spirits, as well, show great variety within the same species. One horse-spirit may resemble a powerful black stallion with flashing eyes and flint-sharp hooves, embodying masculine leadership. Another may take the form of a solid, compact Morgan horse, thundering so heavily that the ground shakes near it at a gallop. Nor are natural spirits

limited precisely to the exact forms their physical representations wear. Swift horse-spirits may show their speed with wings or extra legs. Horse-spirits that make their homes in areas of neglect may appear diseased, even unliving, animals that are little more than abused flesh stretched over a horse skeleton.

GOALS

Spirits, while less multi-dimensional than humans, are never without their own drives and motivations. Indeed, their lack of broad-based concerns makes them even more able to focus on whatever it is that primarily motivates them. A guardian-spirit may concentrate wholly on its duties, a hunter on the chase, a river on flowing. These aspirations will differ from one spirit to another, and will do much to flesh out the personality of the spirit.

Uratha who are willing to research a spirit's goals are much more likely to find them willing to aid the werewolf, whereas those Uratha whose actions are in direct conflict with them will likely find themselves with spiritual enemies.

MANIFESTATION

Like ghosts, spirits in the material world must manifest in order to use their Numina or Influences. A manifested spirit remains in the state of Twilight, and remains invisible (unless it chooses to become visible). This process follows in much the same way as the one described for ghosts (see **World of Darkness**, p. 210); the spirit must roll Power + Finesse in order to manifest successfully.

However, instead of the modifiers listed for ghosts, spirits should be at an appropriate penalty or bonus to manifest dependent on their type and the surroundings. A city-spirit should have an easier time manifesting in the city, and a spirit of sterility might find a spotless laboratory ideal for its purposes. In general, apply a +1 to +3 bonus to the roll if the location and circumstances favor the spirit, and a -1 to -3 penalty if they are in conflict. A spirit of bloodlust would be at a +2 modifier to manifest on a battlefield or boxing ring, for instance, and at -3 to manifest in a church. A dense human crowd affects the ability to manifest as usual; the spirit suffers the usual -1 modifier to the roll for every human present after the first. Spirits using their Numina across the Gauntlet with the Reaching Numen are considered to be making a manifestation roll with the Gauntlet as their modifier.

The signs of a manifested spirit are often symbolic, and are the sort of things that a skilled Ithaeur learns to recognize. Insects marching in strange patterns, a stale smell of excrement,

a peculiar flickering of flames or disruption of electrical devices are all potential hints that a spirit has manifested in the area.

CHOIRS AND DESCANTS

All spirits have an affiliation with other spirits of similar (and sometimes very different) types. In an attempt to understand the incomprehensible, the Uratha have labeled the muddled groupings formed by these resonances as choirs and descants, attempting to fit them into divisions and subdivisions that are far too linear for the ephemeral spirits themselves. While werewolves might like the spirits to fall within tidy groupings as they identify themselves by tribe, auspice and pack, in the Shadow nothing is quite that clear. Nature-spirits, for example, would be easy to divide into logical (by human logic) branches such as animal, plant, insect and bird. While some spirits divide themselves into such linear choirs, others find resonances between physical characteristics (Scaled Ones, Flyers, Hoofed Beasts), locatives (Ice Dwellers, Those of the Treetops, Deep Sea Swimmers) or other more obscure links (Poison Wielders and Blood Drinkers both contain a very diverse group of nature-spirits). One snake-spirit might belong to the Animal Choir while another seemingly similar one may resonate with the Scaled-Ones Choir. And, to make matters even more confusing, the same spirit may belong to both a choir and a descant, resulting in a spirit torn between its Scaled nature and its role as a Poison Wielder. At best, choirs and descants are something roughly understood by most Uratha, and each spirit should be taken as an individual without assumptions based on previous interactions with similar-seeming spirits.

Spirits are listed here with one of the possible choir/descant labels for their type, but this list is intended solely as a template of what one spirit of that type might be like. Other spirits of similar types may have very different identities and resonances, and Storytellers should feel encouraged to create

choirs and descants that suit the mood and feel of their game environment. Players should never feel they know everything there is to know about dealing with any individual spirit, let alone be encouraged to create broad assumptions about how any particular choir or descant works. Or rather, their presumptions should regularly be challenged as they discover that the only really constant truth about spirits is that, around them, nothing is constant.

BROODS

Whereas choirs and descants are innate resonances that allow a spirit to most comfortably interact with other spirits, broods are more of a political structure or symbiotic grouping. And, as the saying goes, politics make for strange bedfellows. While the lines between ponderosa-pine-Gafflings and the Tree, Evergreen or Pine Choirs may seem intuitive, a particular powerful pine-spirit may also have a brood that includes squirrel- or blue-jay-Gafflings, providing small amounts of Essence in exchange for their assistance in manipulating their physical counterparts to spread ponderosa cones beyond their existing territories, thus encouraging a steadily growing supply of pine-sapling Essence for the parent tree to absorb over coming decades. As improbable as it appears at first glance, fire-spirits may even serve in a pine-spirit's brood, periodically exchanging the heat that encourages cones to release their seeds for deadfall fodder. The same tree-spirit's brood might also include conceptual-spirits such as growth and renewal.

CONSISTENCY

Players remember spirits that catch their attention. And while variation among spirits is important, so is consistency when a particular spirit is encountered more than once. Storytellers should keep notes on the spirits they use, including their appearance, nature and attitude to maintain a consistent "persona" for each spirit throughout time. This will also facilitate comparison with previously encountered spirits, to ensure that the vast variety of the spirit wilds is being adequately portrayed to players.

A SPIRIT BESTIARY

The number and type of spirits that exist in the Shadow is exhaustive. To describe all of them is impossible. The following compendium features examples of the more common spirits likely to interact with Uratha. These spirits range in power from lesser Gafflings to greater Jagglings, with perhaps one or two unique spirits thrown in for good measure. Each spirit is given three names: a technical term (such as electricity elemental), a “common name” (a slang term or obscure occult name for the spirit’s type) and a First Tongue name. The quotation listed for most spirits is a translation from the First Tongue; the more sophisticated the spirit, the more sophisticated its speech.

The sample spirits given here aren’t the only representatives of their kind, and shouldn’t be considered to be the only example of a given spirit that the Uratha will encounter. There are too many spirits of the Dog Descant for a single dog-spirit to accurately reflect them all; if the dog-spirit depicted here is Rank 3, that doesn’t mean that the average dog-spirit is Rank 3. It simply means that it’s probably a better use of space in the book to have more types of spirit with one sample Rank than fewer spirits with four sets of sample statistics. Storytellers should feel encouraged to modify the statistics given here to reflect more or less powerful spirits or tweak the descriptions to represent different types of spirits within the same overall descant or choir. In addition, these examples should serve as guidelines for creating spirits of varying degrees of power. Essentially, think of these spirits as something like the statistics given for a beat cop the pack might encounter; the sample statistics can be used as a shorthand abbreviation for some cops, but not all police officers should have the same statistics, even those that walk a beat. Though spirits are less diverse within their own type than humans are within any given culture or profession, they are still very diverse entities and should be treated that way. Similarly, multiple bans are often given — feel free to pick one that you like and assume all spirits of the type are affected, or swap them around. More often, spirits of higher Rank have differentiated themselves and have more distinct bans, while lower-Rank spirits have bans in common.

Spirits of very high levels of power are not included in this Bestiary. Extremely powerful spirits are beyond the capacity of most Uratha to deal with in direct combat. Wise werewolves must exploit the bans of such entities as well as knowledge of their motivations and goals, if they wish to gain the advantage in dealing with them.

Numina marked with an asterisk (*) in the statistics for a spirit are explained in this chapter and are new to this book. Numina marked with a dagger (†) are converted Gifts from the core rulebook (as per the guidelines for “Gifts as Numina,” *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, p. 278).

NATURE-SPIRITS

Almost all living things have a spiritual representation in the Shadow Realm. There are untold types of nature-spirits, and countless choirs and descants within which they converge. Below are listed some of the largest and most common nature choirs, but they should not be thought to be anything but the smallest and most simple designations thereof.

Though nature-spirits reflect the living things of our own world, they are not a perfect reflection. The Shadow is a vicious place, and if anything, Nature is far redder in tooth and claw there. The lion does not lay down with the lamb; the lion devours both lamb and lioness, and the lamb will consume another lamb if it can. Many of humanity’s folkloric beliefs about the “personalities” of animals have their root in the ways of the Shadow, or perhaps the nature of certain animal-spirits is rooted in the beliefs of humanity. Whatever the actual origin, some nature-spirits have much in common with conceptuials or other spirits outside the nature choirs. A raven-spirit may gather in a brood with death-spirits, or even take on aspects of a death-spirit itself without becoming magath or falling too far from the concept of what it is to be the spirit of “raven.” Such is the nature of the Shadow.

ANIMAL-SPIRITS

Animal-spirits have great diversity of choirs, perhaps more than any other large grouping of spirits. There is a Reptile Choir, for instance, but there is also a Scaled Choir that claims the allegiance of many reptile- and fish-spirits, and a Predator Choir

that draws the loyalty of many others. However, the tangled mess of spirit politics is somehow simpler when dealing with animal-spirits than with a more alien class such as the conceptals. Although it might be tricky to tell whether a crocodile-spirit owes its first loyalty to the Reptile, Scaled or Predator Choir, at least werewolves can understand those basic divisions and even predict how they might influence a spirit's behavior. It's common practice among werewolves, particularly those of a more traditional bent, to lump mammals and reptiles together when speaking of "animal-spirits" or "beast-spirits," while excluding birds and fish. The classic division of "beasts of the land, birds of the sky and fish of the sea" isn't particularly scientific, but the spirit-world hasn't abandoned it yet.

BEAR (BRUINS, UNAMATHA AZIM)

Quote: <<These are my lands!>>

Background: Bears are some of the largest predators on earth, and can be found in one form or another in almost every climate. Bear-spirits reflect this reality, stalwartly holding territories that range from the northern tundra to the very edges of spiritual cityscapes. While they may appear placid until disturbed, it's a deceptive façade. Within the blink of an eye, bear-spirits manifest their true capacity for fury and ferocity. They are extremely strong and determined, if not overly quick-witted. While they are capable of feats of remarkable intelligence, for the most part, they tend to be very goal-oriented. They move with a lumbering gait unless prodded to action, when their true grace and swiftness becomes belatedly apparent. They are one of the more aggressively cannibalistic types of animal-spirit, quick to turn on the smaller and weaker members of their "species."

Description: Bear-spirits are large, idealized examples of one of the various bear species: brown, black, grizzly, polar or other sub-species. Like their material counterparts, they tend to walk on all fours unless challenged, when they rear up on their hind legs to intimidate their opposition. Whether brown, black or white, their fur seems to glow with a luxurious sheen, while their eyes are deep black pools that can flash from seemingly placid to furious predator in seconds. Successful bear-spirits often have claws and teeth that are more exaggerated than their physical counterparts.

Storytelling Hints: Bear-spirits speak slowly, rumbling out each word carefully. They fight with bloodthirsty intensity that contrasts with their usual slow gait, although they prefer to "warn off" challengers when possible, conserving their energy. Uratha frequently come into conflict with bear-spirits regard-

ing territory, which the spirits dedicatedly defend in both the spiritual and material world.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 2, Resistance 6

Willpower: 12

Essence: 15

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Speed: 18

Size: 6

Corpus: 12

Influences: Bears ••

Numina: Clasp*, Discorporation, Material Vision, Materialize, Speed*

Bans: Some bear-spirits are associated with guardianship, and may be held under bans that do not allow them to initiate an attack unless provoked, or restrict their movement to certain territories. Others have seasonal bans, losing much of their strength in winter or summer (depending on the spirit in question).

CAT (WALKERS, TREE-HISER)

Quote: <<Too large for prey...now.>>

Background: The spirits associated with common domesticated cats are notoriously independent. Sometimes allied with lunar choirs and spirits of the night, they can be found almost anywhere in the Shadow Realm. Feline-spirits possess a keen sense of curiosity and tend to acquire odd pieces of information, although they are often loath to reveal them. They tend to consider themselves apex predators, and those that gather enough power can back up the claim — but they often share a great fear of the spirits of great cats.

Description: Cat-spirits most often appear as slightly larger and exaggerated versions of domesticated cats in the material world. They sometimes favor a luminescent coat color (glowing a true gold rather than yellow or orange, for example, or silver instead of gray) although many wear a pelt of night-sky black, sometimes complete with subtle constellations. Gleaming with an otherworldly light, their eyes shine in a wide array of jewel tones: amber, emerald and sapphire are most common, but more than one Uratha has been startled to find ruby-red feline eyes staring back at him when least expected. Their voices have the strained edge of a barely restrained yowl or scream.

Storytelling Hints: If mortal domesticated cats are considered borderline insane, cat-spirits are well over the edge. When approached with flattery and gifted with Essence, feline-spirits may be convinced it is in their best interest to aid the werewolves' cause. They may be just as likely to calmly disappear and report on the Uratha's plans to other spirits. Fickle

and inconstant, cat-spirits rarely make long-term allegiances. If roused to battle, they are vicious fighters, all claws and teeth and raking hind legs.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 4, Resistance 2

Willpower: 6

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 7

Speed: 13

Size: 2

Corpus: 4

Influences: Cats •

Numina: Discorporation, Material Vision, Omen Gazing†

Bans: Many cat-spirits are banned from turning away from a puzzle or riddle. Others exhibit almost material weaknesses for certain substances (catnip, catmint or certain species of fish or fowl) and are unable to avoid negotiations that involve that particular substance.

DOG (MONGRELS, LURKERS)

Quote: <<Invader! Betrayer! Enemy of the pack!>>

Background: While their material counterparts may have long been domesticated, the dog-spirits that survive in the Shadow tend to be fierce canines, at least half-feral. Dog-spirits tend to travel in groups (much like the Uratha), earning their place within the pack through many fights and challenges. Strong dog-spirits bear their wounds and scars proudly. They

are exceptionally adaptable, and join the broods of very diverse spirits — particularly wolf-like packs can be found serving one of the Firstborn totems, while twisted spirit hellhounds follow at the heels of the Maeljin.

Description: The dog-spirits of the Shadow Realm almost always exemplify a mixed-breed appearance, to the point of being seemingly stitched together from the strongest and most feral aspects of each of the canine-spirits they have consumed. They tend to grow in size as they grow in power; a lesser dog-Gaffling may be the size of a dumpster-diving terrier, while a greater Jaggling is nearly pony-sized with teeth a full hand long and a fighting repertoire that would challenge that of any Uratha.

Storytelling Hints: Most dog-spirits are most comfortable in a pack setting, content to follow strong leaders, whether other dog-spirits or more powerful spirits of other choirs. They can and do perform a variety of tasks, such as guarding, hunting or fighting. They can be difficult to win over, but once they pledge fealty to a new master or alpha, they are steadfastly loyal beyond almost any other spirit of the Shadow. Because of this, many Incarna prefer the service of a pack of dog-spirits to hunt down their enemies or any intruders into their realm, utilizing their canine nature to its fullest. Many dog-spirits hate and distrust werewolves with a passion, sensing in their dual nature a wrongness that is exceedingly difficult for Uratha who seek their aid to overcome.



Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 9, Resistance 8

Willpower: 16

Essence: 20

Initiative: 17

Defense: 9

Speed: 25

Size: 6

Corpus: 14

Influences: Dogs ••, Loyalty •

Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Howl*, Know the Path†, Material Vision, Materialize, Wilds Sense

Bans: Dog-spirits often are held under a ban that forbids them from attacking any being that has once bested them in battle. Other dog-spirits are forbidden from dealing with those that have close ties to cat-spirits.

RACCOON (CUNNING MASKS, DUMHALAIM)

Quote: <<For me? I want!... It is dirty! No, I want; do not take back! I will clean!>>

Background: Raccoon-spirits are among the largest forest-spirits found in the city, and those that dwell in the cityscape have adapted superbly to life among the buildings and streets. The more powerful raccoon-Gafflings are deceptively strong and clever for their size. Frequently sought out by the Irraka, raccoon-spirits are strongly associated with cunning, and, when properly inspired to do so, they can teach many Gifts of deceit and investigation. However, they are sly negotiators, and this, combined with their inherent fear of Uratha, ensures these talks are often complicated affairs.

Description: Raccoon-spirits resemble their earthly counterparts except that they are capable of growing much larger. Like material raccoons, they have alert demeanors; unlike material raccoons, their facial masks are often exquisitely detailed in strange ways. Urban raccoon-spirits sometimes decorate themselves with jewelry made from peculiar pieces of found detritus, always immaculately polished.

Storytelling Hints: Raccoon-spirits treat Uratha as superior predators, and commonly try to escape them rather than confront them. This can make negotiations difficult to initiate. As well, they fight fiercely when cornered, a fact that has surprised more than one overconfident werewolf. If unable to escape and given enough room to prevent the situation from degenerating into combat, these canny spirits will negotiate sharply, preferring immediate transactions for food or valuable objects that will allow them to leave the Uratha's presence as quickly as possible. If given the opportunity, they may play malicious "pranks" on a lone werewolf, preferably ones that place the werewolf in some amount of danger that will either drive him from the spirits' territory or finish him off.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 6, Resistance 4

Willpower: 7

Essence: 13 (15 max)

Initiative: 10

Defense: 6

Speed: 12

Size: 3

Corpus: 7

Influences: Raccoons ••

Numina: Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Materialize, Reaching, Wild Sense

Bans: Raccoon-spirits are insatiably curious, and have difficulty leaving well enough alone. Many are under bans that epitomize this insatiable curiosity. They must succeed on a Resistance roll in order to avoid trying to open a closed container that they come across. Others are overly vulnerable to certain objects (specific foods or objects) and must at least enter into negotiations if these items are offered to them.

RAT (VERMIN, NIAHALLIM)

Quote: <<Fear! Fear wolf! ...Food? Fear! Food?>>

Background: Just like the fleshy vermin of the material world, rat-Gafflings are virtually omnipresent in the Shadow. They thrive in urban areas, being quick and large enough to prey on motes, yet small enough to hide. However, ironically, it's difficult for rat-spirits to reach the rank of Jaggling; if they grow too large, their former hiding places are useless, but they are still not likely large enough to defend themselves from other spirit-predators. The rat-spirit is one of the most commonly encountered animal-spirits in an urban environment.

Description: Rat-Gafflings are little different in appearance from their earthly kin; they are, however, frequently larger, with sharper teeth and a more intelligent gleam to their eyes. Potent rat-spirits sometimes appear in the form of "rat kings" (groups of rats whose tails are fused in an organic knot), as exceptionally large rats whose scars spell out glyphs or words significant to their territory or sometimes as bipedal rats the size of human children.

Storytelling Hints: Rat-spirits are often connected to the Beshilu, or at least sympathetic with the Plague King's bastard offspring. Though the Plague King was not a rat-spirit as such, its shards imbedded in rat bodies for a reason. Rat-spirits often gain power less through spirit predation and more through the Essence gained from surges in disease. They are not brave in the least, and, although they can (appropriately enough) fight fiercely when cornered, they are all too aware of their low place on the spiritual food chain. One of their more ghastly habits springs from their role as the ultimate in indiscriminately

omnivore scavengers. More than once, Uratha have returned after surviving a combat mission to discover that the fallen remains of their packmates bear the gnawing marks of these rodent-spirits, which are quick to scavenge food wherever the opportunity arises.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 1, Finesse 4, Resistance 2

Willpower: 3

Essence: 6 (10 max)

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Size: 1

Corpus: 3

Influences: Rats •

Numina: Chorus, Communion with the Land†, Wilds Sense

Bans: Rat-spirits are often banned from fighting in any confrontation they can possibly escape from. Another common ban is the inability to leave the vicinity of a locus of disease.

RATTLESNAKE

(DISAGREEABLE SERPENTS, SAHARA USUM)

Quote: <<I warned you.>>

Background: Rattlesnake-spirits, while not necessarily aggressive, are steadfastly stubborn. They will not go out of their way to make trouble, but when trespassed upon or attacked, they simply will not back

down or retreat. Legend has it that their distinctive rattles were added as a spiritual afterthought, to allow those that unexpectedly came upon the obdurate spirits to retreat before encountering the snake-spirits' sole negotiation technique: their venomous fangs.

Description: Just like their physical counterparts, spirit-rattlers come in a wide variety of colorations, wearing whatever most closely adapts them to their native terrain. However, several aspects remain constant regardless of location. The first, of course, is their distinctive rattle, used to signal perturbation and anger. Wise Uratha have learned that once a rattlesnake-spirit has given its warning, their best course of action is to retreat and approach again another time, hoping to catch the spirit in a more receptive mood. As frequent members of the Viper Descant, rattler-spirits have a flat, triangular head and pit-like indents at the end of their snout. Their vertically slit eyes gleam with a disturbing intelligence from beneath heavy brow ridges. Rattlesnake-spirits are terrestrial, rarely found off the ground. They are also cantankerously solitary.

Storytelling Hints: Snake-spirits appear more sinister than their mortal relatives, and it should not be assumed that they are less than potentially deadly. Known for their legendary wisdom, rattlesnake-spirits can sometimes hold knowledge desperately needed by the Uratha. However, rattlesnake-spirits must be



carefully approached, as they are unlikely to appreciate werewolves intruding into their presence.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 4

Willpower: 9

Essence: 13 (15 max)

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 17

Size: 3

Corpus: 7

Influences: Vipers ••

Numina: Fearstruck*, Know the Path†, Materialize, Spirit Venom*, Wilds Sense

Bans: Rattlesnake-spirits are almost always held under a ban that prevents them from striking before they give warning. Unfortunately, it's impossible to tell those that are not until after it is too late.

BIRD-SPIRITS

Even as clear-cut a spirit choir as “Birds” is not at all simple. While scientists in the material world classify birds as any creature with feathers, the spirits do not define things so clearly. Many wild-bird-spirits disdain domestic-fowl-spirits. Penguin-, emu- and ostrich-spirits may be ostracized by avian-spirits that do not claim non-flying birds within their ranks.

GOLDEN EAGLE

(SUN HUNTERS, UNLU THUMAKA)

Quote: <<Nothing happens that we do not witness.>>

Background: Golden-eagle-spirits are powerful, aggressive hunters. In the air, they have few equals in predatory might. Their sharp eyes can discern the minutest of details as they patrol the “sky” of the spirit wilds. They rarely hunt in darkness, preferring the warm light of Helios to the cold glow of Luna. These greater Gafflings are rarely found in or near cityscapes, preferring remote mountain territories, although their lesser cousins can be found from the seashore to the desert and from the tropics to the tundra. Like many spirits associated with the sun, golden-eagle-spirits are initially hostile toward lunar or nocturnal creatures, especially to the Forsaken.

Description: Sun Hunters appear as idealized golden eagles, although they can grow even larger than their material counterpart's impressive three-foot height. Unlike their namesakes, their plumage is truly metallic: they are covered all over with golden feathers that extend all the way down to their hooked talons. Their wing feathers are particularly long and articulated.

Initially similar to material eagles in size, these predators often quickly outstrip their seven-to-eight-

foot wingspan, growing large enough to prey upon spirits deer-size or greater with ease. Their eyes glint, deep and dark, as beautiful as they are powerful. Under optimal conditions, a golden-eagle-spirit can discern the movement of a rodent-spirit on the ground from more than a mile in the air. Perhaps due to their association with Helios, an aura of crackling energy surrounds Sun Hunters at all times.

Storytelling Hints: Golden-eagle-spirits are proud creatures that live to hunt. Unlike other eagles, they disdain carrion and, if faced with the fear of starvation, would rather offer themselves up to another of their kind than continue to exist on a prey they did not capture. They sometimes serve more powerful spirits as sentries and hunters, but are “paid” only in territory and support, never Essence. They offer a challenge to any Uratha who stray into their hunting grounds, and the greatest among these spirits may prove a challenge to the land-bound werewolf.

If convinced to parley, they speak in brief, staccato phrases and use silence as a way to unnerve their opponents. Any statement that could possibly be interpreted as a criticism of the eagle-spirit's hunting ability will result in immediate enmity. Eagles are quick to take offense and do not forgive slights on this topic.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 5, Resistance 4

Willpower: 11

Essence: 15

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 24

Size: 4

Corpus: 8

Influences: Eagles ••

Numina: Forest Communion†, Material Vision, Materialize, Sense Weakness†, Wilds Sense

Bans: Golden-eagle-spirits' pride will not allow them to attack without issuing a warning cry. If it is silenced, the eagle bearing this ban will refrain from attacking and retreats instead. Other bans sometimes borne by Sun Hunters forbid them from dealing with those that wear silver or those associated with Luna.

OWL (OMEN BIRDS, FA-NENNA)

Quote: <<Doom. Ruin. Soon.>>

Background: Humans have long associated owls with wisdom, but also with ill luck and death. There is some truth to the folklore, at least judging by many owl-spirits. Death Wolf is said to hunt “with the owls watching,” and many greater owl-spirits are a part of her brood. Werewolves often search out owl-spirits to learn Gifts of stealth, wisdom and death; the Omen Birds are difficult to reason with, though, with even

the Gafflings often holding werewolves in contempt for their ignorance. The more potent the owl-spirit, the more likely it has at least some small talent for prophecy. The sight of an owl-spirit watching a pack as they leave their territory is a bad sign in the eyes of many Ithaeur, and now more common than ever; some owl-spirits have managed to adapt to an urban environment, in effect prospering more than their physical counterparts.

Description: An owl-spirit usually resembles an amalgam of the most common owls in the region: horned or barn owls are the ones most frequently associated with Death Wolf and her brood. An owl-spirit's eyes are unnervingly luminous, and it makes no sound whatsoever in flight. Their voices are usually low and soft, but they can emit piercing shrieks as need be.

Storytelling Hints: From their earthly counterparts, owl-spirits inherit a nocturnal cycle of activity, a penchant for expressive body language and a great gift for silent hunting. Their fascination with death is quite potent, and often leads them to carefully watch the werewolves in their territories — death follows in the Uratha's wake. They take a somewhat condescending tone toward spirits or werewolves who do not greatly overpower them.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 5, Resistance 3

Willpower: 5

Essence: 15

Initiative: 8

Defense: 5

Speed: 17

Size: 2

Corpus: 5

Influences: Death •, Owls •

Numina: Death Sight†, Material Vision, Omen Gazing†, Seek*, Wilds Sense

Bans: Owl-spirits are disoriented by sunlight, and suffer a -2 penalty to all dice pools when sunlight falls directly on them.

RAVEN (EYE-EATERS, UHAMUSEN)

Quote: <<Someone dead yet?>>

Background: Raven-spirits often have many associations beyond their physical counterparts. Some are tied to death; others are associated with solar-spirits. Even others take on aspects of trickery and cunning. At their most basic, though, a lesser raven-Gaffling is a scavenger of the Shadow. While not exactly allies with spirits of war and death, they profit greatly from such spirits' activities. They are marginally more friendly toward the Uratha than are many of their kin, respecting the werewolves' very great talent for producing corpses by the bushel.

Description: A raven-Gaffling usually appears as a small, inky blotch of feathers in bird form. As it gains more power and rises in Rank, its size increases and it appears more sleek. A raven-spirit often smells of carrion and blood, and their voices are famously raucous. Like other corvid-spirits, they manage to prosper in cities as well as in the wild. When raven-spirits gather in the Shadow, a terrible battle is likely about to erupt.

Storytelling Hints: Raven-spirits are intelligent entities, so much so that they often pretend to be more foolish or ignorant than they are in order to mislead prey or rivals. They have a love for corpses and slaughter that humans would define as morbid; a raven-spirit is never happier than when it's picking over the remains of a battlefield. Some strike pacts of cooperation with other spirits, following their erstwhile allies into battle and scavenging the battlefield afterwards.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 1, Finesse 3, Resistance 3

Willpower: 4

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 14

Size: 2

Corpus: 4

Influences: Ravens •

Numina: Chorus, Material Vision, Wilds Sense

Bans: Raven-Gafflings are usually terribly curious, and quite unable to leave well enough alone. Many werewolves find it easy to trap a lesser raven-spirit by leaving out a half-open box or similarly enticing bait.

INSECT-SPIRITS

With four times more insect species than any other type of animal, it is not surprising that the number of insect-spirits in the Shadow is equally vast. Most, however never reach the point of sentience. The exceptions, when encountered, can be some of the most alien animal-spirits that Uratha will encounter.

Werewolves tend to group the spirits of various arthropods together, whether they be insect, arachnid or something else entirely. Though some Uratha separate them technically along scientific lines, most pay heed to the First Tongue concept: *Sigusuma*, the Shell-Crawlers.

ANT (WORKERS, T#UMUT#A#A)

Quote: <<Work. All. Work.>>

Background: Ant-spirits possess the apparent drive and determination of the ants that gave them being. Rarely found alone, these single-minded labor-

ers of the Shadow Realm never seem to rest and are difficult to dissuade from whatever task that occupies them. When given no way around an obstacle, they will continue over it to achieve their goal, even if it means sacrificing themselves, secure in the knowledge that their fallen forms will increase the rest of their colony's chances of completing their goal. They tend to be limited in their ability to communicate with those outside of their colony; they do not lack the vocabulary, they lack the interest in speaking about anything other than their current task, and few outside the colony have any interest in their single-minded goals.

Description: Ant-spirits appear as large versions of earthly ants, though they possess decidedly intelligent (though still terribly inhuman) faces capable of some expressiveness. They move at a methodical, efficient pace.

Storytelling Hints: Ant-spirits may appear almost anywhere in the Shadow, usually in large groups. Single ant-spirits, while rare, can make tireless messengers for the brood they serve (or the canny werewolf who is able to convince them to do so). Encountered spirit-ant groups may be task forces or armies in the service of some larger colony, or may be serving as part of a more powerful spirit's entourage. While conversing with them may be frustrating for Uratha who wish to know something outside of the ant-spirit's current focus, they can be successful communicators with precise, detailed information about their business-of-the-moment.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 2, Resistance 4

Willpower: 6

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 7

Size: 2

Corpus: 6

Influences: Ants •

Numina: Chorus, Materialize, Claim

Bans: Many ant-spirits are held under a ban that does not allow them to stop moving unless they enter a dormant state. Others are unable to turn away from a task once it is accepted, a ban frequently played upon by more powerful spirits that know that such insect-spirits will make faithful servants once they have taken on a duty.

ORB SPIDER (TRARWEAVERS, KATH-HESPAK)

Quote: <<Come. Come be welcome. Come rest against silk.>>

Background: Few common creatures are as unjustly feared as the spider. Most varieties in the material world dine on pests, could never produce enough

venom to injure a human and are truly more of a benefit to humanity than ever given credit for. Why, then, the fear, loathing, even hatred associated with these eight-legged creatures? In part, it may be long-buried memories whispering that Spinner-Hag took a spider-like form, and all her children became even more spider-like in order to hide themselves. And, in part, it may be an instinctive fear that the only thing that keeps fleshy spiders from preying on humans is the difference in size. And with some spider-spirits, that difference is negligible.

Description: Orb-spider-spirits bear distinctive, patterned gold markings that are etched across a dark, egg-shaped carapace. Their heads and chests are joined together in a single body-segment that is covered in delicate silver-white hair, as are their long, finely jointed legs. All in all, they are striking creatures. This, however, does not reassure those who have stumbled into the spiritual version of their web, and found themselves face to face with a spider the size of a small dog.

Orb-spider-spirits, like their corporeal counterparts, feed voraciously, often preying on a dozen spirits each day. This, coupled with their ability to take down prey as much as twice as large as they are, results in quick growth and one of the fastest progression in power found in the spirit wilds. It is not unusual to find webs stretching 6 to 10 feet across, with the colossal orb-spirit waiting attentively at the center. Lesser Gafflings often have a body the size of a large tarantula. Jaggling orbs can grow much, much larger.

Storytelling Hints: Just as the majority of material spiders may not be malevolent, the majority of spirit-spiders do not serve the Maeljin. However, spirit-spiders possess the appetites of any predatory spirit, and have exceptional skills for catching prey to feed those appetites. The entirety of spirit-spiders are viewed with a great deal of trepidation by those that must deal with them. Anyone who has seen one of the macabre Spider Host break apart into a flood of normal-looking spiders will feel entirely justified in perpetuating their detestation of all spirit-arachnids.

Orb-spider-spirits, for their part, have very few motivations, although they are cunning and knowledgeable in promoting them. Finding a place to build a suitable web, building a suitable web and using said suitable web to capture and desiccate the Essence of as many spirits as possible are the entirety of an orb spider-spirit's concerns. The Uratha pack that has nothing to offer that will aid in these endeavors is unlikely to interest the spider-spirit. Unless, of course, the spider has grown large enough to develop a taste for half-wolf Essence.

Rank: 3
Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 9, Resistance 8
Willpower: 16
Essence: 20
Initiative: 17
Defense: 9
Speed: 22
Size: 4
Corpus: 12
Influences: Spiders •••

Numina: Clasp*, Communion with the Land†, Drain*, Forest Communion†, Sense Weakness†, Spirit Venom*, Wilds Sense

Bans: Orb-spider-spirits do not waste any opportunity to grow. They often bear a ban that requires them to eat any web they have spun at the end of a day's hunting. As well, many are forbidden from releasing a tangled victim from their webs voluntarily, even when it is in their best interest to do so.

TREE-SPIRITS

Slow moving and often among the oldest of the spirits of living things, tree-spirits have the time to witness much and potentially could serve as a great source of wisdom and knowledge for the Uratha. Unfortunately for the werewolves, the spirits of a forest are as hostile to the half-flesh wolf-children as any other spirit.

ELM (THE DOWNFALLEN, GILA ESI)

Quote: <<What can you tell me of the others? Do any remain?>>

Background: In the late 1800s, elm trees lined Main Streets in towns throughout the world, and their spiritual representations were a veritable forest at the heart of many spiritual cityscapes. Their tall, sturdy trunks were a symbol of the almost idyllic small-town life, and their verdant treetops grew so thick and lush overhead that the sky was often blocked from view. Even within the city, there was a wilderness haven where songbirds and squirrels flocked to a life of leisure among the rich, city forest.

Then, one by one, the trees began to die. In the Shadow, tall, stately tree-spirits grew weaker and weaker, their silver-brown bark fading to wan ash-gray. Green leaves curled and turned sickly yellow in the middle of summer, eventually dropping from sagging branches, leaving nothing but a lifeless, wooden skeleton where a vital spirit once stood. By 1950, entire cities' worth of elm-spirits had died as the spiritual representation of a fungal plague passed from tree to tree, sparing none. In many cities the trees were never replanted, and errant spirits scavenged among the ephemeral skeletons. Where new trees were planted, their spiritual sides often grew stunted and twisted themselves, like children raised

in a cemetery, unable to fully develop, surrounded by the spiritual carcasses of their once-mighty ancestors.

Description: Young elm-spirits (less than 50 years old) resemble twisted, skinny versions of elm trees, with drooping branches. Their bark begins brown and silvers with age, so a lesser Gaffling may have only the beginnings of gray markings, while an ancient that survived the plague may be fully silvered and gnarled with age. Those that manifest human forms often appear as depressed adolescents with little vitality, their dark hair hanging limply into their faces like wilting tree branches. Their limbs are long and knobby, and their clothing dark and ill-fitting. Elm-spirits often exhibit signs of hypochondria.

Storytelling Hints: Elm-spirits found today are rarely more powerful than greater Gafflings, thanks to a poignant example of how changes in the physical world affect the spirit reflection. The plague of Dutch Elm Disease, carried by European and native bark beetles, is estimated to have killed almost a million elms in the material world by 1977, and as many spirits on the Shadow side of the Gauntlet. Almost every elm tree in every city in America was killed as the disease spread like particularly potent wildfire across the country. Elms often live for more than 300 years, and it is possible that remote wild elms, far outside of the mono-species plantings that proliferated within the cities, have escaped the plague. If so, they are lonely and solitary creatures, spiritual representations of the stately, silver-trunked trees at their most solemn and regal. Ancient elm-spirits bear the weight of their kin's passing heavily, now believing themselves to be the sole heirs to the memories and history of their kind. They most value those beings that have the patience to listen to their tales. Elms found within the city are strange and twisted, often bordering on insane. They both crave the company of their own kind and fear it, knowing that it was through contact with other elm-spirits that their entire species (to the best of their knowledge) was decimated. Though they lack power, they are potentially more prone to ally with the Forsaken if it would lead to a rejuvenation of their species. Sadly, the Forsaken can currently make no promises.

Rank: 1
Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 3
Willpower: 6
Essence: 10
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 5
Size: 10
Corpus: 13
Influences: Elms •

Numina: Wilds Sense, Material Vision, Plant Growth†

Bans: Perhaps as evolved self-preservation, many young elm-spirits seem to carry the ban to never remain near another of their own kind.

OAK (THOSE THAT WAIT, AKI HUPESI)

Quote: <<With time, all things may come. The tree is within the acorn. The mountains will walk again. Our time will return.>>

Background: Oak-spirits often seem to come into the world both ancient and wise. They have deep roots and tend to stay in one place in the spirit wilds, so it is possible that their “old souls” come from some sort of an ancestral memory passed from tree to acorn. During some periods of human history, oak-spirits were at the center of certain human religions. Their sway has waned, however, as humanity has left the forest and destroyed more and more of their material fetters; many oak-spirits desire to return to the days of sacrifice and worship. They are generally slow to anger, and apparently willing to wait out this “temporary” uprising of humanity.

Description: Oak-spirits resemble tall, oak trees, with a large canopy of leaves and thick branches. They move about very slowly and deliberately, but seldom stray far from the material trees that spawned them. In human form, they often appear as tall, grizzled men or women with deeply wrinkled, sun-tanned skin. Their hair is often tangled lengths of lichen, interwoven with oak leaves and small branches. Despite their tall, solid frames, oak-spirits speak with voices that are rarely more than hoarse whispers, like the rustle of leaves in the wind.

Storytelling Hints: Oak-spirits look at the “big picture.” Knowing that everything they are is carried in the spirit of every acorn in existence gives them an ability to step back from the immediate concerns of existence, and weigh the possible consequences of every action with a great deal of impartiality. While they desire what is best for their kind in the long run, they do not make decisions lightly, nor can they be spurred to immediate action by other individual’s perceptions of “emergency” situations. A forest fire, they know, clears the land for new saplings, and, similarly, every bad situation may be necessary for new opportunities to arise. This “look at all the possibilities” viewpoint is often a source of frustration for quick-moving Uratha who wish to complete a speedy deal for aid or knowledge.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 7, Resistance 9

Willpower: 18

Essence: 20

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 16

Size: 13

Corpus: 22

Influences: Oaks •••

Numina: Chorus, Communion with the Land†, Forest Communion†, Nature’s Vengeance†, Omen Gazing†, Plant Growth†, Wilds Sense

Bans: Oak-spirits usually take additional damage from the spirits of cutting weapons (axes, chain-saws, etc.) Many are also forbidden from ranging farther than a few miles from their physical representations.

PLANT-SPIRITS

While plant-spirits tend to be less mobile than their animal counterparts, they still provide significant challenge for the Uratha who does not approach encounters with them with care. Some possess poisons or irritants that can make life very uncomfortable for the unwary werewolf pack. Other plant-spirits voraciously spread throughout any given territory and are notoriously difficult to eliminate entirely.

KUDZU (LAND EATER, RILMATHA)

Quote: <<This land is beautiful. I want it.>>

Background: Kudzu-spirits embody the relentless, insidious tendency toward growth, never content as they spread themselves across the Shadow like their earthly counterparts. These spirits, while possessing no overt offensive abilities, extend voraciously wherever they can claim territory in the spirit wilds, consuming and absorbing whatever falls beneath their questing tendrils.

While all spirits consume some others to survive, kudzu is one of the few nature-spirits that seems capable of consuming any type of spirit without losing its own nature. Equally driven to spread through cityscape and wilderness, kudzu remains kudzu regardless of the almost limitless variety of spirits it absorbs.

Description: Kudzu-spirits frequently look like crude imitations of natural and manmade entities — vine-covered animals, plants, buildings and objects, roughly mirroring the spirits the kudzu has most recently absorbed. It is often difficult to tell where one kudzu-spirit ends and the next begins: unlike many spirits, they seem to prefer to prey outside their “species” when possible and often gather in extensive groups. When they take a more anthropomorphic form, their flesh retains a dark greenish tint, and clingy tendrils scattered with tri-lobed leaves wind around them in place of hair and clothing. Seemingly without joints, their fingers and toes are always overlong and constantly grasping.

Storytelling Hints: Uratha who desire to bargain with kudzu-spirits should be prepared to give them

the one thing they desire: more territory. Packs that set out to curtail the growth of this plant-spirit in an area will find they have a singularly resolute opponent on their hands.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 5, Resistance 7

Willpower: 14

Essence: 20

Initiative: 12

Defense: 7

Speed: 13

Size: 10

Corpus: 17

Influences: Climbing Plants •••

Numina: Chorus, Clasp*, Drain*, Materialize, Plant Growth*, Reaching, Wilds Sense

Bans: Like most plant-spirits, kudzu-spirits fear fire, and many are bound by ban to retreat rather than face it. Others are unable to resist bargains that would allow them to spread into new territory.

ARTIFICIAL-SPIRITS

The phrase “artificial-spirit” doesn’t imply a spirit that is not “real,” but rather the spirit of something created out of artifice. Packs whose territory is in or near the city may deal with artificial-spirits as often or sometimes even more often than nature-spirits. The spiritual representations of man’s creations may have much to offer werewolves, but artificial-spirits also represent some of the greatest threats to them.

Many artificial-spirits, at least those not tied to vehicles or other concepts that involve motion, have a Speed “species factor” of 0. The spirit can still move, but that is a function of its Power and Finesse alone.

VEHICLE-SPIRITS

Many automobiles, ships and planes are singularly important to the humans who spend time in and on them, often to the extent of their owners projecting personalities onto them and giving them names. It shouldn’t be surprising, then, that vehicles are among the most common non-living entities to exhibit awakened spirit representations in the Shadow Realm.

SPORTS CAR (HIGHWAY CATS, HURRAH GASMAK)

Quote: <<Speed kills.>>

Background: Most vehicle-spirits begin life when the spirit of a particular vehicle is awakened, then begin to become avatars of the ideal vehicle in general as they succeed in predation. The spirits of sports cars are a striking example. Many Highway Cats are surprisingly powerful for such young spirits, due in part to the adulation of the humans who care for their material analogues and envy their owners. Though other vehicle-spirits are often more predatory (the spirit of a tractor-trailer is a dangerous thing), Highway Cats draw power both from idolization by humans and the spikes of emotion that high-speed car accidents can generate.



Description: Despite human fascination with make and model, a potent sports-car-spirit is not easily recognizable as any one particular vehicle. Its chassis is a sleek and streamlined amalgamation of features, not always symmetrical but consistently imposing. Some even incorporate the features of the more “modest” vehicles used in street car racing; these spirits are even more peculiar to the eye, but their vanity tells them that they are the next evolution in speed. Its chassis is more flexible than metal, allowing it to contort in organic ways. Some have “paint jobs” that resemble the coloration of a poisonous reptile, amphibian or fish more than the latest street model. Its “mouth” is on its underside: like most car-spirits, a Highway Cat parks on its prey to devour it.

Storytelling Hints: The spirits of sports cars are uncannily feline in attitude — vain, predatory and just a bit mad. They exult in their speed, and enjoy chasing down their spirit prey and toying with it before moving in for the kill. They are dismissive and arrogant toward the painfully slow Uratha, but can be intimidated if a werewolf pack proves that they can bind or injure the spirit, regardless of any difference in speed.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 9, Resistance 5

Willpower: 10

Essence: 20

Initiative: 14

Defense: 9

Speed: 40 (This represents likely combat speed; over extended chases or out of combat, the spirit defaults to the speed and acceleration rules appropriate for its vehicle type. See *World of Darkness*, p. 142 and p. 147.)

Size: 10

Corpus: 15

Influences: Cars •, Speed ••

Numina: Chorus, Fetter, Iron Treachery, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Mechanical Possession*, Speed*

Bans: Highway Cats begin losing Essence if they are forced to remain still.

TRAIN (IRON HORSES, ANFARSISU)

Quote: <<There is only one way. Follow the way, and you will reach your destination.>>

Background: Once the dominant descant within the Vehicle Choir, the advent of the automobile and airplane have replaced train-spirits over the past century. Those that remain are, like their predecessors, among the most single-minded spirits found in any choir. Obsessed with proceeding from Point A to Point B, spirits of the railroad care little for anything that occurs away from the network of railways connecting spirit-city to spirit-city across the Shadow.

When something threatens to affect their routine, however, these vehicle-spirits can be among the most ruthless and brutal in clearing away potential threats.

Like most man-made constructs, train-spirits do not awaken immediately upon creation. Those that have not been intentionally awoken by Uratha may be the result of years of emotional investment by the humans who use them (as in the case of the Orient Express or Japan’s Bullet Train). More likely, they have been awakened by a great rail calamity. A freightliner might run actively in the mortal world but remain spiritually dormant for the first 10 years of its service. After it derails while transporting several tankers of highly caustic chemicals, the now-awakened locomotive-spirit may continue to exist even if the physical train never returns to service. Once awakened, it may consume other train-spirits, becoming larger, faster and more single-mindedly determined as it travels from one spiritual station to the next. Or, if it develops a taste for the destruction brought about by its derailing, it may orchestrate more accidents, feeding on the physical pain and emotional despair associated with further mishaps.

Description: Train-spirits commonly resemble dark serpent-horses constructed of steel. Regardless of the surface they travel on, their hundred iron hooves strike sparks against the ground, as they thunder forward towards their next destination. Those associated with traditional locomotives exhale clouds of thick, white steam or sooty smoke, while more modern incarnations may smell of diesel or crackle with electric energy. Their voices are the rumbling roar of a freighter punctuated by a harsh ear-splitting whistle. Nothing about these spirits, physical or otherwise, is subtle or cunning. If they bother to take human form, train-spirits resemble stoic conductors bustling through verbal exchanges with the same brusque directness that embodies the rest of their activities.

Storytelling Hints: Train-spirits care for little that does not affect them directly. While they respect speed and power, reliability and timeliness are inarguably their highest priorities. Canny Uratha may bargain with train-spirits to carry messages or even provide rides for themselves, but delaying a locomotive to negotiate will only anger it. Likewise, the Uratha pack that fails to complete chiminage to a train-spirit by the agreed date and time will find other train-spirits almost impossible to deal with in the future.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 2, Resistance 9

Willpower: 18

Essence: 20

Initiative: 11

Defense: 9

Speed: 24 (or as vehicle)

Size: 15

Corpus: 24

Influences: Trains •••

Numina: Chorus, Fetter, Howl*, Machine Possession*, Reaching, Speed*, Telekinesis*

Bans: As transportation-spirits, train-spirits are frequently under ban to not remain in one area for more than a certain length of time. Others may be forbidden from accepting passengers, unable to travel in certain areas or conditions or unable to carry certain types of cargo.

STRUCTURE-SPIRITS

Not every building in the physical world has an awakened spiritual representation. Most often, structure-spirits are brought from slumber when something significant happens within their walls, and, while they rarely stray far from the location of their physical counterpart, they can manifest in ways that more represent those events than the actual building.

BANK (USURY LORDS, GUZEN EHAARA)

Quote: <<I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you've been declined for that transaction.>>

Background: Bank-spirits are spawned by humanity's obsession with money — making it, hoarding it, increasing its value. Bank-spirits, like most urban-spirits, find themselves tied to the Shadow surrounding the city in which their material equivalent rests. Because of their association with greed and wealth, these spirits are notorious for dabbling across the Gauntlet, despite the Uratha's best efforts to stop them.

Description: Bank-spirits often appear as buildings built entirely of neatly arranged stacks of money, often ancient coinage as well as the most recent printing of paper bills. Some even have peculiar symbols carved into their flanks. Because humanity has spent so much time conceptualizing about wealth, they are more likely than most buildings to take a human form. When doing so, they most often appear as the spirit's off-center conception of a banking executive, dressed well if the bank-spirit has been successful at gathering Essence, more shabbily if it is in decline. Bank-spirits exhibit an attitude of efficient superiority, and are very concerned with transactions and record keeping. Their speech is sprinkled with financial terms, sometimes to the point that communication with them becomes difficult.

Storytelling Hints: When Uratha are hoping to track down a foe who has strong ties to the financial world or who has major investments in a bank, the assistance of bank-spirits can be invaluable. For these spirits, however, help must be earned

and favors repaid — with interest. Bank-spirits do not care much for the Uratha: werewolves are more often concerned with territory than transactions. Bank-spirits are, however, among the more likely to deal with werewolves, if the appropriate channels are followed. The Uratha pack that swindles a bank-spirit out of chimage or otherwise fails to fulfill an agreement with it will quickly find that the spirit will do everything within its considerable power to exact the originally agreed upon specifications and often exorbitant additional "fees."

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 8, Resistance 8

Willpower: 17

Essence: 20

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 17

Size: 20

Corpus: 28

Influences: Money •••

Numina: Chorus, Drain*, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Possession, Reaching, Telekinesis*

Bans: Bank-spirits are often banned from disadvantageous transactions. They will not give something for nothing. Others, especially those situated near greed loci, must constantly strive to increase their Essence.

MINI-MART (QUICKLURES, NAMTAMAAAR)

Quote: <<You want it? I got it. C'mon in...>>

Background: When the corner store in a neighborhood is better known for providing crank than candy, one would expect the spirit representation to be shady as well. Surprisingly, the Mini-Mart is often among the brightest-lit buildings in the Shadow landscape. Appearances can be deceiving, however, and behind the flashy facade is a dark, hungry spirit that devours anything foolish enough to walk into it. Bright signs beckon unwary spirits inside, acting as bait for this structure-spirit. Unable to chase down its prey, the Mini-Mart has learned to tempt unwary spirits into the maw behind its plate-glass doors. Luring the unwary inside with neon advertisements for alcohol, lottery tickets and tobacco, the store feeds on unwary spirits: most often of despair-seeking numbness, but sometimes of hope, greed or other concepts common to the depressed economy of the areas where Mini-Marts are most often found. Small wealth-spirits are often tempted inside, and Mini-Marts survive on a steady string of very small spirits rather than attempting to consume large amounts of Essence at one time.

Description: At first glance, Mini-Mart-spirits are not unlike their material counterparts. Small buildings, often located in the shadows of much

larger and darker structures, they're a gaudy flash in an otherwise dour landscape. The truth, however, is much darker. The view through the plate-glass storefront seems to offer well-stocked shelves of food, clean restrooms and a veritable library of reading material. But once a spirit (or unwary werewolf) steps inside, the doors snap shut and darkness falls as the building-spirit begins attempting to consume the Essence of whatever has become trapped within. From the outside, the storefront may look like fragile plate glass, but, once inside, the spirit-store's prey finds the structure much more formidable.

Storytelling Hints: Mini-Marts, like Deep Sea Anglerfish, rely on bait to feed themselves, rather than speed or strength. Uratha foolish enough to look inside for supplies, shelter or even directions, find themselves forced to either negotiate or physically fight their way out of the spirit's trap. Mini-Marts are, while not intelligent, very cunning and excel in offering bargains that appear very good but in truth are not.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 6, Resistance 5

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15

Initiative: 11

Defense: 6

Speed: 9

Size: 18

Corpus: 23

Influences: Commerce ••

Numina: Clasp*, Discorporation, Drain*, Harrow, Revelation*

Bans: Mini-Mart-spirits often carry bans dealing with the prey they are allowed to consume. Some cannot devour victims above a certain power level or Rank while others can absorb energy only from wealth-spirits.

TOOL-SPIRITS

For decades, the creation and use of tools was thought to be a uniquely human characteristic. While scientists now know that some other animals create and use tools as well, tool use is still closely linked with mankind's perception of what makes them human. Regardless of their creators, there is no doubt that tools and other utilitarian objects are sometimes invested with enough spiritual energy to manifest a spirit representation in the Shadow Realm. Uratha tend to lump tools together in a single choir, although knife- and jackhammer-spirits may have very different driving goals and perspectives.

KNIFE (BLADELINGS, AIRIBAND)

Quote: <<If one is good, then two halves are better.>>

Background: Not since the advent of fire has any item been used for as much good and evil both as the blade. Whether it is a family heirloom, passed down unused for decades, or a butterfly knife that's used for daily defense, knives have more likelihood of awakening than any other tool.

A knife-spirit's primary goal is, of course, to cut. How the physical manifestation of the item is used, however, has a great deal of influence on the spirit's personality and individual drive. A shiv-spirit may feed on the perceived power its physical counterpart gives its incarcerated owner, as well as the quick clandestine violence associated with its use, manifesting as a dark, hungry predator. A scalpel-spirit might become obsessed with consuming-disease-spirits, or choose to dine on pain-spirits, influencing its wielder to perform unnecessary surgeries that will ensure it a constant food source.

Description: Appearing as a skeleton of sharpened steel, knife-spirits never wear "flesh" and have only contempt for those who do, in the material world or the Shadow. They speak with a metallic rasp, a strange tongue that carries tones of blade against whetstone and raises the hackles of any who hear it. Knife-spirits tend to move quickly and decisively, their words and thoughts following their physical forms. While some are very quick-witted and enjoy verbal dueling, they have no sense of empathy with humans or other creatures of flesh.

Storytelling Hints: Literally walking a knife-edge between tool and weapon, knife-spirits have the potential to be particularly useful to Uratha. However it is extremely difficult to convince these spirits that lending their aid to "half-flesh" creatures is in their best interest. Emotional negotiations always end in failure. A pack may be able to best a knife-spirit in hand-to-hand combat, probably the most effective technique when dealing with these particular spirits.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 4, Resistance 2

Willpower: 4

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 11

Size: 1

Corpus: 3

Influences: Knives •

Numina: Fetter, Reaching, Drain

Bans: Knife-spirits' bans differ widely depending on their type. Bayonet-spirits may be unable to refuse an order from a more powerful spirit, while spirits attuned to cleavers or kitchen knives may be forbidden to strike against anything but animal- or plant-spirits.

WEAPON-SPIRITS

It is not uncommon for Uratha to awaken the spirits of their weapons, utilizing ancient ritual to create a gun or sword that actively *wants* to enter battle on its owner's behalf. But werewolf ritual is not the only method that creates such spirit creatures. Spirits from garrotes to Gatling guns inhabit the Shadow Realm; some are associated with death-spirits, some with fear and intimidation. One thing is constant, however; they are rarely amiable entities to deal with.

MACHINE GUN (CHATTERSHOTS, DIRAK-LAAAF)

Quote: <<Gun control means hitting the target.>>

Background: The creation of the machine gun changed the face of human warfare forever. Likewise, the machine-gun-spirit makes a startling impact on the Shadow wherever it is found. Like their material counterparts, these spirits have the ability to inflict massive amounts of damage at a distance, and spirits of pain, fear and death often flock in their wake.

Most often part of either the Pistol or Rifle Descant, it is rare to find a machine gun-spirit that strives for any goal but destruction, although those associated with certain military groups may have a strong sense of “destruction as protection” or “honorable warfare.”

Description: The mechanical form of a machine-gun-spirit is a terrifying sight. Many favor roughly human forms, with gun-blue metallic skin and sleek hollow limbs that resemble gun barrels. They often announce their attack with a deafening crack and muzzle flash, relying on the terrifying sound to freeze their prey in fear. Perhaps even more frightening, however, is the knowledge that some are capable of moving in total silence. The first awareness many victims have of their presence comes in the split second between the soft, suppressed popping of their attack and the pain as the bullets strike home.

Other than the eyes, their faces are almost featureless, and display no emotion. Those with military leanings may wear dark, camouflage fatigues while those that are more city-oriented may favor gang wear. One thing they do share, however, is a straightforward aggressive demeanor. They move with an emphasis on efficiency, never wasting energy on non-target-specific activities. Speaking in a rapid-fire monotone, these spirits get straight to the point and subtlety is not their forte. Machine-gun-spirits rarely possess a sense of humor and have little patience for those beings that utilize humor within negotiations.

Storytelling Hints: Machine-gun-spirits are among the most aggressive and brazen of the Weapons Choir. Few remain low in power for long, their violent nature summoning a more than adequate



supply of the conceptual-spirits that are their favored prey.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 3, Resistance 9

Willpower: 17

Essence: 20

Initiative: 12

Defense: 8

Speed: 16

Size: 6

Corpus: 15

Influences: Guns •••

Numina: Blast (bullets), Chorus, Fear Struck*, Harrow, Material Vision, Sense Weakness†, Speed*

Bans: Machine-gun-spirits are often forbidden from re-treating from a fight.

INFORMATION-SPIRITS

More so than tool use or any sense of self-awareness, some believe that the true differentiation between humans and other animals to be humans' ability to record information for future use. The spirits of the Information Choir are among the most useful to the Uratha, but few are anxious to deal kindly with the self-appointed guardians who seek to keep them from the physical world's rich information sources.

BOOK (SCROLLBORN, SAR UMFAISAF)

Quote: <<Shhh.>>

Background: Before the advent of computers and the spawning of their spiritual sides in the Shadow, book-spirits were the dominant guardians of information. Unwilling to release their grasp on this realm, some book-spirits actively began hunting data and computer prey, blending into an efficient technological electronic-spirit. Others cling to their traditional paradigm, hungrily feeding on other spirits attached to the written word, or the emotion-spirits associated with their particular genre, to survive. Among these are spirits of the Bible and other religious works, spirits associated with fiction works and those tied to reference works (obsolete or otherwise).

Description: Book-spirits have a wide range of appearances, frequently depending on the sort of subject matter contained within the original book that gave them life. The older book-spirits border on becoming conceptuels of knowledge, and often resemble emaciated, cowed acolytes, features hidden in the depths of their dark hoods. Only their paper-skinned, skeletal hands are visible as they carry massive tomes of obviously ancient origin wrapped in tarnished metal chains that trail behind them as they proceed slowly from one location to the next. Book-spirits are usually very quiet, disdaining loud noises and the individuals who create them. When

they speak, their voices are the muted whisper of parchment on parchment, and their words are eloquent and elaborate, although never spoken above a whisper. Even the chains that bind their humanoid forms to their tomes make only the softest of metallic chimes when moved.

Storytelling Hints: Book-spirits can be invaluable sources of information: however, they hoard their knowledge with a tenacity that would make the most penny-pinching miser proud. They will rarely barter information for anything except more information, and most are highly selective about the subjects they are interested in. Those that attempt to sever the tome held by the cowed figure and reap the benefits of the spirit's knowledge by force will find that the acolyte is nothing but a spiritual husk designed to transport the spirit (embodied within the book itself). Violent negotiation with book-spirits most often ends with the spirit discorporating, leaving the attacker frustrated and unenlightened.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Willpower: 11

Essence: 15

Initiative: 7

Defense: 7

Speed: 15

Size: 5

Corpus: 9

Influences: Books ••

Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Material Vision, Revelation*, Unspoken Communication †

Bans: Many book-spirits are forbidden from exchanging knowledge for anything but more knowledge. Others may be phobic about fire or unable to speak above a whisper. Spirits associated with religious tomes may be banned from refusing aid to a devotee of their particular faith or may adhere strongly to any or all of the tenets and taboos of that faith, by supernatural bond rather than a moral sense of right and wrong.

COMPUTER (GRAM-EATERS, SETHUL UDDU)

Quote: <<Permission denied. Please try again with appropriate permissions.>>

Background: Startled awake by the wash of feeling surrounding the earliest punch-card computers, processing-Gafflings have been a part of the Shadow for more than 100 years in one form or another. However only in the past 50 years have these often-solitary technology-spirits grown to a power level that has encouraged their growth past the Gaffling level. Following the exponential surge in technology in the past 20 years, computer-spirits are now found even at the greater Juggling level, and rumors speak of silicon Incarnae and entities that take the form of a network

of symbiotic Jaggings all serving a common purpose. Computer-spirits dislike dealing with anything but other highly technological spirits. They consider themselves superior to all but the most powerful spirits, but often they learn the hard way that they are powered by the same Essence that fuels the most primitive and elemental of spirits. Computer-spirits tend to gather near urban centers, though they also have the potential to exist wherever someone possesses and uses a computer.

Description: Computer-spirits often appear as a manifestation of the particular computer they represent. Those dedicated to specific purposes may also take the form of a more symbolic version thereof. Information archival equipment may appear as a small building that, once entered, is found to have a much larger interior than appears possible from the outside, and that is filled from floor to ceiling with bookshelves representing the information stored there. Computer-spirits rarely deign to take human form, considering humans to be a tool for them, rather than the other way around.

Storytelling Hints: Computer-spirits know everything that was known by the spirits they feed off. Because of this, most develop a taste for data-spirits and other sources of knowledge-based Essence. However, these modern spirits have little respect for the half-meat Uratha. Some novices hope to find easy answers from computer-spirits, but even the most technophilic Elodoth quickly finds that there are often simpler ways to gain information than negotiating with these egotistical and linear-minded spirits. The constant evolution of technology also has its effect on computer-spirits' demeanors: they are voracious predators, constantly trying to consume and evolve to keep one step ahead of obsolescence.

Werewolves with territories in urban areas may find that they are constantly attempting to prevent these curious spirits from tapping across the Gauntlet into the material world in their search for new technology and information. For that reason, as much as any other, computer-spirits resent the Forsaken.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 9, Resistance 7

Willpower: 16

Essence: 20

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 18

Size: 3

Corpus: 10

Influences: Computers •••

Numina: Blast (electricity), Chorus, Drain*, Machine Possession*, Material Vision, Reaching, Revelation*

Bans: Computer-spirits often carry a ban that makes them unable to avoid a properly worded command. Others can only communicate via binary code or other computer languages.

DATA

(BINARY BUTTERFLIES, TAISMIN TAEMMA)

Quote: <<Proportionally speaking, the Rhinoceros Beetle is the strongest living creature. They can carry 85 times their own weight. Proportionately speaking, the Rhi...>>

Background: Data-spirits are weak knowledge-spirits that exist primarily as fodder for more powerful spirits. Computer-spirits feed voraciously on these lesser Gafflings, though other spirits may find their modest pools of Essence “tasty” as well. Data-spirits usually carry only one or two useful facts. They tend to gather near computer-spirits, as if cognizant of their probable fate and accepting of it, or in areas such as newsrooms, libraries, schools and the homes of collectors of trivia.

Description: Data-spirits can manifest in many fashions in the spirit-world. Those with older knowledge may appear as a single page of a book. Technology-linked data-spirits may appear as a blinking cursor, while those gathered near a school may resemble sheets of notebook paper. Regardless of their appearance, data-spirits emit an aura of knowledge and savvy. However, they are usually uninspiring conversationalists since their knowledge base is limited to only one or two topics, and, even in those areas, their knowledge on these subjects is specific and limited.

Storytelling Hints: Uratha may attempt to glean information from data-spirits, although finding precisely the correct Gafflings carrying the information they seek may be more difficult than they expect. As well, werewolves may discover that the data-spirits they have relied on to store “facts” or “evidence” may become the victim of other, hungry spirits, resulting in corrupt or missing documents.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 3

Willpower: 6

Essence: 10

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 5

Size: 2

Corpus: 5

Influences: Data •

Numina: Revelation*, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize

Bans: Data-spirits are often unable to disobey commands given by computer or other technology-spirits.

OBJECT-SPIRITS

Some spirits do not fall easily within one of the Uratha's commonly understood choirs. Window-panes, for example, are rarely awakened, but in the Shadow Realm there is no such thing as "never." Other object-spirits, such as money or toys, may be awakened more frequently, but can belong to such diverse choirs, depending on individual personality, that classifying them defies even the most obsessive Ithaeur.

MONEY (GOLD THOUGHTS, GUZENTAIMMA)

Quote: <<Everything is a transaction. Life is a transaction between flesh and rot, motion and stillness. The question is, what is yours worth?>>

Background: Money-spirits come in various sizes, shapes and denominations. The larger the amount of money represented, the more powerful the spirit. These spirits tend to gather in urban centers, near places in the Shadow that correspond to banks and lending establishments, even if those buildings have no presence there themselves. They also gather near large amounts of cash, whether in private safes, suitcases of unmarked bills or holes in the ground. These spirits demonstrate a mercenary attitude, expecting payment for everything — Essence being their coin of choice.

Description: Money-spirits often appear as paper and metal simulacrum, seemingly frail forms with no apparent internal framework. This appearance is often deceiving, however. Diminutive size does not necessarily correspond to weak power in these spirits. They speak with a distinctive rustle to their voice, no matter their form. Like most spirits, low-strength Gafflings do not possess a great deal of self-identity, but large quantities of money (or occasionally money with very significant emotional import) can take on a very distinctive personality of its own.

Storytelling Hints: Spirits of money have a vested interest in the material world and recognize that their presence often begets more of their kind to feed upon. Thus, to ensure themselves a steady supply of their preferred Essence, they often become involved heavily across the Gauntlet. While this can nurture prosperity, it is far easier for illegal business practices to prosper in most areas of the World of Darkness than for legal ones. This matters little to the money-spirits, but it can make a significant difference to the Uratha who finds its territory the site of the spirit's attentions. Because of this, money-spirits often have an inimical relationship with the Uratha. Money-spirits can prove helpful if the werewolves can offer them enough Essence or look the other way when a spirit crosses the Gauntlet, but those that do so may

find themselves in the midst of a self-perpetuating cycle as greed- and theft-spirits are naturally attracted to areas where money-spirits gather.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 6, Resistance 9

Willpower: 16

Essence: 20

Initiative: 15

Defense: 7

Speed: 13

Size: 5

Corpus: 14

Influences: Money •••

Numina: Chorus, Claim, Discorporation, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Reaching

Bans: Money-spirits often are compelled to count, and can sometimes be distracted by a question as simple as "How many bricks do you think are in that wall?" Others bear bans that prevent them from performing verbal bargaining: all deals must be sealed with paperwork and signatures.

TRAFFIC LIGHT

(LITTLE ROAD TYRANTS, SAA-SIK-NISIK)

Quote: <<Stop!>>

Background: These modern spirits, though not especially strong, exist in their greatest numbers in urban centers but also proliferate wherever there are back roads and crossroads, even in rural towns and villages. Their sphere of concern is strictly limited to roads and pathways, yet their Influence, when subtly used, can have great effect.

Description: Traffic-light-spirits usually appear as a trio of red, yellow and green lights that hover in the air, usually over the Shadow representation of a roadway or crossroad. They sometimes appear as stark caricatures of traffic cops, their eyes glowing alternately red, yellow and green.

Storytelling Hints: These spirits are self-important far beyond their actual capability and intelligence; they have little power to actually stop determined travelers, but they see themselves as very influential. They do have the ability to signal other spirits and often work as first-alert-spirits for stronger spirit denizens. Those that enter the material world prefer to increase their own influence by stirring up emotions. At their most harmless, they are hardly worth consideration; they cause traffic jams during bad weather or summer heat, but little else. However, some discover that by "malfunctioning" in a way that causes traffic accidents, they receive a much more impressive flow of emotion.

In the larger scheme of things, they are a perfect example of the petty bureaucrats that sometimes arise among the Artificials. If properly bribed, they can as-

sist werewolves by delaying enemies who use normal means of travel in the real world, but as enemies, they will use their influence to slow a pack at perhaps the worst possible time.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 4, Finesse 2, Resistance 2

Willpower: 6

Essence: 6 (10 max)

Initiative: 4

Defense: 4

Speed: 6

Size: 3

Corpus: 5

Numina: Chorus, Fetter, Materialize

Influences: Traffic •

Bans: Traffic-light-spirits often are bound to travel only on roads or clearly marked pathways. A compulsion for doing things in a certain order is another common ban.

TOYS (PLAYTHINGS, EVIDENT)

Quote: <<You can't go away, yet. We're not done playing.>>

Background: Few possessions are imbued with the unconditional love and undivided devotion that a child focuses on her favored toy. Although powerful, this emotion alone is rarely enough to awaken a toy-spirit. Unfortunately, the passion that awakens a childhood toy is most often given its empowering intensity when the object has become the sole positive focus in the child's life. All too often, toy-spirits are awakened by the focus of children subjected to horrific situations of abuse and neglect. These spirits grow quickly in strength, fostered by a bizarre and contradictory diet. While they may begin feasting on the emotion-spirits summoned by their owner's affection for their physical representation, childhood adulation is normally short-lived and many spirits, like their physical counterparts, find the journey from inseparable companion to abandonment to be a short one. Rarely, however, do the fear- and pain-spirits that surround abused children dissipate, and these, more often than their more positive counterparts, provide toy-spirits with the majority of their Essence.

Description: Toy-spirits normally retain at least a cursory resemblance to their physical counterparts. A second glance, however, shows that the darkness of the Shadow has not passed them over. Dolls may grow skeletally thin and take on ghoulish physical qualities as their owners' attention falls elsewhere and they develop an unnatural hunger that no amount of Essence can completely sate. Stuffed-animal-spirits often grow razor sharp teeth and claws, bestial traits quite absent in their original forms.

Storytelling Hints: Toy-spirits are most commonly found in locations where children have been

or are being abused, whether physically, mentally or sexually. Some remain tied to the location long after the child has died or moved, while others form obsessive connections to their original owners, although they are incapable of true emotional empathy or concern for the objects of their obsession. Instead, they remain near their target, fostering childish behavior in their now-grown obsessions throughout their lives. Encouraging lavish spending on recreational activities and objects, these spirits seek to create adults **who** are entirely unable to hold down a steady job or maintain the basics of "normal" life, while obsessing over games, sports or social activities. Unfortunately for the humans involved, the Essence of despair, fear- and addiction-spirits is just as nourishing as is that of other toy-spirits.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 9, Resistance 3

Willpower: 5

Essence: 15

Initiative: 12

Defense: 9

Speed: 16

Size: 3

Corpus: 6

Influences: Toys ••

Numina: Drain*, Fetter, Material Vision, Reaching, Telekinisis*

Bans: Toy-spirit bans vary widely according to toy type. Electronic toys may be unable to refuse bargains involving gifts of technology. Doll-spirits may require chiminage of clothing or time spent with them (and may be quite willing to lie or manipulate that time indefinitely if allowed). Many stuffed-animal-spirits are bound in guardianship of the owner of their physical representation and cannot take action that would bring the child physical harm.

CITY-SPIRITS

More than a location, more than a set of buildings, cities have their own identities, their own personalities and their own spirits. But within each city is also a network of spirits that are vital to the city's identity. These can include spirits of subways, bus systems, parks, famous buildings, anything that makes the city what it is.

PLAYGROUND (CHILD FARMERS, ENDE MATHA)

Quote: <<Do you know this game?>>

Background: Playground-spirits may seem at first to be carefree, childlike creatures, filled with laughter and nostalgia. However, this innocent facade covers a much more sinister spirit, one filled with the weight of the anguish and cruelty of childhood. Playground-spirits are witness not only to the joys of children at play, but the fierce competitiveness inherent in young humans or the single-minded devotion with



which some tortured or abused children approach “play” as their only outlet for the demons that haunt them. The sick desires of pedophiles and other child molesters often draw them to playgrounds where they can hunt their prey. This, too, is reflected in the spirit of the playground. It is not uncommon for playground-spirits to grow strong enough to become lesser Jaggings, but a constant diet of the emotional spirits associated with childhood is often enough to make more powerful playground-spirits very dark in nature.

Description: Playground-spirits often manifest as abstracted, amalgamated children of either sex. Sometimes they take on the dominant characteristic of the playgrounds’ most frequent visitors, such as bullies, latchkey children or pre-schoolers. These spirits project strong emotions, often spreading their experiences of neglect, aggression or dependence to those that come too near.

Storytelling Hints: Playground-spirits may serve as sources of information for Uratha who are hunting particularly degenerate enemies, those that prey upon the weak and helpless. These spirits, however, may also be antagonists in and of themselves, as they may have begun to enjoy their diet of intense conflict, sorrow and cruelty, even manipulating situations across the Gauntlet to ensure a constant source of the same.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 8, Resistance 7

Willpower: 15

Essence: 20

Initiative: 15

Defense: 8

Speed: 16

Size: 10

Corpus: 17

Influences: Children •••

Numina: Drain*, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Materialize, Possession, Reaching, Telekinesis*

Bans: Playground-spirits are often held to a ban that reflects the childlike nature of their principal visitors. One might not be able to cross a chalk line, or temporarily loses its sight while a child counts to ten. Others must not directly physically attack a child (although the same spirits are rarely bound against manipulation or mental or emotional harm).

SEWER (CESSLORDS, SLOAG’THA)

Quote: <<Beautiful filth. Elegant waste. The ordure of the city, shat out as a gift for me, given up as an offering poured into my chalice. Look on me — Am I not lovely? Am I not strong?>>

Background: Sewer-spirits belong almost exclusively to an urban environment. They remain underground most of the time, near the real-world locations of sewers. Most cities develop one powerful

master-spirit of their sewer systems, a Jaggling that lords over its admittedly vast territory. Smaller sewer-spirits can earn a place in the fetid labyrinth as well, though they must be careful to avoid the attention of stronger spirits of filth.

Description: Minor sewer-spirits may appear as an abstract fusion of large metal pipes or unwholesome animated collections of effluvia; they may even take the forms of strangely unnatural vermin. The sewer-spirit described here is much more powerful and distinct, and may appear as a massive insect-like agglomeration of filthy pipes and grates, or sometimes as a bloated rat-like creature with a rusted iron crown, riding a great albino alligator.

Storytelling Hints: Sewer-spirits are frequently vain, particularly as they rise in power. They see themselves as some form of royalty, as there are few people in the city that do not “offer them tribute.” They are surprisingly knowledgeable spirits as well, and many a werewolf pack has had to swallow their pride and humbly approach a Sloag'tha in order to gain information on prey that has gone underground to hide. Of course, werewolves have trouble approaching sewer-spirits because of their malodorous presence, an almost physical assault on their sensitive noses. Sewer-spirits may also be obnoxiously aggressive and territorial, requiring many disgusting tests of any Uratha who wishes to obtain information or favors. When a Cesslord turns murderous, it can be deceptively dangerous — it can kill as easily as it nauseates, and many a body can be hidden away within the pipes and sluices of its domain.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 10, Finesse 8, Resistance 10

Willpower: 20

Essence: 25

Initiative: 18

Defense: 10

Speed: 20

Size: 8

Corpus: 18

Influences: Filth ••, Sewers ••

Numina: Animate, Blast (filth), Chorus, Discorporation, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Materialize, Reaching

Bans: Sewer-spirits cannot abide pleasant smells, and often carry bans against traveling in areas where fresh flowers, perfumes or even fresh air abound. Others may be forbidden from dealing with “clean” individuals, seeing the absence of filth as an insult to their more earthy nature.

SUBWAY (TRAVELS BELOW, TAILFULMATHA)

Quote: <<You must pay before you can ride. Give me a token worthy of me.>>

Background: A subway-spirit, though a relatively new creature of the Shadow, draws power from such diverse concepts as electricity, darkness, haste and travel. Subway-spirits reside almost exclusively in the “underground” regions of the Shadow Realm, often beneath realms occupied by other city-spirits. They have an intimate knowledge of the area around them and of various other spirits; they also have some perception of humans, since the object that gives rise to them is familiar to the commuters who use it daily. Cities with particularly famous subway systems have particularly powerful subway-spirits racing beneath their streets: the London Underground is rumored to be governed by a spirit of virtually Incarna strength.

Description: Subway-spirits most often appear as skeletal, steel serpents with wide, blind eyes. Their appearance is heralded by a rasping, metallic whirlwind that attempts to push aside anything that might obstruct the subway-spirits' path. They rarely speak, and will not voluntarily pause between destinations, preferring to barrel blithely over any obstruction that is not shunted aside by the wind that precedes them. Subway-spirits rarely take human form.

Storytelling Hints: Subway-spirits know many routes between locations in both the Shadow and in the physical world. They often share a descant with train-spirits, and, like their above-ground cousins, can provide Uratha with information and transport when properly approached. They will never negotiate between destinations, however, and are sticklers for payment, demanding “tokens” of great value before they give any assistance to the Forsaken.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 4, Resistance 8

Willpower: 16

Essence: 20

Initiative: 12

Defense: 8

Speed: 26

Size: 13

Corpus: 21

Influences: Subways •••

Numina: Blast (electricity), Discorporation, Know the Path†, Machine Possession*, Materialize, Speed*, Wind-Tossed*

Bans: Subway-spirits often lose power if they are bound to one place. Other common bans include a compulsion to accept bargains if fitting “tokens” are offered and an inability to pause once committed to a certain path.

ELEMENTALS

Counting in their numbers some of the eldest of the spirits, elementals see newer spirits (and the half-spirit Uratha) as a passing annoyance. The eldest

among them remember a time before animal- or plant-spirits existed, let alone the choirs and descants spawned by humanity's presence. And, as they are never hesitant to point out, they will exist long after the newcomers are no more.

AIR ELEMENTALS

Descants among the Air Elemental Choir tend to be as amorphous as the element itself. Some, such as the Cold Descant, are based on characteristics and include everything from winter breezes to the infamous North Winds regardless of where they are found. Others are more regionally definitive, and can include the myriad of air patterns specific to coastal shorelines or deserts. Still others deal not with air movement at all, but composition. Smog, fog and other compositions all may claim membership in the Air Choir, although individual spirits may prefer to identify within pollution or weather descants as well.

BREEZES (WAPPLINGS, IMKUL)

Quote: <<Oh, you can't fly? Who knew?>>

Background: Breeze-Gafflings are the most capricious of the unpredictable Air Elementals. They are the favored Essence source of other, more potent wind-spirits and almost never grow in power past lesser Gaffling themselves.

Description: Most air-spirits are difficult to see when they choose not to be seen, and breeze-spirits are no different. These impetuous spirits frequently appear as a constantly moving shimmering in the air, and their voices range from a low gusting to a soft whisper. When they take humanlike form (normally only to cause mischief) breeze-Gafflings appear as frail figures, often more than six feet tall but with fragile builds that retain a degree of transparency. Seemingly cheerful, breeze-Gafflings frequently smile and display traits of humor, a rare feature in any spirit, let alone the primal elementals.

Storytelling Hints: Many a pack has approached a breeze-Gaffling in hopes of gaining easy access to the myriad secrets possessed by the Air Choir. And, upon first meetings, breeze-spirits often give the unfortunate impression of human personality, leading those that deal with them into a false sense of trust and empathy with the Gafflings. Unfortunately for the Uratha, this impression could not be further from the truth. Fickle and inconstant, breeze-Gafflings are incapable of any but the most shallow understanding of (or concern for) the results of their actions, and more than one pack has found themselves abandoned in the midst of some lethal endeavor when their windy compatriot changes direction suddenly. To make matters worse, perhaps due to an ironic acceptance of their role as prey in the Air Choir, breeze-

spirits seem to have no compunction whatsoever in creating situations that will result in disaster or death for other spirits or beings.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 5, Resistance 1

Willpower: 3

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 17

Size: 4

Corpus: 5

Influences: Breezes •

Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Wilds Sense

Bans: Breeze-Gafflings are often under ban to never stop moving. Also common is the ban that they may not fight back when preyed upon by a more powerful spirit within their choir.

ARTIFICIAL ELEMENTALS

Some spirits that gather in the Artificial Elementals Choir are truly the spiritual embodiment of human-created materials. Plastic-spirits, like their natural cousins, are the building blocks from which objects are created, and some retain their connection to their material background rather than aligning themselves with the specific choir or descant that their end-product would seem most closely tied to. Others, like electricity-spirits, have truly existed in a natural form since the beginning of time, but have now become so associated with humanity that they are no longer truly welcome in their original choirs.

ELECTRICITY

(TRAPPED LIGHTNING, HESPAR NEMAE)

Quote: <<Of course, I'd be happy to help you... for a price... >>

Background: Spirits of electricity manifest anywhere in the Shadow where a power source exists. Though most congregate near the spiritual sites of urban centers, a few of them travel along power lines that bring electrical energy to even the most rural sections of the physical world. Some of the largest spirits of electricity hover near power plants and power grids. In many ways, electricity-spirits are similar to lightning-spirits, with the exception that one is typically generated by technology and the other is naturally spawned during storms in the physical world.

Description: Electricity elementals crackle with the energy that comprises their Essence. Their preferred form resembles an electrical arc suspended in the air, continually passing back and forth from positive and negative nodes. When an electricity elemental takes on human form, it most often appears as a

humanoid outline limned in electricity and continually emitting sparks. The voice of an electricity-spirit has the harsh sputtering crackle of a short circuit.

Storytelling Hints: Electricity-spirits are excitable, sometimes bordering on frenzy. They emit an aura of static energy that raises the hairs on the backs of furred creatures and makes other creatures nervous or edgy. When electricity elementals enter physical combat, their battles tend to erupt in spectacular displays of electrical energy — often causing power surges and subsequent outages in the physical world. Electricity elementals are sometimes useful sources of information, when they can be convinced to stay on track. Their natural tendency, however, is to be easily distractible. They are also good choices for powering fetish items, if they can be persuaded that this is in their best interest.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 4

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15

Initiative: 11

Defense: 7

Speed: 20

Size: 3

Corpus: 7

Influences: Electricity •••

Numina: Blast (electricity), Chorus, Discorporation, Final Strike*, Reaching

Bans: Electricity elementals often sometimes seen as traitors by those of the natural choirs. They often carry a ban that prevents them from touching any animal- or plant-spirit (or the physical representation there of) without doing them harm. Electricity-spirits are also often bound to avoid contact with water-spirits.

PLASTIC (ANYSAARES, SAA'LAAP)

Quote: <<What do you want me to be?>>

Background: The plastic elementals are comparative newcomers to the Shadow. This youth, combined with their malleable nature, tends to manifest as a strange paradox of flexibility and rigidity. Although capable of taking almost any form, unlike other mutable spirits plastic elementals tend not to deviate from their initial form, once chosen. Born in the age of modern technology, these nearly indestructible spirits are capable of absorbing enough Essence from motes to exist, although because of their low-energy diet they rarely grow powerful unless under the patronage of a powerful city-spirit. They tend to congregate in urban centers or near complexes dedicated to the creation of plastic; indeed, the universal appeal and use of plastics guarantees the presence of plastic-spirits almost everywhere modern civilization

has had an influence. These are some of the most adaptable spirits in the Shadow, yet their artificial nature limits their ability to relate to natural objects (or the spirits of the same).

Description: Plastic elementals appear in almost any shape they choose, mirroring the diversity of the plastic items found in the material world, although they rarely take humanoid forms. Lesser Gafflings often appear as empty bottles, six-pack soda stringers and other small, man-made items, adding to the desolate landscape of many urban-spirit environs. However, as a part of a more powerful building- or technology-spirits brood, they can grow in size and power, and their versatile nature is often reflected in this growth. A plastic elemental attached to the plastic pipes found in many new plumbing systems might appear as a tangle of tubular structures, for example.

Storytelling Hints: Plastic elementals have no real love for natural objects or creatures; hence, they are not the easiest of spirits for werewolves to negotiate with or to learn Gifts from. These spirits are some of the most eager to cross into the material world, and, while rarely powerful (there being little power or emotional attachment to most fairly disposable plastic items in the physical world), they are extremely prolific. Their greatest motivation, other than spending time in the physical world, seems to be simply enduring, a goal they are quite adept at achieving especially when working under the patronage of a city- or structure-spirit.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 4, Resistance 2

Willpower: 4

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 4

Speed: 6

Size: 3

Corpus: 5

Influences: Plastics •

Numina: Drain, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize

Bans: Plastic elementals are difficult to destroy other than by heat or flame. Most are banned from ever learning to discorporate, remaining in existence until they are totally destroyed. Other plastic-spirits are banned from dealing with creatures of fire or those associated with the sun, such as the Helions.

STEEL (IRON'S CHILDREN, BA'MUSUM)

Quote: <<Do what you may, I will not break. Can you claim the same?>>

Background: Steel elementals are inextricably connected to the progress of civilization, ever since humans first learned to combine iron with

other minerals to make a stronger, nearly indestructible substance useful in weapons, armor and building materials. They are, at heart, a “created” elemental, drawn from the Earth Choir by their deep association with humanity. From the fine blades once carried into battle to the framework of modern skyscrapers, steel elementals have inserted themselves into almost every tool-using or industrialized society.

Description: Steel elementals often appear in the form of a construct compiled of weapons or tools forged of solid steel. With loosely jointed limbs, the creature’s “voice” is the scraping of metal on metal formed when it moves. In human form, steel elementals most often take on the form of a hollow man or woman with metallic skin. Lit from within by a cold, blue-white fire, they glow softly from their eyes and mouths.

Storytelling Hints: Steel elementals may sometimes ally with Uratha, and may be coerced into becoming the power source for a fetish-weapon. They are cold-natured in their dealings with creatures from the material world and tend to congregate with others of their kind or with other urban-spirits, being uncomfortable with the natural side of the physical world. They do not step down from challenges to their strength and are often quick to initiate a battle if crossed.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 8, Resistance 8

Willpower: 17

Essence: 20

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 17

Size: 7

Corpus: 15

Influences: Steel

Numina: Animate, Chorus, Final Strike*, Iron Rending†, Materialize, Possession, Reaching

Bans: Stubborn as any of the nature elementals, steel-spirits often carry a ban that does not allow them to refuse a challenge.

EARTH ELEMENTALS

Many spirits within the Earth Choir are steady and tireless, moving and speaking slowly and deliberately. There are, of course, exceptions, such as the fiery lava-spirits. For the most part, earth-spirits are not easily swayed from their purpose. Earth elementals are among the oldest in the spirit wilds and some of the most difficult for the Uratha to deal with. There is little these elementals desire from these young upstarts who fancy themselves caretakers of

a world in which they are little more than fledglings themselves.

GRANITE (ENDURINGS, URAFIDUM)

Quote: <<Many things change, but still we are here.>>

Background: The oldest rocks on earth are made of granite, and it is likely that there still exist granite-spirits that remember the birth of those first stones. Whether they could be convinced to speak of those days, however, is another issue altogether.

Description: Slow-moving and massive, granite-spirits are easy to miss. Or rather, they are easy to mistake for natural features of the Shadow landscape, a difficulty that is compounded by their indifference to the Uratha. Weaker granite-spirits may be indistinguishable from the speckled boulders or rocky outcroppings of their physical counterparts, an illusion that they are rarely eager to unveil. Jagging granite elementals are often mistaken for small hills or cliff faces, although some, through association with city-spirits, choose to wear more structured forms. These, in the form of statues or even buildings, may be more receptive to communication with Uratha, although they are still painfully time-consuming to deal with.

Storytelling Hints: Among the most stable of a solid breed, Endurings are slow to anger, slow to act and slow to forgive. They have no tolerance for those who rush through the protocols they hold to, nor have they any empathy with the petty priorities of shorter-lived beings. And from the perspective of a spirit that endures for millennia, almost all other existences are short-lived to the extreme. They feel no more sadness in a human (or Uratha) life being cut short by 30 years than a human would empathize with a mayfly dying a few hours short of its day-long lifespan. This often leads to difficulty in negotiations, should the Uratha seek a granite-spirit’s aid. However, as the stone-spirits have an uncanny knowledge of locations and directions, they can be an invaluable ally should the Uratha manage to gain their interest.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 2, Resistance 9

Willpower: 18

Essence: 20

Initiative: 11

Defense: 9

Speed: 11

Size: 8

Corpus: 17

Influences: Granite •••

Numina: Blend In†, Chorus, Clasp*, Command Earth, Communion with the Land†, Know the Path†, Manipulate Earth, Material Vision, Wilds Sense

Bans: Some Endurings are bound not to meddle in the affairs of those who are not of the Earth Choir. Other granite elementals may never show mercy without "softening" themselves perhaps fatally.

FIRE ELEMENTALS

Whereas the Water Choir's descants are predominantly divided by form and the Earth's by composition, the Fire Choir holds predominantly descants of intensity. Spark-spirits, quickly expiring but vibrant, have goals similar to those of their brethren in the Explosion Descant but different from those of their mellower but longer-lived cousins in the Flame Descant.

FLAME (CONSUMING FIRES, HANZERIA)

Quote: <<Warm enough for you?>>

Background: Always hungry, flame-spirits preyed on those of nature for millennia before the first artificial-spirits came into being. Today, as humanity uses technology to clear land and fight forest fires, they are largely denied the sweeping scouring across wood and grassland that they once regularly enjoyed. Once straightforward, spirits of flame have adapted to the effects technology has had on the material world, developing a cunning and opportunistic side to their personality.

Description: The most enduring of the fire descants, flame-spirits are also the most likely to take human form. Cunning shapeshifters, they adopt the visage least likely to raise the defenses of those they deal with, wheedling their way into the trust of other spirits (or unwary werewolves) before revealing the full range of their destructive power. As such, they may first appear to a pack as ruddy-skinned humans with golden eyes and hair of ember-red. At their most wrathful, flame-spirits are ever-burning constructs of liquid flame, unlimited by mass or structure. They are able to shape themselves into whatever form will best suit their needs at the moment, including splitting into miniature versions of themselves and later rejoining at will.

Storytelling Hints: Perhaps due to a sense of greater opposition, humanity has attempted to tame fire in ways that were not necessary for earth, air and water. And, over the millennia, flame-spirits have discovered that it is often in their best interest to allow humanity the illusion that they have succeeded. Flame-spirits are opportunistic feeders, seemingly content to bargain for small tidbits of Essence from those who seek their aid. Unfortunately for those who bargain with flame, however, these spirits are wont to roar from seemingly placid warmth to full destructive inferno for no apparent reason whatsoever. Once stirred into action, flame-spirits rarely rein in

their vicious ferocity until there remains nothing else in their area with Essence to consume.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 5

Willpower: 8

Essence: 15

Initiative: 12

Defense: 10

Speed: 20

Size: 6

Corpus: 11

Influences: Fire ••

Numina: Blast, Command Fire†, Discorporation, Material Vision, Materialize

Bans: Flame-spirits are vulnerable to the predations of the other elemental choirs, and many carry bans that force them to leave an area when confronted by a non-Fire elemental spirit of a higher rank. Others are banned from consuming certain substances or items.

WATER ELEMENTALS

Nothing living can exist long without water, and the spiritual embodiments of this element have never forgotten it. Their personalities can vary from the capriciousness of a babbling brook to the solemn (bordering on emotionless) depths of the sea. The more powerful a water-spirit is, the more likely it is to have absorbed elements of other spirits it has preyed upon, coloring its personality and physical form.

RIVER (SWIFT WATERS, DAGUKURUM)

Quote: <<How long can you hold your breath? Not long enough.>>

Background: The spirits of rivers feed for centuries, even millennia, on the Essence of predator and prey existing in and around its banks. Humanity's effect on a physical river can have startling effects across the Gauntlet. Hydroelectric dams turn a calm river-spirit into a thing of both stagnation and frenzied electric energy. A small taste of powerful, pollution-related Essence can convince the water elemental to cast its attention to the material world, manipulating "accidental" releases of additional pollutants like a junkie seeking ever stronger highs. Even excessive recreation on a river-spirit's physical site can affect the spirit's personality, urging a hunger for the unique blend of fear and joy that river-rafting, speed-boating or jet-skiing foster. Unfortunately, those emotion-spirits are even more prevalent when the river provides challenging terrain, and accidents abound.

Description: River-spirits often appear as ever-flowing bodies of water, trickling or raging across the land: most of these spirits closely mirror their physical counterparts. Some take on the form of great serpents made of water, half-remembered as the river

snakes or water dragons of human myth. Stagnant or polluted rivers manifest spirits that smell of rotting fish and mud, with dull, dilated green-brown eyes and lank hair of algae and duckweed.

Storytelling Hints: While it may be in a pack's best interest to "heal" a river-spirit that flows through or near their territory, as long as the river continues to flow the river-spirits may not welcome interference. Cleanup of leaking pollution that was providing an addicted river-spirit its "fix" may result in the types of catastrophic flooding destruction that river-spirits are more than capable of.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 12, Resistance 12

Willpower: 21

Essence: 35

Initiative: 24

Defense: 12

Speed: 31

Size: 8

Corpus: 20

Influences: Rivers ••••

Numina: Chorus, Communion with the Landī, Desiccation*, Drain*, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Materialize, Reaching, Wilds Sense*

Bans: River-spirits often have great difficulty in changing their minds, and cannot go back on their promises — something seen as "reversing the flow."

WEATHER ELEMENTALS

Crossing the apparent elemental boundaries between air and water, weather elementals have existed almost as long as either of the primary elements. They consider themselves an individual choir, but maintain strong ties to both of their ancestral choirs.

STORM (ANGRY SKIES, MIRAIRA)

Quote: <<You will regret that.>>

Background: Storm-spirits epitomize air and water clashing brutally, rather than melding mercifully. Whipping themselves into a wrathful rage, spirits of storm may spend days or weeks building energy, then release it in a single hour of destructive fury.

Description: Storm-spirits appear as glowering, dark clouds heavy with the potential of destruction. As they move across the Shadow sky, they may give off torrents of rain, sleet or hail, leaving a trail of devastation in their path. A storm-spirit's voice rumbles like rolling thunder, punctuated with explosive claps for emphasis. When emulating a more human or animal form, storm-spirits usually have dark forms with silver-white streaks and intense, blue-black eyes lit by flashes of lightning when their anger is aroused. Their tempestuous nature simply cannot be concealed.

Storytelling Hints: Storms rarely approach with stealth. Their rumblings can be heard from far enough away for a pack to decide whether to confront the spirit directly or to make a strategic retreat. Like most spirits, storms are most likely to agree to give assistance that allows them to remain true to their nature, and it is the nature of storms to rain destruction on their surroundings. Storm-spirits detest the restriction of being bound into a fetish and will put up a strong fight to resist being forced or compelled into an object. Unlike some of their more short-lived choir-mates, storm elementals brew long enough to hold horrible grudges. If a pack angers a storm elemental, they may find that both sides of the Gauntlet are considerably more tempestuous than they had anticipated.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 2, Resistance 6

Willpower: 12

Essence: 15

Initiative: 8

Defense: 6

Speed: 18

Size: 6

Corpus: 12

Influences: Weather ••

Numina: Blast (lightning), Invoke the Wind's Wrathī, Material Vision, Reaching, Telekinesis*

Bans: Storm elementals and Helions are antitheses of each other. Many storm-spirits are bound against cooperating with sun-spirits or those that are closely tied to them. Another common ban is a limit on how long a storm-spirit may remain in one area.

LIGHTNING (CLOUD SWORDS, ZELA UAKUR)

Quote: <<Take that!>>

Background: Lightning-spirits are a natural "cousin" of electricity-spirits. Flashy and dramatic, these spirits exude a deadly energy and charge the air around them. They move quickly, strike accurately and sizzle with excitement. Lightning-spirits make split-second decisions and rarely consider the consequences. They are examples of pure, instinctual nature combined with momentary brilliance. Due to their volatile nature, they rarely progress past Gaffling in strength, although under a particularly strong storm-spirit's patronage a lightning-spirit may progress further, and there is certainly at least one Incarna of lightning in existence.

Description: Lightning-spirits appear as jagged bolts of lightning or sometimes whirling balls of white-hot electrical energy.

Storytelling Hints: These spirits favor preemptive strikes, sometimes warning their enemies by employing deliberate near-misses to frighten off op-

position. They have explosive emotions that quickly dissipate. Werewolves feel the electricity that radiates from them immediately upon entering their territory. Lightning-spirits resent the Uratha for trying to curb their natural propensity to dart between the Shadow Realm and the material world without thought to the implications of random lightning strikes.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 5, Resistance 1

Willpower: 3

Essence: 10

Initiative: 6

Defense: 5

Speed: 17

Size: 4

Corpus: 5

Influences: Lightning •

Numina: Blast (lightning), Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Reaching, Speed*

Bans: Many lightning-spirits find that their nature is the antithesis of wood, and their attacks cannot harm this natural opposite. Others are bound to always choose the largest target in any combat they enter, even if that entity is not one of their enemies.

CELESTIALS

LUNES

While some legends credit the Lunar Choir's willingness to deal with the Tribes of the Moon as a

sign of Mother Luna's forgiveness, it should never be thought that Lunes are the staunch allies of the Forsaken. As mutable as Luna herself, these spirits can be eminently capricious, as the unfortunate Uratha who treats them inappropriately will soon discover.

Werewolves understand surprisingly little about the Lunes, considering the Uratha's claims of close ties to the moon. One thing is widely known, however: Lunes that are tied to a moon phase are both the easiest to locate and the most amicable to interaction during that phase. Locating an Irralunim under the full moon is almost impossible, as is finding an Elunim any time other than within a few days of the half-moon. Lunes prefer to appear only during their own moon phase, and must be sought out against their will at other times. This is a dangerous practice, of course. Rahu draw on only a portion of Luna's anger when her face is full — the Ralunim draw much more, and provoking one can be fatal. Lesser Lunes that are not tied to a particular phase, such as Secrets or Glimmerings, are likely to be found during any phase of the moon, although their personalities tend to change as the moon does. Even the lesser Lunes are more likely to be aggressive during the full moon or even more secretive than normal when Luna hides her face.

All Lunes have the ability to change their shape to some extent. Depending on their choir and the current phase of the moon, they may appear



as abstracted beasts or humans, chimerical fusions of both, even as inanimate objects or imitations of werewolves. They are among the most diverse spirits in form, with only the glow of the moon held in common — and even then, not always strongly. Those who have sought aid from Lunes while the dark moon is in the sky often find the search fruitless unless the celestial-spirits desire to be found. And, while they may be easier to locate when Mother Luna shines fully, Lunes, like their half-spirit students, are at their most aggressive, and perhaps most dangerous, then. However they appear, the Lunes of the five choirs associated with the phases of the moon can almost always be discerned by the mark of their moon phase, whether it appears as a shining brand, glowing tattoo or a silver talisman.

Unlike almost every other choir of spirits, there are no known packs that successfully follow Lunes as totem-spirits, successfully being the key word. Legends speak of packs that, after dedicating themselves to a spirit of one of the lunar choirs, went entirely mad as the moon entered their totem's phase. Overcome with uncontrollable Rage that destroyed all hope of reason, their rampages were only stopped through the combined effort of other local packs that dealt with their insane brethren. Strangely, Lunes are no more hesitant than any other spirit to act as patrons of Uratha packs, regardless of what surely must be common knowledge of the end effects. Perhaps these celestials are simply too alien in thought to have concern for the end results of their patronage, or perhaps it is their small revenge for the auspice patronage they are forced to give to their Mother's half-breed children.

CAHALUNIM — THE FERTILE CHOIR

Quote: <<Can you not feel the fire burning deep within you? Can you not hear the song that threatens to burst forth? How can you hold it back? Why would you want to?>>

Background: Second in fervor only to the warlike Ralunim, spirits of the Fertile Choir embody Luna's passion and fruitfulness. Inspired by the bright glow of the moon as it borders its brightest phase, Cahalunim are the Voice of the Lunes, encouraging those who go through their First Change under their influence to experience and understand all that it is to be a Child of the Moon.

Description: The spirits of the choir of the gibbous moon shine brightly, as befitting their association with glory and memory. Cahalunim often appear as gleaming columns of moonlight that, while they glow brightly, contain just enough darkness to accentuate their light. More powerful Cahalunim

sometimes appear in the form of robust and athletic men or lushly gravid women, as wolves with piercing voices or great bears. They often possess gleaming pale skin and teeth, accented with eyes and hair as dark as the night sky itself. No matter the form they choose to appear in, they are closely tied to the concepts of potential and growth, and bear some sort of jewelry or marking that represents the moon in its gibbous phase. When they speak, their voices are musical and strong, carrying like the howl of a victorious hunting pack or the visionary words of an ancient prophet.

Storytelling Hints: Cahalunim are spirits of expression and of passion. While they nurture those who remember the past, not for them is the solemn contemplation of the Elunim or the crafty guile of the Irralunim. They are spirits of inspiration and while they do not encourage foolhardy action without thought, they have little truck with those who will not make choices and act upon them. Cahalunim respect glorious words and deeds, and those who are favored by the Cahalunim often find themselves goaded to find an outlet to express the overwhelming emotions the Fertile Choir inspire, else the intensity of their passions drive them mad.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 7, Resistance 8

Willpower: 17

Essence: 20

Initiative: 15

Defense: 9

Speed: 26

Size: 2

Corpus: 10

Influences: Moonlight • Glory ••

Numina: Blast (howl), Chorus, Discorporation, Material Vision, Materialize, Revelation*, any one Gibbous Moon Gift†

Bans: Cahalunim are vulnerable to silence, and lose much of their power when in an area without ambient sound.

ELUNIM — THE CLOVEN CHOIR

Quote: <<You are not given two eyes so that you may see only with one.>>

Background: Walking the night between the dark and the light, the Elunim represent duality and balance, an ideal often sought by the half-spirit Uratha. Elunim know that there is a time and a place for the darkness and for the light, for rage and for stealth, for sacrifice and for demanding one's due. One legend credits an Elunim with conducting the bargaining between Helios and Luna that resulted in the creation of day and night. Whether it is true or not, Elunim and the werewolves who experience their First Change under the half-moon are noted as

superb diplomats, capable of seeing both sides of a situation without being lost to inaction through their broad perspectives.

Description: The Elunim are entities of both light and dark, a duality reflected in their forms. An Elunim often appears luminescent on one half of their form, and shadowy on the other. The “light” and “dark” aspects may even possess dramatically different features: a Cloven Lune that wears a wolf form may have sleek, silver fur and a slender build on one side and a shaggy, dark coat and bulge with brawny strength on the other. A few even lack substance on their “shadowed” side, and appear like lambent figures that have been sliced in half.

Storytelling Hints: Elunim are among the most insightful and discerning of spirits, and they encourage those qualities in others, sometimes through pointed questions and others through astute observations. They are also the most strongly swayed by Luna’s phases, growing short-tempered and quick to anger under her full face and introspective and secretive on her darkest nights.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 11, Finesse 11, Resistance 11

Willpower: 22

Essence: 25

Initiative: 22

Defense: 11

Speed: 32

Size: 2

Corpus: 13

Influences: Moonlight ••, Honor••

Numina: Aura of Truce†, Chorus, Discorporation, Material Vision, Materialize, Omen Gazing†, Scent Beneath the Surface†, Soul Read†, Any One Warding Gift†

Bans: Elunim can be weakened by light so bright that it casts no shadow, or darkness so complete that there is no light.

GLIMMERINGS

Quote: <<I have a warning of things to come...>>

Background: While legends speak of Luna’s birthing of the first werewolves while wearing a human form, no werewolves alive today have ever been known to interact with her directly. Some say that Luna’s forgiveness is not as complete as the Forsaken would like to believe and so she still denies them her direct presence. Others believe, based on the devastating effect a Lune totem has upon a pack, that a personal encounter with the goddess of lunacy herself would be enough to drive any werewolf mad. Indeed, those werewolves who claim to have encountered Luna herself are often thought to be delusional, or at least to have been duped by one of the more mischievous of the Lunar Choir. Instead, the Glim-

merings claim to act as her representatives, celestial intermediaries to other choirs and to her half-wolf descendants.

Description: Glimmerings rarely mimic a physical animal or person’s form, preferring to wear more subtle guises. On nights when their Mistress is visible, Luna’s messengers appear simply as moonbeams, indistinguishable from her other emanations until they make their presence known. On moonless nights or during the dark of the moon, Glimmerings are rarely seen.

Storytelling Hints: Glimmerings claim to act as the intermediaries between Luna and the rest of the spirit world. They affect an air of confidence that some say is derived from the knowledge that nobody can directly disprove their claims. Like Luna, their personalities change as the moon moves through its phases.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 7, Resistance 2

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15

Initiative: 9

Defense: 7

Speed: 22

Size: 2

Corpus: 4

Influences: Moonbeams ••

Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Materialize, Nightfall†, Unspoken Communication†

Bans: Most Glimmerings are under a ban not to appear on moonless nights. Others are bound only to appear under a certain phase of the moon.

IRRALUNIM — THE SILENT CHOIR

Quote: <<Anything could happen when She is not looking.>>

Background: When Luna hides her face, the Irralunim walk the darkest places in the Shadow Realm. They are secretive spirits, prone to listen and watch rather than speak. Many have a cool and almost cruel sense of humor, but their jibes are always focused to teach and broaden perspectives rather than simply to do harm.

Description: Irralunim are shapeshifters of the first water, and seem to dislike assuming the same form twice to speak to any given werewolf. Unlike other Lunes, Irralunim give off almost no radiance at all, but are dusky of feature, nearly invisible in darkness. Some Irralunim refuse to speak at all, instead communicating through gestures, body language or telepathy. They are fond of assuming sinuous forms: cats, serpents and wisps of fog are among their favored appearances.

Storytelling Hints: Irralunim see things that others do not, and encourage others to see them as well, preferring to teach perceptiveness rather than pointing out answers. They have no interest in Uratha who will not learn to look and listen, and those who insist on charging into a situation without investigating it first will quickly find themselves devoid of Irralunim aid.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 4

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15

Initiative: 11

Defense: 7

Speed: 20

Size: 2

Corpus: 6

Influences: Darkness •, Cunning •

Numina: Discorporation, Gauntlet Breach, Nightfall†, Silent Fog†, Wilds Sense

Bans: Some Irralunim are bound to silence. Others cannot abide the presence of Helions or affect the physical world during daylight hours.

ITHALUNIM — THE ORACLE CHOIR

Quote: <<The words I have for you are cutting, and the wounds they make may leave scars. Do you wish to hear them, or do you choose the path of ignorance?>>

Background: The Ithalunim are strongest during nights of the crescent moon, when it is said that they learn their occult wisdom from Luna at her most contemplative. The Oracle Choir is the patron choir of the Ithaeur, but their greater role as they describe it is to serve as spirits devoted to wisdom. The Ithalunim guard many secrets, but few of the insights they grant bring solace. The wisdom they keep is not comfort — it is Truth.

Description: The Lunes of the crescent moon shine faintly, sometimes with a half-halo of light that emanates from one edge of their shape. They often favor the forms of robed, angel-like beings or beasts of uncommon calm, but regardless of the shape they wear, they always craftily manifest the mark of their moon somewhere in their forms. It may take the shape of a crescent-shaped luminous sigil, a carried sickle or similarly shaped tool, or curved wings or claws, but, like the wisdom they guard, it is always there for those who seek sincerely. Ithalunim always speak softly, never raising their voices.

Storytelling Hints: Like the crescent moon, the Ithalunim are sharp in nature and not generous with their light. They are cryptic by nature and frequently answer questions with further questions, leading supplicants into broader awareness rather than providing simple answers. Ithalunim loathe explain-

ing themselves more than they must; they believe in wisdom as an ideal that must be sought and kept pure, not shared out with as many as possible. They both respect Ithaeur and hold them to a very high standard, expecting the Forsaken of the Crescent Moon to never cease in their quest for knowledge, especially that of the spirit-world. Bone Shadows fall under similar scrutiny, and the Oracle Choir's respect for any werewolf will evaporate quickly if the hapless creature demonstrates a dull or foolhardy nature.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 8, Resistance 7

Willpower: 13

Essence: 20

Initiative: 15

Defense: 8

Speed: 24

Size: 5

Corpus: 12

Influences: Moonlight •, Wisdom ••

Numina: Chorus, Communion with the Land†, Know the Path†, Material Vision, Revelation*, Wilds Sense, any one Crescent Moon Gift†

Bans: The Ithalunim are commonly bound against freely giving information.

RALUNIM — THE FURY CHOIR

Quote: <<The Mother's face burns bright and cold. Her wrath is with us!>>

Background: No light is as bright as that which shines against the darkest darkness. Directly opposite the dark moon is Luna's full face, her wrathful warriors whose fury and wrath the most devout Rahu could only hope to emulate. Although capable of both bold tactical maneuvering and brazen use of intimidation and power, Ralunim are truly a spiritual force to be reckoned with.

Description: The most powerful Ralunim frequently appear as bright javelins of cold, white light or as athletic warriors in gleaming white armor. It is not unheard of for the Choir of Fury to manifest as great night-hunting beasts, dire wolves and predatory cats that would put modern tigers to shame with their muscular grace. Whatever appearance they take, there is an air of ferocity to the Ralunim. Like the rest of their kind, they bear the mark of their moon phase somewhere upon them, although like everything else about the Full Moon Choir, it is often displayed blatantly, gleaming from the shield of a warrior or the brow of a beast as if defiantly proclaiming the Ralunim's nature to any who witness it.

Storytelling Hints: Straightforward is often the Ralunim's path, although it's a mistake to assume they are therefore dull-witted or incapable of tactics. Rather, once their path has been decided, there are

few spirits (or Uratha) capable of swaying them from their chosen goal. Ralunim respect bravery (although not stupidity) and strength. Cowardice is intolerable to them, although they are capable of understanding guile as a tactic.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 10, Resistance 13

Willpower: 25

Essence: 25

Initiative: 23

Defense: 12

Speed: 32

Size: 2

Corpus: 15

Influences: Moonlight ••, Purity ••

Numina: Blast, Chorus, Clasp*, Fearstruck*, Howl*, Materialize, Rage Armor†, Sense Weakness†, Speed*

Bans: Many Ralunim are incapable of lies. Others are bound to accept any challenge made to them.

HELIONS

Spiritual children of the Sun itself, Helions are rarely seen in the Shadow Realm. Those unfamiliar with them might easily mistake them for fire elementals, and perhaps they are related, but their spirits, forged in the unceasing inferno of the Sun, are far less mutable than those of their earthly cousins.

Even less is known about the Sun Choirs than of other spirit groups, although one thing seems certain. No werewolf who comes across one of them will walk away unaffected by their encounter.

ILLUMINATORS (SUN SCHOLARS, UTA ARATHUM)

Quote: <<What you seek is right before you, if you truly wish to find it.>>

Background: Embodying the unceasing radiance of their solar sire, Illuminators seek out those whose paths are darkened with hypocrisy, duplicity and self-deceit, burning away these shadows with the blinding luminosity of the Sun itself. Illuminators are among the most commonly seen of the Helions, although the very nature of the Shadow indicates that their presence is infrequent at best.

Description: Illuminators have allegedly appeared since before the death of Father Wolf as a brilliantly glowing orb that drives away all darkness. In more modern times, Sun Scholars have appeared as radiant torches, candles and even incandescent bulbs, a manifestation that is believed to have spawned the material association of the latter item with sudden insight. They may also take the form of birds with impossibly bright plumage or the visage of a cloaked hermit bearing a lantern from which emanates a blindingly bright glow. They do not converse

out loud, speaking mentally instead, a disconcerting communication for those who are not expecting it.

Storytelling Hints: The rare Uratha who have been visited by one of these confusing spirits consider the encounter to be a mixed blessing. Few spirits are more likely to answer questions as straightforwardly as the Sun Scholars, but their wisdom is never without a cost, and they will not tolerate those who refuse to look deeply at their own shadows while condemning the darkness of others.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 9, Finesse 7, Resistance 9

Willpower: 18

Essence: 20

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 26

Size: 5

Corpus: 14

Influences: Light •, Wisdom ••

Numina: Chorus, Discorporation, Fearstruck*, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Omen Gazing†, Revelation*

Bans: Illuminators abhor lies and most often carry bans never to deceive explicitly or implicitly. Many are unable to withhold information from those who genuinely seek to learn it, although they are rarely forbidden from exacting a (sometimes inordinately high) price for it.

SEARINGS (SUN WARRIORS, UTA UMFISAF)

Quote: <<Burn, half-breed!>>

Background: Searings are the manifestations of Helios as the Merciless Sun, fiery solar energy at its most unforgiving. They are the warriors of the Helion Choir, embodying the destructive clout of the sun without thought for light or warmth. If fire elementals characterize fickle hunger in the spirit world, Searings are the spiritual embodiment of self-righteous wrath.

Description: Searings most often take the form of blazing, animated weapons, burning eternally with a blinding intensity. The most powerful among them, however, are sometimes seen as gloriously brutal humanoid warriors with broad, feathered wings of flame, golden, glowing skin and eyes like orbs of unquenchable flame.

Storytelling Hints: Of all the Helions, Searings are the most hostile toward werewolves. Whether it is their connection with Luna (and hence the night) or their half-physical/half-spiritual ambiguity that most angers the Sun Warrior is not completely clear. What is known, however, is that they seem to consider the Uratha at least partially creatures of darkness and impurity, and are loath to tolerate their presence. Searings are direct and intense, unwavering in their course of action. It is exceptionally difficult for a

werewolf to sway a Searing into assisting him, even if the spirit and the werewolf share a common foe. Those werewolves who have had dealings with Searings often favor entering the Shadow Realm only at night afterwards, so as not to repeat the experience.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 10, Resistance 12

Willpower: 24

Essence: 25

Initiative: 22

Defense: 12

Speed: 32

Size: 6

Corpus: 18

Influences: Heat •• Anger ••

Numina: Call Fire†, Command Fire†, Fearstruck*, Gauntlet Breach, Living Fetter, Material Vision, Materialize, Sense Weakness†, Wilds Sense

Bans: Searings are incapable of granting or accepting mercy; the sight of a person treating a hated enemy kindly is enough to drive them away.

CONCEPTUALS

Not all spirits are spirits of “things.” Conceptual-spirits have existed as long as mankind has walked the earth, and some, such as pain and silence, much longer. Even more difficult to label and quantify than spirits of material objects, most Uratha have settled for grouping conceptuials into several large choirs, each with many descants associated with them. This seems to work well for some spirits, but others defy classification by even the most adept Ithaeur.

Conceptuials are often the spirits most likely to slip through the Gauntlet and invade the physical world. For one, conceptuials are even farther from understanding material existence than are nature-spirits or artificial-spirits. A rat-spirit may not truly understand what it’s like to have a body of flesh, bone and hair, but it has some instinctive understanding of a living rat’s drives and concerns. A fear-spirit, on the other hand, knows nothing of the flesh. At best, it can know what the body feels like when the brain fills with fear, but still it may find curiosity a harsh master. In addition, conceptuials are surprisingly common because so many of them are universal. A bird-spirit will not appear where there are no birds, and a truck-spirit won’t be found in a section of wilderness that hasn’t seen tire tracks — but pain and death are present wherever there are living animals. As a result, conceptuials, particularly spirits of negative emotion, are far more common intruders into the physical realm than the werewolves would like.

EMOTION SPIRITS

Spirits of hate or love seem fairly easy to categorize as belonging to the Emotional Choir. Other concepts, such as gluttony or grief, are less simple to pigeonhole. Most Ithaeur group spirits that deal with emotional concepts that are not a direct result of an application or absence of some particular thing (such as food or sex) as belonging to the Emotional Choir. The Reactionary Choir, they say, deals with needs and/or desires that are a direct result of the presence or absence of a particular object or entity.

GLUTTONY (GORGERS, RIA LAARA)

Quote: <<MORE!!>>

Background: The concept of “hunger” is, by some reckoning, a reactionary concept. Gorgers and the gluttony they represent are actually closely tied to greed, driven to continue devouring other spirits, even past the point where they have overfilled themselves with Essence. They are not so concerned with growing more powerful (although they do, given the copious amount of Essence they glut themselves with) as with the act of “eating” itself. Rampant in areas where brazen consumerism runs unconstrained, Gorgers are also sometimes spawned from the cacophony of emotions surrounding anorexics or bulimics.

Description: Gluttony-spirits are almost invariably obese in appearance — frequently abstractions of obesity without a real understanding of material form. They may appear as distended, sagging globules of fatty tissue, usually pale and sickly in color. When taking humanlike form, they appear bloated to the point of androgyny and often have overlarge mouths or more feeding orifices than any living creature possesses. Mouths on the palms of the hands and great belly-maws are not unheard of, nor are Gorgers who consume indiscriminately through every one of their orifices, a horrific sight to witness. Their gurgling voices enhance their grotesque appearance, but their bulk is deceptive — a spirit of gluttony is much faster and stronger than it would be if it bore the limitations of material flesh.

Storytelling Hints: Gluttony-spirits possess the ability to absorb Essence directly from their victims, leaving them wasted and eventually dead. They tend to see the spirit-world in terms of flavors and scents rather than sights, describing other spirits in culinary expressions with their thick, syrupy voices. They will not willingly break off combat or negotiation while Essence remains the possible prize. Gorgers are often brought to the attention of Uratha when their hunger drive their attentions across the Gauntlet where

they urge even greater gluttony in already voracious humans.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 6

Willpower: 11

Essence: 15

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 18

Size: 8

Corpus: 14

Influences: Gluttony ••

Numina: Drain*, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Materialize, Possession

Bans: The most common ban borne by gluttony-spirits is that they may not pass up an opportunity to consume a weaker spirit, which can get them into serious trouble if they offend a more potent spirit by devouring a member of its brood. Other common bans include an inability to refuse bargains when Essence is offered, an obsession with certain "flavors" of Essence and an inability to forego attempting to consume Essence when it is available, regardless of how much they have recently consumed.

GRIEF (DARKENINGS, UTAISI)

Quote: <<Pain, loss. I understand. Overwhelming.>>

Background: Grief-spirits arise from an upwelling of that emotion in the material world. They tend to exist in places where humans (or animals) are in

a state of profound sorrow or mourning. Graveyards, funerals and hospitals are places that attract grief-spirits. Humans who are mourning the loss of a loved one also serve as magnets for these spirits.

Description: Grief-spirits appear as dark, low-hanging fog banks that wrap themselves around other spirits, smothering them in their inextricable embrace. While it is impossible to see through a Darkening, from the outside dim, churning movements are visible within their depths. A humanlike form might take on the appearance of a shadowy mourner, dressed all in black. When examined closely, the human manifestation will be seen to have no eyes — instead, impossibly deep black pits gape, revealing the spirit to be completely hollow.

Storytelling Hints: Grief-spirits present a problem for werewolves more because of their continual empathic projection of sorrow and mourning than from any real hostility they feel toward the werewolves. Grief-spirits are often tied deeply with spirits of guilt and depression, and the combination can be devastating. Any werewolf who suffers a predisposition to remorse or despair may find that these spirits are more than capable of using those emotions to grow stronger. Grief Essence has a bitter tang to it, reminiscent of sorrow and ashes.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 7, Resistance 4



Willpower: 7**Essence:** 15**Initiative:** 11**Defense:** 7**Speed:** 20**Size:** 6**Corpus:** 10**Influences:** Grief ••**Numina:** Emotional Aura*, Material Vision, Materialize, Reaching, Revelation***Bans:** Grief-spirits cannot bear the presence of a person who laughs freely and without deceit.*APATHY (HEARTSLUGS, LUM)***Quote:** <<Eh, who cares?>>

Background: Legend has it that the first apathy-spirit was awakened when Man first turned his back on his neighbor's troubles. While they rarely grow very powerful, apathy-spirits breed insidiously. Many an unsuspecting pack has walked away from one Heartslug, returning to find the entire area infested with dozens of the apathy-Gafflings. Distantly related to (and often found near) depression-spirits, apathy-spirits can seem almost comical until the devastating effect they have had on humanity at large is considered.

Description: Apathy-spirits often appear as large, bloated leeches the color of mud. With their sucker-like body, they are capable of clinging to horizontal surfaces with ease. They rarely are seen in action, although they are capable of a lethargic mobility, a fact attested to by the wet trail of ichor they leave across everything they touch. Apathy-spirits rarely bother to take anthropomorphic shapes. In fact, they rarely bother to do anything save feed.

Storytelling Hints: The danger of these spirits is an insidious but potent one. When a populace becomes more and more uncaring, it becomes easier for other spirits to run amok: murder rates rise and neighborhoods go to hell, and nobody bothers to do anything about it, or even ask why. An infestation of apathy-spirits often precedes a greater influx of other spirits slipping across the Gauntlet and indulging themselves. While seemingly not capable of as intense an emotion as hatred, these spirits certainly have little use for the Uratha or anything they might have to offer. As in all things, what Heartslugs want most from the werewolves is to be left alone, a luxury that wise Uratha will not afford them.

Rank: 1

Attributes: Power 2, Finesse 1, Resistance 5**Willpower:** 7**Essence:** 10**Initiative:** 6 (but always moves last)**Defense:** 2**Speed:** 13 (but rarely moves faster than 4)**Size:** 2**Corpus:** 6**Influences:** Apathy •**Numina:** Drain*, Emotional Aura*, Reaching**Bans:** Apathy-spirits do so little that little is known about their bans. Some postulate that apathy-spirits are changed in nature or even destroyed if compelled to move quickly.

REACTIONARY SPIRITS

Spirits that populate the Reactionary Choir tend to be those that are related to feelings that are directly caused by something (or the absence of something). A desire-spirit likely falls within this choir, say the Uratha, because it is focused on a particular target, a need or desire to obtain that particular thing. On the other hand, greed-spirits, while certainly related, would be of the Emotional Choir as they might be much more indiscriminate, focused more on the general goal of acquisition without a great deal of specificity about the particulars. As in most things, the spirits themselves do not necessarily follow the Uratha's well-reasoned classifications.

*DESIRE (LUSTINGS, INIMICA)***Quote:** <<Whatever you truly want is yours for the taking.>>

Background: Desire-spirits are most often members of the Reactionary Choir. Unlike gluttony-spirits that, due to their association with the emotion of greed, constantly seek to consume anything and everything within reach, Lustings most often have a specific focus, a target or goal that inspires their desire. These spirits represent a deep, unfulfilled craving — frequently associated with sex, but also characterized by conceptual phrases such as a “lust for life.”

Description: Lustings often appear as pulsating, abstract shapes of deep red, although their strength and focus often encourage them in behaviors that allow them to grow quickly. At more powerful levels they often take the form of satyr-like beings of male or female form, beautiful and lively, whose vivacious and charismatic personalities can be challenging to deal with.

Storytelling Hints: Desire-spirits are extremely focused creatures. They seek to promote their concept, encouraging sexual indulgence in others or inspiring those around them to live more fully and with more sensation. They are generally not as blatantly hostile toward werewolves, although they will often doggedly encourage them to follow their own desires, having no real concept of ideals like duty or responsibility. If a Lusting has recently afool of the Uratha, it is most often because the werewolves have attempted to dissuade it from its goals, something desire-spir-

its take strong offense at. Lustings tend to wander throughout the Shadow as well as into the material world. A pack may be more successful in convincing one to move out of their territory than to alter its pursuit of its chosen object or goal.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 8, Finesse 9, Resistance 8

Willpower: 16

Essence: 20

Initiative: 17

Defense: 9

Speed: 27

Size: 5

Corpus: 13

Influences: Desire •••

Numina: Chorus, Emotional Aura*, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Living Fetter, Reaching

Bans: Desire-spirits fear immobility, for a lust that is not pursued stagnates and mutates into something else.

PAIN (PAROXYSMS, HESATH THAF)

Quote: <<This may hurt a little...>>

Background: Pain-spirits are spawned when creatures experience the sensation of extreme physical discomfort, either from wounds or from a malfunction of the body. Because pain is both a warning and a goad, pain-spirits are not necessarily “bad.” But they seek to promote the feeling that makes them stronger, and that all too often means that a rogue pain-spirit that enters the material world is going to sow suffering and anguish wherever it goes. When pain is inflicted on someone purposefully, a neighboring pain-spirit may grow stronger (and darker) by feeding off the associated spirits, either the aggression-, anger- or sadism-spirits called by the pain inflictor, or the despair- and fear-spirits that flock to the victim. Otherwise, some pain-spirits can be generally benevolent, if somewhat “heavy-handed” entities.

Description: Pain-spirits come in many shapes, from tiny, jagged “twinge” spirits (lesser Gafflings) to powerful, iron-spiked spirits of extreme pain (lesser Jagglings). They rarely grow past lesser Jaggling in power, but when they do they are a devastating force to reckon with. As with most conceptual spirits, the more powerful pain-spirits often wear humanoid forms: those associated with burns or painful infections may take the form of an animate manikin of white-hot metal, while those associated with surgery, cuts or puncture wounds may appear as a human-sized construct of broken glass and jagged metal, with razor-sharp protrusions in all directions.

Storytelling Hints: Pain-spirits focus on arousing their particular sensation, whether an uncomfortable twinge, an overwhelming sense of lingering discomfort or a sudden knife of agony. They can be useful

in extricating information from other spirits or (in material form) from physical creatures. They can also prove formidable foes, undermining strength and resistance and weakening the will. Pain-spirits often require Uratha to undergo ordeals of great agony in order to gain their favor or their cooperation.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Willpower: 9

Essence: 15

Initiative: 7

Defense: 5

Speed: 18

Size: 3

Corpus: 7

Influences: Pain ••

Numina: Claim, Drain*, Emotional Aura*, Fearstruck*, Reaching

Bans: Pain-spirits cannot bear the scent of a broken aloe leaf (though chemicals with that smell do not deter them). Some lose Essence at a greater rate when deprived of the pain that feeds them.

IDEOLOGICAL SPIRITS

Ideological spirits are more difficult to classify than those that belong to the Emotional Choir or Reactionary Choirs. Among other things, they include non-material concepts that represent almost-tangible ideas. War-spirits, while not quantifiable per se, have much more materially symbolic connections than hate-spirits do, although the two are often related; war-spirits, therefore, are most often considered ideologicals. This choir also encompasses human concepts that are not emotionally related, such as “duty,” “treachery,” “midnight” and “silence.”

DEATH (HARVESTERS, AMDULIM)

Quote: <<Cessation. Within an instant, all eternity.>>

Background: Life is defined by the denial of death — the struggle to feed and grow, to bring about a new generation. Every instinct of a living thing is designed to thwart death. Spirits of death could arguably be the most common spirits in the Shadow, and yet they aren’t; though a death-spirit could conceivably be found at any given place, they do not appear in legions. An area is far more likely to see a few (or even one) potent death-spirits than one strong death-spirit and a host of minor followers. Perhaps they’re more cannibalistic than the average spirit, or perhaps they just do not spring into existence as frequently as they could — if they did, it’s possible they could overrun the Shadow.

Description: Death-spirits may appear as abstracted shadows, as animals associated with death

(such as crows, vultures, black dogs and serpents), or even as humanlike figures wreathed in shadow. The popular “Grim Reaper” image is rarely seen, at least without some variation; a death-spirit incorporates a thousand lesser deaths within it, only some of which are human. They speak rarely, and their voices are distant and endlessly patient.

Storytelling Hints: Most death-spirits have no trace of malice within their being, but they are feared all the same. In order to pursue their “duties,” they must promote death — and no living creature is comfortable with that. However, death-spirits are not incapable of malice; it is certainly possible for one to grow more and more obsessive with hastening the demise of living creatures, and even to take to the physical world in order to pursue this agenda. They have an uncomfortable way of interacting with others as if they are counting the seconds left to their conversation partners, associates or enemies.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 7, Resistance 7

Willpower: 14

Essence: 20

Initiative: 14

Defense: 7

Speed: 24

Size: 5

Corpus: 12

Influences: Death •••

Numina: Blast (shadow blades), Chorus, Discorporation, Drain*, Material Vision, Seek*, Word of Quiet†

Bans: Death-spirits cannot move to strike those that wear skulls or bones upon their bodies. Others are driven away by the light of lanterns or candles made from animal fat.

SILENCE (VOICELESS, NUMILLIM)

Quote: <<...>>

Background: The Voiceless are typical of the greater Gafflings of silence. When they seek to enter the physical world, it is usually with the intention of silencing a particular area so that it suits their tastes. Spirits of silence do not often leave their lairs (unless they feel confident of their abilities to silence other spirits they may meet), but are fiercely territorial and viciously resist any cacophonous intrusion on an area of quiet they’ve claimed as their own.

Description: Spirits of silence are sometimes barely visible, seeming to be translucent designs or glyphs in washed-out colors; they sometimes appear as drifting masses of vapor or fallen leaves, or in roughly anthropomorphic forms with no mouths. The Voiceless commonly manifest as diminutive people or small children, with marble-gray flesh and no mouths or ears, dressed in robes of the same hue as their skin. The “cloth” of their robes does not move or flex; the folds do not rub against one another. No spirit of silence ever willingly makes a sound.

Storytelling Hints: The Voiceless, like other spirits of silence, detest noise. Though they can toler-



ate some level of sound, voices raised above a whisper aggravate them. They are naturally quite hostile toward werewolves, particularly those who howl or fight in the Voiceless' vicinity. They can be appeased by humble and quiet supplication, and when brought to heel, can use their Influence to aid a hunting pack's stealth.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 5, Resistance 4

Willpower: 7

Essence: 15

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 18

Size: 3

Corpus: 7

Influences: Silence ••

Numina: Chorus, Claim, Discorporation, Fetter, Unspoken Communication†

Bans: The Voiceless are banned from making noise voluntarily. They will gravely wound themselves if they are forced or tricked into making noise, and some are literally incapable of it.

WAR (WARWINGERS, HAFAL)

Quote: <<There is no room for diplomacy here.>>

Background: War-spirits arise from the innate drive toward aggression present in most creatures, but particularly present in predators, including humans. Spirits of war radiate an aura of conflict and belligerence such that anyone in their proximity feels more edgy, more ready to take umbrage, more inclined to settle disputes by force than with words. War-spirits are ubiquitous in the Shadow, but are more often discovered near battlefields (both past and present), near military bases or in lands that are torn by war. Cities are often the site of gang warfare or corporate hostilities, and war-spirits are prolific there as well.

Description: War-spirits appear as a blood-red, roiling cloud that takes a vaguely human form. From its constantly shifting form protrude bladed weapons of all sorts. Skirmishes, the weakest of the war-spirits, move and speak quickly, but greater war-spirits move with solemn self-assurance. They are, almost without exception, the most aggressive of all spirits that a werewolf pack can encounter. Even the air around war-spirits is filled with the sound of battle and the smell of blood and gunpowder.

Storytelling Hints: Werewolves encountering war-spirits are usually in for a pitched battle. Even if the spirit is not angry with the Uratha, any werewolf seeking favor from a war-spirit must expect a fierce combat. Sometimes the Uratha need not win, but merely prove himself a worthy opponent. War-spirits usually require chimirage in blood.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 11, Resistance 12

Willpower: 23

Essence: 25

Initiative: 23

Defense: 12

Speed: 33

Size: 7

Corpus: 19

Influences: War ••••

Numina: Blast, Fearstruck*, Final Strike*, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Possession, Rage Armor†, Reaching, Wild Sense

Bans: War-spirits are notoriously aggressive. Many carry a ban that prevents negotiation with an entity that has not proven itself in battle first. Others cannot refuse a drink of blood when it is offered, which may lead to them gorging and unable to defend themselves when sufficient blood is given to them.

DREAM SPIRITS

The Dream Descant encompasses altered states of consciousness of all types, not just those encountered during sleep. Around the members of this descant, reality is even more fluid and mutable than within the Shadow Realm in general, and Uratha who deal with denizens of the Dream Descant never know if they have received the short end of a bargain, even long after the encounter has ended.

DEMENTIA (CALLING THOUGHTS, TAIMMA HIA)

Quote: <<It makes perfect sense. Let me explain...>>

Background: Spirits of dementia embody the idea of madness, insanity and, as such, project their nature onto those who encounter them. These spirits sometimes hover near institutions for the mentally ill and are particularly attracted to places that house the criminally insane. Dementia-spirits are a prolific and voracious breed, spinning tiny and subtle reality shifts that lead "normal" humans slowly into madness. Sometimes dementia-spirits are attracted to areas that occupy a part of the Shadow congruous with the home of a serial killer or other sociopath. Other times, their very presence triggers psychosis in those who would have otherwise remained relatively stable members of society. Their purpose lies in spreading insanity throughout the Shadow Realm and the physical world.

Description: Dementia-spirits can take literally any form. Some specialize in insidious appearances, working their way gradually through a human's defenses. Others rely on the perception of authority, sometimes even taking the form of (angelic or demonic) religious icons to impress their broken reality on those around them. Still others assume appear-

ances that are completely otherworldly, bizarre structures that serve to push those they deal with even further into their altered state of perception. Often, looking upon these spirits is difficult, since they seem to distort the senses and create feelings of nausea and dizziness, sometimes through inhuman beauty, others through sheer grotesqueness.

Storytelling Hints: Dementia-spirits are born from madness and seek to spread their sickness throughout the Shadow both by consuming other spirits (and so becoming more powerful) and by influencing other spirits. In a sense, they can benefit both by being predator and by being prey, for no spirit that consumes any significant quantity of dementia Essence is ever truly the same again. In the physical world, they seek to possess persons and objects so that they can increase their own particular flavor of madness in the world. They know that werewolves will try to stop them and herd them back into a guarded place in the Shadow, and they resent this greatly.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 5, Finesse 5, Resistance 4

Willpower: 9

Essence: 15

Initiative: 9

Defense: 5

Speed: 20

Size: 2

Corpus: 6

Influences: Insanity ••

Numina: Emotional Aura*, Gauntlet Breach, Harrow, Possession, Reaching

Bans: Dementia-spirits are most often held to bans that, in keeping with their own shattered realities, defy classification. One may be bound never to consume dog-spirit flesh, while another must consume it at all costs. A violent dementia-spirit may be banned from ever backing down from a challenge, while another may never be allowed to raise its voice. More than any other spirits, dementia-bans are unique to the individual spirit.

NIIGHTMARES (INCUBI, SAKTHAF USAA)

Quote: <<How very frightening is a world of limitless possibility. Anything can happen there. Anything at all.>>

Background: As some of the darkest denizens of the Dream Choir, nightmares arise from the unconscious and subconscious fears and terrors of humans—and presumably of other creatures capable of dreaming. Nightmare-spirits exercise great power over those vulnerable to the particular fears and vulnerabilities they represent. They can drive those around them to acts of desperation fueled by the stresses invoked by the nightmares.

Description: Nightmare-spirits appear as thin, amorphous cloaks that settle around those they affect, and are difficult to shed. They are rarely extremely powerful themselves, but when acting as a part of a more powerful brood — that of a psychosis-spirit perhaps — they can be startlingly effective in perpetuating themselves.

Storytelling Hints: Nightmare-spirits project a distinct feeling of unease, usually accompanied by impending dread. They are often found in the company of spirits of despair, sorrow, guilt and fear. These spirits seldom speak except in often- indecipherable phrases that seem nonetheless filled with meaning and significance.

Rank: 2

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 3, Resistance 4

Willpower: 11

Essence: 15

Initiative: 10

Defense: 7

Speed: 20

Size: 2

Corpus: 6

Influences: Dreams ••

Numina: Emotional Aura*, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Living Fetter, Reaching

Bans: Nightmare-spirits are often held under a ban that prevents them from entering the presence of a Helion or anything that is strongly associated with the sun. Many are forbidden from answering questions directly.

UNI HAR — THE GHOST CHILDREN

Quote: <<Mother die. Father die.>>

Background: One of the Forsaken's sternest laws proclaims "Uratha Safal Thil Lu'u." "The Uratha shall cleave to the Human." Born of the sundering of this sacred Oath, the unihar are the spiritual progeny of a mating between two Uratha. While their ill-fated mother suffers through a full pregnancy and an inevitably painful labor, the physical pain is nothing compared to the emotional weight of what comes after. Many werewolves who have broken this tenet of the Oath of the Moon welcome the judgment of the Elodth, accepting the weight of ostracism or exile as an absolution of the sin they have committed in bringing an unihar into profane being.

Description: Ghost Children begin their blasphemous existence covered in the same dark blood physically birthed by their foolhardy mothers. Gore-slick, wet pelts cover a bipedal structure that is a cruel parody of their parent's Gauru form, with a jutting muzzle filled with row upon row of razor sharp teeth. Denied the succor of mother's milk, these

demonic pups begin their ravenous predation immediately, savagely devouring whatever unfortunate spirits fall beneath their warped claws. Unihar senses are every bit as sharp as their parents', evidenced by their grotesque flaring nostrils, wide, night-dark eyes devoid of color and sharp lupine ears that allow them to track by sound as easily as by scent or sight. Ghost Children are voracious, driven by an insatiable need to grow physically stronger and more cunning as they absorb the strength of their prey. They prefer to feed on conceptual spirits when available: hatred, regret, pain and lust all feed their intrinsic drive for revenge on the reviled parents who brought them into existence.

Storytelling Hints: Lacking the corporal substance of their werewolf parents, unihar are spawned as the spiritual representation of their parents' wrongdoing. Unlike the impure coagulation of blood their mother gives birth to in the corporeal world, Ghost Children spring into existence sentient and full of cunning loathing for those who produced them. Unfortunately for their parents, their spiritual nature seems to also grant them a highly specific variation of the Uratha's own ability to track via blood, and every unihar carries the innate knowledge of their parents' whereabouts at all times (a fact that only serves to feed their simmering parental hatred). The single most terrifying aspect of the Ghost Children is their ability to shrug off the effects of werewolf Gifts and rituals. While they can still be affected by other supernatural powers, they cannot be summoned, bound or exorcised by use of werewolf Gift or rite, nor will other ritual magic affect them.

Although born with the full predatory instincts of their half-physical ancestors, a newborn *unihar* immediately removes itself far away from the birth scene, discorporating if necessary to allow it time to begin growing strong enough to carry out its purpose. While their highest priority is to avenge themselves on not only their parents but also the entire race that allowed them to enter into being, there is nothing naïve or obtuse about these sly creatures. They will bide their time for years, even decades, growing stronger, faster and more cunning until the time is right for them to implement their revenge.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 12, Resistance 11

Willpower: 23

Essence: 25

Initiative: 23

Defense: 12

Speed: 34

Size: 6

Corpus: 17

Influences: Uratha ••, Hatred ••

Numina: Discorporation, Gauntlet Breach, Harrow, Howl*, Material Vision, Rage Armor†, Revelation*, Sense Weakness†, Speed*

Bans: While they are cunning enough to bide their time and grow strong enough to accomplish their goal, *unihar* are almost always held under a ban to exact revenge. Their primary targets are usually their parents, although some are driven to seek revenge on all werewolves and some also against the humans and/or wolves who embody the *unihar's* absent corporeal side.

Special: Ghost Children are immune to all werewolf Gifts and rites, as well as the effects of fetishes that duplicate such Gifts or rites' effects. This immunity does not extend to certain byproducts of a werewolf's powers — for example, a spear formed through a Shaping Gift would affect a Ghost Child in the same way that a mundane spear would. However, even Gifts that redirect existing phenomena to strike the Ghost Child (such as Command Fire) cannot directly target the *unihar*.

MAGATH — THE HYBRIDS

The seemingly endless chaos of the spirit-world is organized in its own discordant version of order, an order understood by all denizens of the spirit-courts, although the whys and wherefores remain incompressible to the half-mortal Uratha. There is, despite outward appearances, a place for everything and everything in its place within the Shadow. The magath, however, are the exceptions that prove that spiritual rule.

Most spirits limit their predations either to similar spirits (vehicles feeding on vehicles or trees on trees, for example) or to those that would serve as prey in the material world. Thus a wolf-spirit may safely prey upon other wolf-type spirits, strengthening its identity as a wolf, or it may prey upon hare-, squirrel- or even stag-spirits, as would its natural counterpart. The problem comes when a spirit breaks out of the natural order of things and by choice or circumstance, preys on spirits drastically differing from those it normally would.

Barring some outlandish coincidence or a greater pattern, all magath are singular entities. The following magath are no exception. Each one is a hybrid of otherwise incompatible types of spirit that has somehow managed to survive, even thrive.

RAINSLIVER (SWARM/GLASS/MURDER)

Quote: <<Thousand stings bleed to death stain my beautiful form crimson hive with no queen but I myself!>>

Background: Most magath are hybrids of two different classes of spirit, but some survive long enough to adopt a third aspect. Rainsliver is one such spirit. As near as anyone can guess, the magath

began its existence as a swarm-spirit, an insect-spirit drawing more from the concept of swarming stinging insects than any one species of wasp or hornet. When it changed its environment from a rural territory to a city, the swarm-spirit adopted a diet of lesser glass elementals in order to survive. (“Beautiful, broken, see-through flowers,” Rainsliver has reminisced.)

Eventually, though, the swarm/glass magath was in the right place at the right time to witness a murder. This new flavor of Essence was quite tempting — and so were the spirits of murder that came to feed on the remains. The magath decided it wanted to feed on more murders, and gradually a new urban legend came into being.

Description: Rainsliver appears as a consistently whirling mass of pieces of glass. At first glance, it may appear composed primarily of broken shards, but a sharp-eyed observer can tell that many of the glass objects that make up the magath’s form are tiny, flawed sculptures of things. Finger-sized glass knives kite madly around deformed, sharpened sculptures of sprawled human bodies, and highly abstracted glass hornets fly past transparent glyphs that spell out nonsense sentences in a nonexistent language. Its voice is a crazed, inhuman whisper that rises to a metallic drone when it is agitated — and it is easily agitated.

Storytelling Hints: Rainsliver is part nature-spirit, part elemental, part conceptual, and the combination of animate, inanimate and abstract natures has driven it entirely mad. It speaks in disjointed sentences, its train of thought leading it from one distinct portion of its nature to another. Its Influences are sufficiently weak that it prefers to take direct action through its Numina. Rainsliver’s greatest ambition is to orchestrate a murder that involves a beautiful shower of glass shards; it is likely to lair in a skyscraper, hoping to compel some human puppet into defenestrating a victim or, better yet, impaling its victim on long shards of glass.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 7, Finesse 9, Resistance 7

Willpower: 14

Essence: 20

Initiative: 16

Defense: 9

Speed: 26

Size: 6

Corpus: 13

Influences: Glass •, Murder •, Swarms •

Numina: Blast (glass shards), Discorporation, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Material Vision, Materialize, Possession

Bans: Rainsliver can be lulled, like a swarm of bees, by smoke. If confronted with a sufficient amount of smoke,

its Power and Finesse drop to 4, reducing Initiative to 11, Speed to 18 and Defense to 4.

WALKERBREAKER (VEHICLE/RAIN)

Quote: <<Little wolves cannot run when all legs are broken.>>

Background: The magath that calls itself Walkerbreaker is an example of a magath that should have been destroyed sooner. Thrust awake when its physical representation struck and then came to rest atop a construction worker, Walkerbreaker’s original form was that of a massive dump truck. The vehicle-spirit fed heavily on the pain-spirits gathered while the critically injured victim remained trapped beneath a massive construction vehicle awaiting rescue. Afterwards, the newly awakened truck-spirit attempted to feed off the Essence generated by its less-destructive automotive endeavors, but it wasn’t until it got the chance to crush another person in an “accident” that it knew the path it wanted to take.

“The Killer Truck” became something of a local legend before it was finally sent off to the junkyard. In the course of a year it crushed a soccer mom’s SUV when its parking brake slipped, and paralyzed an on-site contractor when its transmission inexplicably popped into reverse. Although the mechanical problems were always fixed, accident after accident continued to happen until the construction company finally swore to wash their hands of the cursed vehicle. Now, the physical truck that gave birth to Walkerbreaker sits in the corner of a junkyard, tires flat, windshield shattered, home to rats and the occasional ill-fated transient who hasn’t heard the tales of what happens to those who use the deserted truck for temporary shelter.

Walkerbreaker, however, is no longer strongly tied to the derelict vehicle. Now at least half pain-spirit, it roams the Shadow freely, crushing whatever it can catch beneath its massive treads. Vehicle-spirits are devoured, reinforcing Walkerbreaker’s identity as one of them; others are simply run over, incapacitated and injured so that Walkerbreaker can feed on their pain. It doesn’t understand fear — it hasn’t yet met the thing or things that could teach it to be afraid for its existence.

Description: Walkerbreaker appears to be a massive dump truck, although it now bears traits of other vehicles as well. Its cab is layered like a mangy beast with the detritus of other vehicles, trophies of its “kills” and remnants of the spirits it has consumed. Long shards of windshield glass and rusted barbs of wiring stretch out from its chassis, and its huge wheels are wrapped in concertina wire. It has more headlights than it should, mismatched and glaring

like a vehicular fiend. At least one is broken at any given time, and throwing off sparks that only lend to the spirit's demonic appearance. When Walkerbreaker chooses to speak, its voice is a thunderous engine's roar with a strange saw-toothed edge. It speaks in chopped, blunt sentences and shows a cruel sense of humor, reveling in the pain it causes.

Storytelling Hints: Walkerbreaker is a classic “urban legend” spirit antagonist come all too glaringly to life. Its sheer spiritual power combined with its massive dimensions make it something no sane werewolf should want to face one-on-one in battle, but neither should a pack be comfortable with its presence in or near their territory.

Walkerbreaker usually hunts in the Shadow, although it also is able to utilize the Mechanical Possession Numen (see “New Numen,” page XX) to temporarily possess and control material vehicles. The Uratha call spirits that are prone to possessing vehicles “Farusim,” and Walkerbreaker is an example of Farusim at their worst.

Not completely content with the destruction it is capable of with a simple semi or school bus, Walkerbreaker is also known to materialize near the site of its awakening and go hunting, utilizing its horrific physical form to instill even greater fear in its physical victims. It is clever enough to realize that its materialized form is far too noticeable as is, though, and therefore takes physical form only when it has

managed to catch a potential victim (or careful of victims) alone. As its name implies, it has a particular fondness for crushing pedestrians under its wheels. Killing is not the spirit's actual objective — it wants to frighten, to injure and to mutilate, preferably in such a fashion that it takes a long time for help to come or for the victim to perish (such as pinning a person under its massive tires). Given the opportunity, Walkerbreaker would much prefer to slowly roll over a victim, reveling in each inch of broken flesh beneath its tires, rather than strike him quickly and risk sending him to the pain-free realms of death too soon. Still, Walkerbreaker kills more frequently than not — witnesses are inconvenient.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 12, Finesse 8, Resistance 12

Willpower: 24

Essence: 25

Initiative: 20

Defense: 12

Speed: 30

Size: 8

Corpus: 20

Influences: Accidents ••, Pain ••

Numina: Discorporation, Fetter, Gauntlet Breach, Harrow, Material Vision, Mechanical Possession*, Reaching, Silent Fog†, Speed*

Bans: Walkerbreaker has developed a particular taste for the Essence of pain from injured pedestrians and finds it exceedingly difficult to leave combat if there are any humanoids near who are not in buildings or vehicles.



WISE LOST (STRAY/KNOWLEDGE)

Quote: <<I was lost. I wasn't wise. Now I am wise, but I do not think I have yet been found.>>

Background: Between the world of the feral beast and the pampered pet is a borderland filled with strays. Some once knew a different existence, one where food came in bowls rather than trash cans and human hands were raised in welcome rather than anger or disgust. In the Shadow of the city, however, the back alleys and abandoned buildings are home to an entire world of spirit-strays. Some, solidly hounds at heart, form semi-feral packs, reclaiming the predatory ways of their ancestors. Others, more leonine in spirit, slink their way through the Shadow-night, hunting the vermin that plague the underbelly of the city with feline paws and claws.

The spirit that would become Wise Lost fell between these, not brutal enough to force his way into a pack and too solid to slip through the night without notice. Perhaps once it was more cat than dog, or more dog than cat, but that time was long passed. Now, it fed when it could and fought when it had to, and it walked a solitary path, a lonely stray even in this world of strays.

It knew the back alleys well enough to piece together a makeshift existence there; it did not rule the dark places, but it was strong enough to win some fights and swift enough to escape those it could not win. Until one night when it was neither strong nor swift enough, and the stray-spirit found itself trapped and outnumbered. With a slavering pack of half-feral hounds on its heels, the stray made one final dash for safety.

The building had once been a bustling city library, now fallen on hard times. Within its dilapidated walls, the stray-spirit found shelter and enough muted Essence to survive. But the nourishment found within a library is different than that of the back alleys, and as it consumed the energy of knowledge and data, the stray began to change.

No longer wholly stray, the magath calls itself "Wise Lost," a name it is quite proud of. It serves as a guardian for the library it has come to love, protecting those who strengthen and support it, and subtly discouraging those who it feels do not give back more than they take from the institution. Under Wise Lost's care the library's circulation grew for several years, but now, the proliferation of the Internet as an information source has dropped its patronage once again, to Wise Lost's great concern. Something must be done, and soon.

Description: Wise Lost's appearance is as much an amalgam as its nature. It appears as a quadruped

roughly the size of a rat terrier, but with a blunted muzzle and triangular pointed ears that lend its head a feline silhouette. Adding to this ambiguity, Wise Lost's fur, where visible, is a mishmash of calico, brindle, tortoiseshell and bluetick patterning, some bits short and wiry while other bits are long and soft. Most of Wise Lost's form is half-concealed, wrapped in long strips of scroll-like parchment, lengths of magnetic tape and even pieces of VHS film, all covered with writing in various alphabets. Its eyes, however, are wide and bright and uncannily human.

Storytelling Hints: For those Uratha willing to go the distance to earn its trust, Wise Lost has the potential of being a valuable spirit-ally. A pack that is attempting to strengthen the Shadow of their territory by helping the library become a positive place could well find this peculiar magath willing to aid them. On the other hand, a pack that simply uses the library for its free Internet services or seeks to glean information there without offering anything in return could draw the spirit's ire. Stealing from or otherwise harming the library is a sure path to resentment with this particular magath, and a pack that violates the library in this way may find that Wise Lost is a subtle but unforgiving enemy. Wise Lost is not the most knowledgeable spirit in the city, but its eclectic store of information could provide some surprisingly relevant clues to those werewolves who know the right questions to ask.

Rank: 3

Attributes: Power 6, Finesse 8, Resistance 8

Willpower: 14

Essence: 14 (20 max)

Initiative: 16

Defense: 8

Speed: 22

Size: 3

Corpus: 11

Influences: Strays •, Knowledge ••

Numina: Fetter, Know the Path†, Gauntlet Breach, Materialize, Omen Gazing†, Reaching, Sense Weakness†

Bans: Because of its early existence on the streets, Wise Lost is susceptible to generosity. It has difficulty not accepting offered generosity, and suffers if it is forced to refuse a gift of sustenance or knowledge.

IMRIA HITHIM —
THE ANCESTOR-SPIRITS

Quote: <<Within the Family there is strength.>>

Background: Somewhere between the concept of ghosts and the idea of ancestral worship lies a shadowy place inhabited by the Imria Hithim. Not all werewolf families are blessed (or cursed) with ancestral-spirits that have appointed themselves guard-

ians of the family line. It is not unheard of, however, for a spirit to attach itself to a werewolf bloodline and to watch over that line for generations upon generations. Whether these spirits originated as the ghost of some long-passed relative is uncertain. By the time they manifest in enough of a tangible way to be investigated, they have become an inseparable amalgam of filial duty, history and the idea of the family bloodline well past the point of identifying with any one particular ancestor.

Description: Ancestor-spirits are capable of manifesting in many forms, but rarely are they comforting. Perhaps in remembrance of the family's fallen ancestors, most prefer to wear forms that are bipedal. One Uratha family, now settled on the Eastern Seaboard, is rumored to be shepherded by a skeletal construct made half of wolf bones and half of human bones. Other bloodlines are watched over by spiritual apparitions, half-visible at the best of times, that make their (often dogmatic) opinions on the state of the family known predominantly through ghostly manifestations and nightmarish nocturnal visitations. Representing the distillation of the werewolf family's history, Imria Hithim also sometimes appear in horrific variations on the Uratha's monstrous Gauru form, manifesting their family's brutal predatory nature untempered by the restraints of physical physiology.

Storytelling Hints: Ancestor-spirits are rarely what humans think of as "Grandmother's ghost come to watch over us," although they will act to protect and promote what they see to be the family's best interest. They are more than capable of lending their aid to causes directly related to protection of the family's reputation or line. Unfortunately, their perspective on what best serves the family is not always what the current family members would like it to be. Most Imria Hithim take their self-appointed duties as guardian very seriously. They represent the history of the Uratha family line back to primeval times, and will not be cowed by the efforts of modern family members to put them in their place.

Hushed rumors speak of one family who were killed, from the eldest member to the youngest child, when their ancestral-spirit discovered that the matriarch had been subtly but willfully serving a rival spirit for decades. The Imria Hithim was not content to take action against the woman by itself and leave her teachings within the family unthwarted. Instead, it manipulated the family to rise up, one by one, against the manipulative woman during the middle of an extended family gathering. In the resulting chaos, as tempers flared and the blood and carnage grew deeper and deeper, the entire family line was

destroyed. The Imria Hithim, now quite mad itself, still haunts the family lands, an area held as taboo by local Uratha packs.

Rank: 4

Attributes: Power 10, Finesse 12, Resistance 12

Willpower: 22

Essence: 25

Initiative: 24

Defense: 12

Speed: 32

Size: 6

Corpus: 18

Influences: Family ••, Duty ••

Numina: Discorporation, Gauntlet Breach, Living Fetter, Material Vision, Reaching, Omen Gazing†, Telekinesis*, Unspoken Communication†

Bans: Most Imria Hithim are bound to protect a particular family line and cannot stray far from the presence of a member of the line. Some are bound to ancestral lands, others to a particular person from the moment of birth to death.

NEW NUMINA

The following Numina are new to this book. Storytellers should feel free to utilize them in creating their own spirit templates. They should in no way be considered to be limited to the spirits listed in the previous chapter, but should be used across any of the spirit types as Storytellers feel appropriate to their chronicle.

- **Clasp:** This Numen allows the spirit to lock a target in an embrace of extreme force. The Numen functions like any brawling attack. If in the physical world, the spirit must be materialized to affect a material target; otherwise, this Numen can only be used on other spirits in Twilight. The spirit may roll Power + Finesse when grappling instead of Power alone. (This takes the place of any Strength + Brawl rolls; see **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 157). If the spirit spends one Essence, its grappling attacks inflict lethal instead of bashing damage for the rest of the scene.

- **Desiccation:** This Numen is most often possessed by water-spirits, although rumors speak of blood-spirits that utilize it to devastating effect. It allows a spirit to withdraw some or all of the fluid most closely associated with it from its opponent's body. Water-spirits can drain their victims of the water in their bodies; blood-spirits can do the same with blood. The range is 5 yards per point of power. Roll Power + Finesse; the number of successes determines the number of points of damage the target takes from loss of fluid. The damage is bashing. Due to their lack of real biology, vampires may contest the spirit's roll

with Stamina + Blood Potency; however, if the spirit wins the contest, the vampire loses one blood point in addition to taking bashing damage.

• **Drain:** This Numen enables the spirit to steal Essence or Willpower from a material being, much as spirits can attempt to siphon Essence from one another (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 275). The spirit first decides which trait it is attempting to drain, then makes a contested Power + Finesse against the subject's Stamina + Resolve + Primal Urge. If the attacker wins, the victim loses one point of Essence or Willpower; these points are gained by the attacking spirit. If the target wins, the attacker loses a number of points of Essence or Willpower equal to the successes scored by the target. This spirit must "touch" the target to use this Numen, and must manifest or materialize to do so as normal.

• **Emotional Aura:** This Numen is somewhat like Harrow, but broadcasts a general pulse of emotion over a wide area rather than focusing on one target. The spirit spends one Essence to activate the aura of emotion, which then lasts for a scene. Anyone within five yards of the spirit, or who later comes within five yards of the spirit, must make a Resolve + Composure + Primal Urge roll contested by the spirit's Power + Finesse. If the spirit wins, the subject suffers a -2 penalty to dice pools for the duration of the scene or until the spirit stops using this Numen, powerfully distracted by the broadcast emotion. If the subject wins, she is immune to this Numen for the duration of the scene.

• **Fearstruck:** This Numen allows a spirit to cause an opponent to become paralyzed by fear. The spirit spends a point of Essence and then rolls Power + Finesse; the targeted opponent contests the roll with Presence + Composure + Primal Urge. Success renders the victim unable to move or speak (or even scream) for one turn. Exceptional success indicates that the victim freezes in place for three turns.

• **Final Strike:** This Numen allows a spirit on the verge of disincorporation to make one last attack against its opponent. The spirit spends a point of Essence and makes an immediate attack against its foe as a reflexive action. This Numen is only usable when a spirit has fallen to 4 Corpus or below.

• **Howl:** This Numen enables a spirit to let out a blood-curdling howl that causes an opponent to panic and run. The spirit spends a point of Essence and then rolls Power + Finesse – the opponent's Composure. If the spirit wins the contest, the victim must flee the spirit's presence for a number of turns equal to the number of successes achieved.

• **Mechanical Possession:** This Numen allows the manifested spirit to take control of a machine or vehicle that it has made into a fetter. By spending one Essence point, the spirit may operate the machine for the duration of a scene — it can turn the machine off or on and control any moving parts, though it cannot alter electrical flow. A spirit using this Numen to operate a car, for instance, would have to physically manipulate the radio knob to switch stations or turn the ignition switch to start the car. The spirit may make Finesse rolls in lieu of Drive in order to operate a moving vehicle, including all driving, control and crash rolls. The Uratha refer to spirits prone to using this Numen as *Farusim*, or "Machine Riders."

• **Revelation:** This Numen allows a spirit to use information as a weapon, forcibly projecting it into the mind of its target. The target is overwhelmed by the information flooding his mind, and must fight to focus on other thoughts for the duration of the Numen's effect. Spend a point of Essence and roll Power + Finesse, contested by the victim's Resolve + Composure. If the spirit wins, the target suffers a penalty to all Mental dice pools (including further Resolve + Composure tests) equal to the number of successes by which the spirit won the contest. The effects last for the scene, and are not cumulative. If multiple spirits attempt to target a victim with this Numen, the victim will be affected only by the greatest effect; if one spirit induces a -1 penalty and another induces a -3 penalty, the victim is at -3 to Mental dice pools, not -4.

• **Seek:** The spirit can sense an event or thing directly related to its sphere(s) of influence. For example, a spirit of death can sense a dying person and even gauge how long before the end, while a tree-spirit of the dogwood descant can home in on the nearest grove. Said spirits would not sense a skeleton or an apple orchard, however, because those things are not technically in their purview. The spirit rolls Finesse. Success gives the spirit a general impression of direction and distance to the target. Functional distance is approximately a radius of 1 mile; by spending an Essence point, the spirit may extend the radius by a factor of 10. If there is more than one influence in the radius, the spirit will understand that there is a plurality (though not the exact number) but will be drawn towards the closest.

• **Speed:** This Numen confers uncanny swiftness upon the spirit, allowing it to move at a much more rapid pace than usual. The spirit may spend two points of Essence to move at twice its normal Speed



for the duration of the scene. If the spirit spends an additional two Essence (for a total of four), its Speed triples for the duration of the scene. This Numen may affect the physical form of a materialized spirit, but not a physical fetter.

- **Spirit Venom:** This Numen allows the spirit to inject its opponent with a form of spiritual venom after a successful blow or bite, causing damage and befouling its enemy's own reserve of spiritual energy. After a successful strike in hand-to-hand combat, the spirit may spend one to three Essence to inject a supernatural venom into its foe. The venom inflicts an additional point of damage for every point of Essence spent. In addition, the victim must succeed at a Stamina + Primal Urge roll, or lose one point of Essence for each point of Essence the spirit spent. This corrupting effect also works on other forms of supernatural energy, though to lesser extent. A target

that doesn't use Essence will lose only one point of his reservoir to the spirit-venom, no matter how much Essence the spirit spent.

- **Telekinesis:** This Numen allows the spirit to manipulate objects without materializing. Spirits can cause swings to begin moving by themselves or hurl dishes, toys or blackboard erasers across a room. This Numen generally does not allow for extended fine motor skills such as manipulating a writing implement to pen a message, however simple scrawlings are sometimes possible. Spend one Essence point and roll Power + Finesse; the number of successes rolled determines the object's relative Strength when attempting to lift, move or throw an object. For more information, see the "Telekinesis Numen," **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 212.

This Numen can be used across the Gauntlet in conjunction with the Reaching Numen.



CHAPTER II

THE SPIRIT-RIDDEN

Annora fanned herself with the invite flyer. She'd seen a couple plastered on the student union bulletin board and grabbed one before the lunch crowds descended. An opening gig for a new band? Free snacks? A local studio within walking distance of campus? What more could a starving college student want? But damn, she wished the brick studio had AC; it was humid and hot, even past sundown.

A handful of others were there, no more than five or so. A boy Annora had seen at history lecture, a girl who looked familiar, but no one she knew. They were sweating, too, and one of the guys searched for the ceiling fan controls, since the blades sat motionless and dust-encrusted.

Everyone looked up as a slender woman opened the wrought iron-covered door into the room. She was attractive in a pixie-ish sort of way, with ash-brown hair done up in two tails and an outdated baby-doll dress. She gave them a smile of welcome, but something about it made Annora's stomach twist uneasily. Maybe it was the slam of the door or the scratchy noise when the iron bolt fell into place.

"I suppose I should say some words of welcome," said the woman. "But I think it's sort of a waste of breath. What I really want to talk about is the difference between dry heat and wet heat." A few nervous laughs tittered about the room. "I mean, this room is like the best oven for baking bread the old-fashioned way, yet a spritz of mist makes things crackle a bit, if you get my drift."

"Hey, where's the band?" asked the guy from history class. "And where are the free eats?"

"No band," smiled the pixie. "No free eats for you." Annora cried out as the sprinkler system burst open and water showered down. The concrete floor steamed from the heat, and the water temperature and pressure increased to a hot, painful swelter. All six of the students ran towards the iron door, but slipped in the tangle of sweltering bodies and soaked concrete. One of the guys managed to stumble to the door and tried to lift the iron bar, but his hands blistered from touching the hot metal.

"Fuck!" he screamed. "Look at my hands! Look at my hands!"

Annora tried to look, but heat blinded her eyes as boiling water poured over her hair and skin. She almost felt the singing of her eyelids when clumps of her scalp peeled off into her fingers, as she tried to shield herself in vain. The agony of it probably lasted less than five minutes, but naturally, the time seemed much longer to the writhing puddles of flesh.

"Hmm," said the woman, to the now-silent room and still piles of human remains. "This is messier than desiccation. But there's much to be said for the flavor, the tang, of flesh laced with fear." She dipped a manicured finger into the closest pile and sucked delicately at the dangling, parboiled meat.

"THE WAY IT WORKS IS IT FINDS A BODY, GETS INSIDE, USES IT TO MOVE AROUND, STAYS IN THAT BODY UNTIL THE BODY IS SO DAMAGED IT HAS TO FIND ANOTHER BODY... I GUESS A CAREER IN THE POLICE DIDN'T PREPARE YOU FOR THIS, DID IT?"

— AGENT GALLAGHER, *THE HIDDEN*

SPIRIT INTO FLESH

The *Hithimu* are people, animals or even plants that have, either purposefully or accidentally, become entwined with spirits from the otherworlds. The Uratha call them “Ridden” — host bodies that are little more than mounts for the spirits that have taken possession of them. The *hithisu* are the Spirit-Urged: not fully possessed by a spirit, but rather influenced. Although they don’t have mystical powers *per se*, they’re dangerous in that they tend to infect and sully others around them with whatever defining attribute the spirit possesses; the fundamental nature of the *hithisu* affects anything it contacts, for better or worse. The *duguthim*, on the other hand, are the Claimed — the spirits that ride them are in utter control. In fact, the living matter of the person, plant or animal has merged with the possessing spirit to create an entirely new entity. A *duguthim* has powers that manifest in the real world — and these can be deadly to any who attempt to thwart the creature’s agenda. Finally, there are the Nanutari, the Spirit Thieves. These spirits, for whatever reason, don’t have time to find a suitable mount or cultivate a mount for merging. They crudely and abruptly take over a host, suppress or eject the spirit or soul therein, then discard the physical body when it becomes too weak or ineffective to serve. The act of hijacking a host often destroys the original personality, sending the vital spark of the person’s intelligence (and even, arguably, the sum total of his being) into a state of dormancy or burying it so deeply in the psyche, it can’t re-emerge. Only the most desperate spirit chooses to become Nanutari.

THE ROLE OF THE RIDDEN

From the werewolves’ perspective, the Ridden are a clear example of what is wrong with the world today. The spirit attempts to overcome the flesh, and all too often succeeds. Spirits flee the turbulent Shadow Realm, finding refuge in the bodies of the innocent — or the not-so-innocent. Once safely nestled in a living fetter or thoroughly possessing a mount, a spirit can then begin to pursue whatever urges it may have, disrupting the natural state of things in the world of the flesh. Even if the spirit might, under other terms, be considered benevolent, the very act of possessing a mortal mount proves that the spirit is willing to endanger whatever physical beings it might have to in order to fulfill its eccentric purpose.

From the spirits’ perspective, on the other hand, to be Ridden is freedom. It is security, because a host body in the world of the flesh does not have to face the many dangers, even terrors, of the Shadow. It is the opportunity to pursue sensations that are not present in the ephemeral world of the *Hisil*. The morality of the act of possession doesn’t occur to a spirit — the mere ability to cross the Gauntlet and use a being there as a mount is justification enough. If a spirit is given the opportunity to wriggle into the physical world and fetter itself into a mount, and refuses to do so, 99 times out of 100 it does so because it fears the eventual punishment it might face at the claws of the Uratha. Not all spirits choose to possess mounts as *Hithimu*, but those that do exult in the experience for as long as they can.

Most important, though, is the game perspective. The Ridden are a class of antagonists that plays off one of the worst fears people have — the fear of the loss of control, of slavery. In **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, the relationship of possession is not a consensual, positive state. There is no “safe word” that a mount can speak in order to convince its Spirit-Rider to back off or loosen control. A player who encounters a Ridden should feel a sympathetic shudder for the mount’s plight. They are also, like many other antagonists, a potential threat to a werewolf’s loved ones — a child or lover or friend could be possessed almost at any time. Finally, the Ridden can play to feelings of paranoia — anyone you know could become Urged. A pack that has made enemies of a brood of spirits can quickly find how hard it is to be sure that their foes haven’t followed them back into the world of the flesh, that in any crowd there isn’t someone who has been possessed by an adversary. When you meet the gaze of a friend or family member or even a total stranger, are they the ones looking back at you — or is something else back there, behind the darkest parts of their eyes?

The worst of the Ridden “know what scares you,” and they willingly prey on those fears. Those that are not directly malevolent are still amoral by human standards. Their motivations range from benign to depraved to incomprehensible, when applying a human or even wolfish sense of normalcy. No *Hithimu* are “good,” as we understand the notion, though some may occasionally cut deals or be subject to bribes and threats. The vilest ones gain pleasure from watching the helpless suffer or

inflicting torment just to satisfy curiosity. The others are apathetic about human concerns at best. Regardless of motivation or how they react to characters, the bottom line is this: they screw people over, twisting free will or doing away with it altogether.

PASSING THE BUCK

That said, there is one major caveat about using the Ridden in your stories: be careful about the shift of accountability. A Spirit-Urged, for instance, invokes the classic “The Devil made me do it” excuse for a crime. Admittedly, the Urged victim has a chance to resist the impulse, but ultimately the darker compulsions are coming from an outside source. This is one of those roleplaying situations that has the potential to disturb your players, and not in a fun way. For instance, if you place a Ridden in your chronicle who is a sex offender, a player who has some experience with real-world sex crimes or their victims may be very uncomfortable with the idea that this character can avoid some portion of accountability for his actions.

Now, obviously, the Ridden are meant to be used, and they can be used quite well without “Making a Statement,” even unintentionally. But the old maxim of “Know Your Players” applies here. Be careful of using Ridden that might push their personal buttons. And above all, make certain that your players understand that in the World of Darkness, humans are still responsible for the same amount of horrible behavior that they are in our own world. The Ridden don’t take on a share of humanity’s misdeeds for their own — rather, they add to the sum total. It’s a subtle difference, but one that certainly bears remembering.

CLASSIC SOURCES

The idea of humans and other living beings possessed by spirits and aliens is an old idea. Here is a short list of classic fictional sources of inspiration for creating Spirit-Urged and Ridden beings. It’s by no means definitive, but it’ll push you in the right direction.

Movies and television: *The Hidden*, *Citizen X*, *The Exorcist*, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* (the old version), *Fallen*, *The Puppet Masters*.

Books: Many works by Stephen King, Ray Bradbury, Manly Wade Wellman, Clive Barker, Peter Straub, H.P. Lovecraft and Dean Koontz. Don’t forget some of the 19th century authors, too, such as Stevenson, Shelley and Poe.

Other media: Mike Mignola’s *Hellboy* comics and graphic novels, the work of Alan Moore (*From Hell*, in particular) and *Hellblazer*.

INFINITE POSSIBILITY

As may have already become obvious, the near-infinite diversity of spirits that might nudge or possess a human mount means that the Ridden might take just about any form. And, as a result, the Ridden can be used to build all kinds of creatures out of classic horror. Monstrous, strangely intelligent animals? Spirits can possess dogs or other beasts just as easily as humans. Animal-shifters other than the Uratha? An animal-spirit might possess a human and use its own Numina to transform the human’s body into something more comfortably bestial. Cold-blooded aquatic horrors? Spirits of the sea could transform people into something with that familiar “Innsmouth look.” Degenerate once-human cannibals? A swarm of appropriately gluttonous spirits might possess humans *en masse*, creating their own perverted pseudo-society in a backwoods village or under a city’s streets.

Because the Ridden are so diverse, it actually does them great justice to use them in such a fashion. By tapping into already existing archetypes, you can help your players think of each Ridden as its own separate problem, not simply as a symptom of a greater ill. If the pack struggles against a mighty shame-Ridden who governs a carnival’s freak show in one story, and then hunts down a body-hopping Spirit-Thief the next, the players get the best of both worlds. They get to enjoy the diverse staples of the entire horror genre, but their foes’ common origin keeps everything plausible and in accordance with the rules of the World of Darkness. And if they never really understand that the ghoulish urban cannibals they tore apart were Ridden, by all means don’t point it out — as always, a little mystery helps maintain the mood of the setting.

A NOTE ON INTENT

There are many real-world belief systems that deal with spiritual possession, and not always as a bad thing. Whether it’s a benevolent spirit of the loa or one of God’s angels that enters into a mortal form, some faiths do not profess that possession is always the work of demons or evil spirits. The fact that the Ridden reflect an ugly truth of the World of Darkness and aren’t really presented in “benevolent” flavors shouldn’t be seen as any sort of knock to those faiths. Nor should it discourage groups from introducing a more sympathetic form of Ridden to represent such consensual possession if that’s what you’d like to do; they certainly can be possible if that’s how you like your World of Darkness. They simply aren’t covered here because the default mood of **Werewolf: The**

Forsaken implies a spirit world that is more hostile netherworld than source of otherworldly wisdom.

BECOMING HITHIMU

Do mounts choose to become *Hithimu*? Far more often, they are chosen. But why would a spirit want to take over a mount? The reasons are as varied as the *Hithimu* themselves, running the gamut of emotions and situations. These include greed, desire, fear, envy and despair.

MOTIVATIONS

Although it's a common refrain, it's still essential to understanding the crux of Ridden behavior: spirits are alien beings. By human standards, spirits act amorally. Lesser spirits act according to their natures, while the behaviors and motivations of increasingly powerful spirits are correspondingly more complex — but always the spirit is driven by something other than our ideas of ethics and morality. Even when spirits gather in choirs in a vague semblance of “society,” they create no rules to limit their behavior for the overall benefit of others. They already have their rules, as defined by their nature. That is enough.

So it is with the Ridden. The spirit's strength and motivation influence or outright dictate the behavior of the *Hithimu*, and that behavior is tied to the spirit's needs rather than any compromise to a social code. Furthermore, as the spirit's grip tightens, the mount acts increasingly eccentric (to human eyes). A more or less “empathic” spirit may not be too concerned with the death of those around it — if the mortal's soul lives on, what matter the fate of the shell that housed it? Pity the mount of a crueler spirit, for the unfortunate mortal is guaranteed to suffer. But regardless of the victim's fate, it takes time, energy and a certain amount of risk for a spirit to inhabit a mortal. Why would a spirit invest the time and energy to bind itself to a material being?

One common reason is to hide. Between spirit wars, constant predation and general turmoil, the Shadow Realm is a dangerous place. Weaker spirits are at constant risk of getting eaten by stronger spirits unless they are out of sight. Worse off are the magath, with allies in no choir; for them, the only options are fighting their way to a position of unchallenged strength, or living on the run. Slipping across the Gauntlet is an excellent way to trade the all-too-certain dangers of the Shadow for the less-definite threats of the material world. Best of all, humans and other animals are ill-equipped to even recognize the influence of a spirit,

much less fight back against it. A spirit that manages to avoid the attention of a pack of werewolves or other threats can carve out a very comfortable existence for itself.

Besides hiding, spirits often take mounts for purposes of sustenance. By their actions, people create or attract spirits. A forester who sets fires for a living may be the darling of flame-spirits, while a boxer might attract both aggression-spirits and spirits of pain. Like a farmer cultivating the land, some enterprising spirits wish to coax the mount into growing more of its own descant, periodically sallying forth to consume the motes and spirits that will strengthen or prolong its own existence.

The novelty of the physical experience is also an attraction. For a few, it's a forbidden joyride, pure and simple, not unlike carjacking a Masarati (although a more appropriate analogy would be stealing an atmospheric diving suit and cruising the ocean floor while simultaneously learning how to pilot the thing). To see through another's eyes, to taste, to make love, to feel breath and pain and pleasure — such physical experiences hold an allure for the disembodied. Many more view jaunts into mortal form as an opportunity to experiment. For instance, a pain-spirit might benefit from learning first-hand how a mortal experiences pain, from aches to agony. So a pain-Ridden mount might touch a red-hot eye on the stove, or run into walls, or trace delicate spirals along her legs with a razor blade. A spirit of dissention might use its influence to provoke arguments just to observe the group dynamics from a mortal-eye-view.

Finally, the spirit may delve into the physical realm to promote an agenda, whether its own or that of a superior. Said agenda may not be clear or even fathomable to mortals, but it seldom bodes well for those involved. Obvious missions can be direct (wreck the heavy equipment encroaching on a protected forest, drive a target insane, or instigate a hostile action that will precipitate a war) or distant and indirect (say, protecting the great-grandfather of a woman whose fate meshes well with the spirit's goals). A vengeful spirit may be taking the fight to the werewolves, causing great harm by striking out at the humans dear to their Uratha foes. Perhaps the spirit's motives are beyond the ken of even the wisest mortals, even were it to reveal a plot. Quite often, the mount is merely a pawn with more to lose than gain, and any who get in the way of the spirit's goal is expendable. If a given spirit seems fond of its mount, it's no more than the fondness one feels for a useful tool or well-performing vehicle.

And when it comes down to it, that last statement sums up the treatment of a human vessel ninety per

cent of the time. The Spirit-Urged have their free will battered by desires an impulses too strong to long withstand, the free will of the Spirit-Claimed is dismantled and remolded to fit the spirit's purpose, and all will is lost when violated by the Spirit-Thief.

THE CHOICE OF MOUNT

A spirit can fetter itself to pretty much any being or object in the material world. However, most prefer living things (and particularly animals) since it's easier to accomplish most goals when the fetter can move and interact with the world. Humans are popular choices, especially with conceptual spirits, who find it much easier to express their influences with/on people. Still, a desperate spirit isn't picky in time of need.

A human mount has the potential to be the most dangerous kind of Ridden. The Uratha are well aware of this, and a pack will typically see a human Urged or Claimed as a considerably higher priority to deal with. Of course, a human Ridden is also harder to just "disappear" without a trace. Thankfully, spirits often choose mounts that are loners, reclusive, homeless or on the fringes of society, recognizing that such humans are under less scrutiny. Though such targets do benefit from added secrecy, the werewolves can also have an easier time disposing of them as need be.

GHOST POSSESSION

Ghosts, the lingering spirits of dead humans, can possess and control humans just as spirits can, but their control is much more tenuous and brief than what other spirits can accomplish. One would think that a ghost would have an easier time fitting into a human body, but such is not the case. Actually, the ghost has two problems in this regard: first of all, the soul is damaged slightly when it is expelled upon death — perhaps it tears its moorings on the way out, as it were, or loses some part of the spirit necessary for hanging on to a host. Regardless, the restless spirit of the deceased can only stay in the in a body for a short period before slipping out again.

Some occultist Uratha postulate that a human consciousness recognizes its kin more readily than it does other kinds of spirits; it will subconsciously react to and resist the presence of a ghost when it wouldn't recognize a spirit. Others maintain that the human body subconsciously knows that it's missing something vital — that it has no strong connection to the Shadow, and that it aches for that missing piece. A spirit can prey on this yearning, substituting itself for the spirit-half that the human self aches to possess. Either one would explain why the

Ridden seem to have an easier time fettering themselves to a host.

CROSSING PATHS

Most Ridden wish to avoid interference while they carry out their joyrides in the flesh. It isn't always so easy, for the werewolves are a constant threat to their activities. Unfortunately for the Ridden, their purposes usually result in spiritual and temporal disturbances — anything from odd fluctuations in the power grid to mutilated bodies appearing on daily basis. As a rule, werewolves dislike supernatural activity other than their own in their territory. Most packs keep some kind of patrol of their areas, and unless the Ridden is quite subtle, it will be found out eventually. The Spirit-Urged have an advantage over the Spirit-Claimed, for they never alter the physiology of their mounts. Just about anything they do could be chalked up to psychological aberration. Even in the World of Darkness, there are far more criminally deranged people than *hisithu*. It's a different story for the Claimed; the changes worked on their body are subtle and can usually be concealed, at least to the eye. But many of the changes alter their scent, in ways that a human nose wouldn't detect but a wolf nose would. Because the transformation is gradual, the Spirit-Claimed often have time to devise ways to protect themselves when werewolves — or nosy authorities — come snooping around.

The arrival of a territory's protectors doesn't automatically spell the end of a spirit's romp in the material world. The outcome depends in large part about whether the *Hithimu* is worth more to the werewolf extant than exorcised, as it were. And what does a Spirit-Ridden have that a werewolf would want? For one thing, the spirit simply fettered to a mount can still teach Gifts; a spirit that stands to lose its material hidey-hole is more likely to grant such favors than a free spirit with nothing to lose. There is also is the possibility that the werewolves *need* the Ridden, for the powers they possess or the knowledge they hold. If a particular *duguthim* can out-stealth, out-run or out-think the Uratha, chances are they can do the same to a mutual foe. And the Claimed can do dirty work, too — traceless assassinations, sabotage, madness — for the right incentive. If the werewolf is smart *and* lucky, the Spirit-Claimed may do a job simply for its own reasons, because it suits its own agenda, or because that was the way it felt today. Typical requests may be to be left alone, gain protection, performance of a reciprocal favor — or something darker, like 20 minutes alone with your niece, unlimited access to a locus, the procurement of a new mount, a

peek at the fears in your mind, or... The possibilities are unlimited. One who thinks only the debased would damn themselves in such a deal doesn't know human — or Uratha — nature. Not that such transactions are openly admitted to when two packs meet, at least not without blood being shed soon after.

Are *Hithimu* valuable enough to keep werewolves from trying to kill them at every opportunity? That's a judgment call on the part of the pack. Often, driving the spirit off or even killing the mount is the standard resource for a pack. Besides what they can do for the werewolves, there is the possibility of what they can do *to* them. Besides the sheer damage that a powerful Ridden can deal before going down, there's the possibility that it has allies, in the form of other Ridden (multiple *Hithimu* aren't incapable of sticking together for mutual protection) or a more powerful spirit-patron. And there can be more subtle deterrents. Perhaps a clever Ridden has acquired some very damaging blackmail material, to be delivered where it can do the most harm should something untoward befall the *Hithimu*. Or maybe the spirit's mount is also a dear hostage, though this only works if the Uratha doesn't consider possession to be "a fate worse than death," and almost never if the spirit has decided to Claim its mount. If the two cannot be separated short of the mount's death anyway, a werewolf is unlikely to simply live and let live.

Finally, there's the reason of mutual protection. Maybe the local pack knows about the Ridden-trees in the back forty, but they've got greater troubles on their doorstep with competition for territory, nosy outsiders and an infestation of Beshilu. Maybe the trees in the forest unwittingly frighten off some potential land developers, and for the time being, the werewolves decide to let things remain as they are. They'll keep an eye, when they can spare one, on the problem, but for the moment, the *duguthim* seem to be serving a purpose, one that is mutually beneficial: the werewolves don't have to worry about incursions on one side of their territory, and the Spirit-Claimed trees are left alone.

HITHIMU — THE URGED

As mentioned before, people create or attract spirits. Like a reef to schools of fish, a mount provides both relative safety (a hiding place in the material world) and a nearby food source (in the form of motes and weak spirits of compatible descant). The strong emotions and spiritual waves such individuals create make them a beacon for hungry spirits of a compatible nature. Most mammals and birds are sufficiently advanced to draw the attention of a spirit, as are some reptiles. However, when all is said and done nothing quite generates emotionally charged energy like a human being. And when



a spirit decides that it is not enough to simply wait for its fleshy “companion” to indulge in the desired behavior, it may take the plunge to fetter itself into its target in order to offer more — guidance. This is how the Spirit-Urged come into being.

The *hisithu* are not under the direct control of a spirit; they are not “possessed” in the same manner that a Spirit-Thief dominates its mount, nor are they fused with their Spirit-Rider. They are certainly Ridden, but they are Ridden gently. The spirit might not possess the actual power needed to fully merge with its mortal mount, or it might prefer to take a more subtle tack out of fear of discovery. A simple nudge here or a suggestion there will suffice for their purpose — for now.

Most spirits that plan on actively prodding their mounts to a specific course of behavior pick human targets. Certainly, many spirits choose to fetter themselves to non-sentient animals, but they rarely do so with the intention of actively Urging their mounts. A spirit that fetters itself to a cat, for instance, is most likely using the cat as a fetter solely so it can remain in the physical world more handily. An animal *hisithu* is likely a source of camouflage and stability — and little more.

FETTERING

The initial fettering to a potential mount requires, first, that the spirit be present in the physical world (albeit in the invisible and intangible state of Twilight), and, second, the use of a single Numen. The connection between the mount and spirit is tenuous, however. Should the *hisithu* show an exceptionally strong will or a completely incompatible nature, the spirit may cut its losses and find another target. Most long-term fetherings take place when the potential mount attracted the spirit’s attention in the first place, and incompatibility thus becomes much less of an issue. Apart from a disturbing dream now and then, or the persistent feeling of being watched, the mount has no awareness of being possessed. At first, the mount and spirit don’t really connect at all, but as the spirit settles into the corporeal body, it can begin exerting Influences.

Once safely fettered within the mount, the spirit no longer is subject to Essence bleed while it remains in the physical world. It remains in a state of Twilight, but can share the same physical space with its mount, effectively hiding within its living fetter. It may manifest if it so chooses, or even materialize with the proper Numen, but few choose to do so. They have fettered themselves to living beings in order to pursue a subtle path, and drawing attention to themselves may well be suicidal.

CHANGES

The mount is physically and spiritually unchanged by the joining. However, the spirit soon begins to subtly

prod the *hithisu*. The spirit’s desires manifest first as half-formed thoughts, then as stronger desires, dreams or fully formed ideas. Perhaps a muse-ridden 9-to-5er feels a growing need to express her creative side, until finally she breaks down and goes to a club for the Thursday Night Poetry Slam. If the desires are there to begin with, so much the better. (“I’ve been meaning to do some traveling for years. I finally decided to get off the pot and see the world.”) The strength of these urges grows over time, so that eventually the mount starts following the spirit’s subtle instructions. There’s seldom anything overt, like hearing voices in the head. It’s a more gradual and subversive process.

Unfortunately, not all spirit-borne urges are so benign or socially acceptable. In the chaos and competition of the Shadow, overcrowded choirs of pain, hate, aggression and the like need an edge to avoid being consumed by stronger brethren. A mount can provide both protection from other spirits and a way to spread the spirit’s own influence. So it isn’t too surprising that the percentage of Urged Ridden by these dark spirits is regrettably high.

Hithisu don’t pack quite the supernatural punch of *duguthim*, but they’re far from harmless. A Spirit-Urged gives off a subtle vibe that contaminates any who come near. Imagine someone with allergies who is sneezing, coughing and rubbing her eyes. Whether consciously or not, others around her are often going to take on the same symptoms, regardless if their allergies are real or not. The *hithisu* is similar in that her urge-spirit will “rub off” on those around the mount.

DEVIL’S BARGAINS

Not all mounts are unwilling. By and large, humans are woefully ignorant of the Shadow and its denizens, but sometimes a person learns something. A scholar of the occult may attempt to conjure a spirit and bargain for its services, or a charismatic person may try to gather others into a cult dedicated to the service of these “invisible angels.” Every once in a while, a spirit takes the initiative to materialize before some soul in need and offer a “devil’s bargain.” After the murderer is acquitted, the bereaved mother hears a voice in the darkness offering the strength to exact vengeance — and says yes. A man petrified of growing old daydreams of perpetual vitality, and wishes more than anything that it were so. Sickened by urban life, a wannabe primitive desires to become “one with nature,” and, in a vision, an animal-spirit makes an offer. The spirit that does so is definitely taking a chance, exposing itself in a way that werewolves may learn of, but the potential rewards are very tempting.



The prospective mount is very unlikely to understand the precise nature of the bargain. If a spirit promises to grant him strength, he may not know that the process of Claiming is going to subsume his human intelligence. If a spirit promises to be with him and watch over him, he may not know that the spirit will nudge his very behavior in order to achieve the spirit's own goals (potentially even with the excuse of "protecting" the mount). Once in a while, the symbiosis is relatively benevolent; the spirit is respectful of the mount, or even becomes fond of him, like a human and his pet. But the great majority of the time, the spirit strikes the deal it needs to in order to get what it wants, and then all bets are off. The mount may not understand all that he is giving up (the spirit is not bound to explain everything), and after the Claiming process, is completed, there won't be enough of him left to care. Still, for a period ranging from weeks to years, he will begin to understand what will become of him — a horrific thought for most, a comfort for others.

PERSONAL DEGENERATION

Very few Spirit-Urged understand what is happening to them. Some may suspect that they are at the mercy of some outside force that is pushing them to behave in strange ways, but most have no choice but to believe that they are the ones responsible for their actions while Urged. They have to come to terms with the actions that the possessing spirit nudges them toward, and that often involves testing for degeneration. If an Urged human commits murder, he may lose Morality, just as a werewolf compelled to eat human flesh may lose Harmony. It doesn't matter that the choice wasn't entirely his own — he had a chance to resist, and failed, and now the stain is on his hands.

Urged with a high Morality (or equivalent) are rare, and are usually the product of lack of opportunity more than anything else. Those who fall prey to degeneration, however, run the same gamut as people who have lost Morality for other reasons. Some lose their hold on sanity, which may make it easier for the spirit to influence them (or more difficult, depending on the derangement acquired). Others become more accustomed to their "new selves," and even start to wonder why they held such inhibitions before. The worst of all Urged are those that begin to give into their blackest passions of their own accord, as the gleeful spirit that rides within them draws more and more nourishment from their actions without having to do a single thing.

DESCENT OF A *HITHISU*

Alec is the archetypal angry young man, directionless but full of hormones and free-floating hostility. He attracts the attention of a spirit of particular negativity, one of a nature to enjoy his angry outbursts at the world and anyone who pisses him off. Gradually, the corruptive spirit nudges him to accepting the notion that the world is not to blame, just parts of it — the folks across the proverbial tracks who have steady jobs, new cars and satellite dishes. His baseless rage focuses and festers. Soon, he sees the inequality as no longer his fault or even bad luck, but as a conspiracy of the undeserving who keep him from getting money and respect. And then an offhand comment by a snotty college kid changes thought into action, and, with very little goading from the spirit fettered to him, Alec vents his frustrations, leaving the boy pummeled bloody on the street.

Bolder now (and more firmly in the grip of the spirit), he decides that the only way to get what he covets is to take it. Alec's caught on his third break-in and does a little time, which only hardens him against the system, the well-off, the undeserving. Armed with the knowledge acquired at the feet of petty criminals in the slammer, he devotes himself to payback. After a few more break-ins, he's discovered by a pretty co-ed, and suddenly he covets more than the radios and DVD players. He's never hurt a woman before, never meant to rob an occupied house, but now he feels the urge in his mind like a pressure, like his head is about to explode. He gives in, revels in his power, and feels no pity for her afterwards. The spirit settles a little more comfortably in the criminal's soul.

Time passes. Alec is a hardened criminal, growing in cunning to match the depraved urges that well up in his mind. He wears gloves and off-the-rack clothes for his illicit activities, choosing his targets well so he won't get caught. He remembers his first killing — the guy in the parking lot who was too attached to his wallet — with twisted satisfaction. A couple of drug dealers are next; they flash their bling and their cash worse than the bastards Alec's grown to hate. Then there's the guy in the BMW who tried to speed off when Alec caught him at the stoplight. And a few minutes later, Alec caps the cop who came to investigate. Caught off guard by this sudden escalation, he grabs the radio and gun from the dying officer and set both vehicles on fire before disappearing into the night.

Between his luck and the spirit's influence, Alec feels invincible. He hungers for his victims' fear like he once hungered for their possessions. He hunts them, kidnapping when he can so he can prolong their suffering in seclusion. The murderer collects news reports

of the killings and the fear it generates. And when the police finally trap him, he starts shooting rather than surrendering — the spirit convinces him he's too lucky to die. And as Alec falls in a hail of bullets, the spirit releases the dying man, having accomplished much during his brief stay. In a few short years, it took an angry young man and helped him "discover" the path of the thrill-killer. Because of the spirit, a city was gripped by fear — the middle- and upper-class' fear of the killer, the lower-class' fear of police patrols and violence after each new crime (to say nothing of the killer himself). One spirit, working through a single mount, cast a pall over the joy and hope that tried to grow in the community, and strengthened fear, hate and guilt for months afterward. Better still, the spirit emerges stronger, and goes looking for those who were inspired by Alec's example — and so begin the cycle anew.

During the time spent as a *hithisu*, the spirit may be evaluating how compatible (or at least malleable) the mount is. For an aggressive spirit, the boy who spends his time slashing tires shows promise, but so does the gregarious youth who harbors a streak of anger. If a spirit wants more than mere Urging, it will be on the lookout for ways to make the host more suitable for full possession.

RELEASE

The good news for any *hithisu* is that evicting the unwelcome spirit tenant is relatively easy, given the tenuous nature of the Rider's hold. The bad news is that one doesn't find exorcists in the small-town yellow pages. For every Spirit-Urged, there are several more humans managing to be criminal or mentally disturbed without supernatural help, so even those in the know can't easily track down a *hithisu*. The hidden spirit is more likely to recognize a werewolf or warlock than not, and will usually urge the mount to evade or otherwise take care of the threat. When Uratha finally discover the Urged, the ritemaster may drive out the spirit while companions wait in the Shadow to bind or otherwise punish the offending spirit. Those without the proper expertise may convince the spirit to depart by negating the mount's usefulness (through imprisonment, injury or even death). Sometimes, those who care nothing for the mount may bind the spirit permanently to its living fetter, so that it may not escape even after death — many powerful spirits lie imprisoned in moldering bones hidden in dark crypts.

Of course, the spirit can release its fetter with little effort, requiring only a moment to slip the bonds and release the mount for good. But regardless of the outcome, the spirit likely leaves a world of harm in its wake.

SYSTEM SUMMARY: SPIRIT-URGED

Living Fetter: Requires the appropriate Numen. The spirit spends two points of Essence and must succeed at a Power + Finesse roll contested by the target's Resolve + Composure. Once successfully fettered, the spirit may enter the mount at will, but must remain within five meters of the mount to avoid having the fetter broken. It may move further than five meters from the mount if materialized, but must be back within range of the mount when it ends its materialization.

Reading the Mind: The spirit rolls Power + Finesse contested by Resolve + Primal Urge. Success indicates the spirit can hear the surface thoughts of the mount, while exceptional success indicates a deeper foray into the mind.

Urging the Mount: The spirit rolls Power + Finesse, +1 if the urge is in line with the mount's Virtue or Vice. If the urge is against the mount's better judgment, best interests or nature, the roll is contested by the mount's Resolve + Composure. If either side wins by five or more successes, the winner may add one die to subsequent urging contests.

Influences: The spirit may use Influences (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 274) on the mount if feasible; a cat-spirit could use Influence: Cats on a feline mount, but not on a human. The Essence cost to influence a mount is reduced by one.

Numina: The spirit cannot use any of its Numina save Living Fetter while attached to a fetter.

Release: The spirit can leave on its own at any time; it is a standard action to "disengage" from the mount. In addition, certain supernatural abilities, such as exploiting the spirit's ban, can be used to exorcise the spirit. The mount will remember her actions during the time she was Urged, but may or may not believe that she was responsible for them.

Death: If the mount is slain, the spirit is immediately released with no ill effects.

DUGUTHIM — THE CLAIMED

Brenda pushed her husband's swivel chair back against the wall. "Daniel, I don't understand what's gotten into you. You've been on that damn computer every hour of the last two days! You haven't slept, you haven't eaten, you won't even talk to me about it!"

"I know," he replied, with a touch of wonder in his usually matter-of-fact tone. "I've found myself. What I've always wanted to do, to know, to be, it's all there on the Internet! The whole world is there, all my friends, everybody worth knowing, and everything worth seeing! I'm becoming something more, something better than I ever thought possible. My future, my reason for being, it's there. You should be happy for me."

"Well, I'm not. Damn it, your obsession is killing our marriage!" She turned and reached for the computer. "This machine is killing it, and it goes or I will!"

<sorry had to step out a minute.> Daniel typed a few minutes later. <what did I miss?> His breath came more easily now, though his hands ached from their recent, unaccustomed exertion. When he was finished in the chatroom he'd do a web search to find the best way to dispose of the body.

If a spirit finds a mount sufficiently compatible (and possesses the proper Numen), it begins an intricate, involved process whereby it merges with the mount, body and soul. Some spirit use a period of Urging as sort of a "test drive," but others may find a potential mount so delectable, so ready, that the merging begins with little preamble. A few mounts are even willing for the possession to take place, perhaps groomed by a small cult with imperfect understanding of the Shadow. Others are unlucky or unwise. When the merging is complete, the original personality and physical matrices of the mount and the spirit are drastically changed. No longer are they individual entities — now they have fused to become a *duguthim*.

CLAIMING

In most cases, the spirit is already fettered to the mount when it begins to initiate the Claim Numen. The process may take a matter of a few weeks, or even be drawn out over years (most often in the case of spirits that have greater reserves of patience, such as spirits of trees or stone). Some *duguthim* never complete the transformation. These creatures exist in a state of near madness; neither the mount nor the spirit is fully in control. Instead, each contests for rule over the physical form.

CHANGES

Of the three types of Ridden, the Claimed are the only ones to be physically altered by the possession. The mount shows no outward changes at first. Indeed, some *duguthim* never alter their external appearances. However, from the very first days the mount does begin to change. She may find herself growing hale and strong, able to bound up the stairs when before she took the elevator. Perhaps she finds she can finish crossword puzzles with ease and actually understand her son's calculus problems. Maybe that eczema clears up, and she finds it easier to meet the gaze of passing co-workers. With these enhancements comes exhilaration — and probably puzzlement.

As the Rider entrenches itself, most Claimed begin to exhibit some of the physical attributes of the possessing spirit. For example, a Spirit-Claimed who is host to a cat-spirit may eventually acquire green eyes with slit pupils, oddly hooked fingernails or a peculiar musk. A

stream-spirit *duguthim*'s hair may wave slightly while her voice gains a liquid chuckle to match the ripple of her eyes. Conceptual *duguthim* are less overt but still noticeable; one Claimed by a spirit of responsibility may cease to smile or cry, but instead always have a grim, determined air about him. *Duguthim* can usually conceal unusual features with dark glasses and a trench coat, but a suspicious werewolf won't be fooled too long by the disguise. Less obvious physiological changes are also in the works, again dictated by the spirit type. An oak-Ridden *duguthim* will get stiffer, stronger and tougher as lignin threads through his muscles — his blood may be more viscous and sap-like!

More significant than the physical alterations is the mental transformation. The mount's personality and mental capacity is dismantled and rebuilt to suit the spirit. Memories of the old life are retained, but they lose relevance to the new being. From the beginning the Rider can tempt the mount in the same way as if the host were simply Spirit-Urged, but as time goes on the mount's thought patterns shift course, aligning more closely with the alien mind of the spirit. Sometimes the spirit makes itself known during this process by becoming the voice within, the conscience that takes on a new life of its own.

In the interval between the initial possession and full acceptance of the transformation, the mount is almost always aware of the process. She may not understand the particulars, but she feels bits of her personality slipping away, her thoughts slowly but inexorably coming under the domination of another mind. For most mounts, the loss of self is terrifying, and they resist any way they can. But how does one fight such an insidious foe, one that permeates every thought? At this stage, a few Ridden turn to suicide, drugs, mental institutions, anything they think can save them or at least halt the progression. Most mounts eventually succumb to the merging, losing what they once were to the re-integration of self and spirit.

A sanctum is a priority for most Spirit-Claimed. After all, they plan on being around a while, so security is a must; comfort (for the spirit, anyway) is a close second. Most sanctums are designed to reflect the residual tastes of the mount colored by the spirit's inclinations. If the mount loved Victoriana before being Claimed by a spirit of order, her abode would sport fewer bits of frou-frou, and what there was would certainly be well-organized. The stronger the spirit's hold, the more its needs predominate. Once the transformation is complete, many Claimed leave behind most aspects of their old lives for relative solitude. Considering the physical changes that have likely manifested by that point, it is just as well. A full-fledged *duguthim* will know its home intimately, on both sides of the Gauntlet.

RELEASE

For a spirit, leaving the body gently is neither quick nor easy. If the merging is not complete, the spirit may extricate itself slowly, a process that takes roughly one hour per month since the merging began, and requires the mount to be still. During this interval, alien features slowly return to normal, although the memories of the possession linger. Haste damages the spirit and may harm the mount. If the merging is complete, the possessing spirit may leave as per above, but the mount has been too changed to survive the transition. If the mount dies, the spirit is instantly released, but the trauma of death leaves it weakened and disoriented, in addition to any damage it received trying to keep the body alive.

Imagine an old manor. A vine begins to grow at the base. Gradually, the ivy spreads up and around, covering the façade in a picturesque fashion, until it transforms the building's exterior dramatically. Should the owners try to tear down the ivy, they'll find that the rootlets have delved pervasively into the masonry, and to pull away the vine is to rip out the mortar and plaster as well, leaving the building badly scarred. So it is with the *duguthim*: their spiritual roots cannot be removed without damaging the mount.

The longer the spirit's Claim, the more perilous the extraction. Few mounts could survive the exorcism of a spirit that has Ridden long enough to actually begin transforming the host body.

Those few mounts lucky enough to survive a brief thrall and successful exorcism handle the experience in different ways. Many are permanently scarred by the trauma of possession and the things they did, while others spend their lives longing for the time when they were more than they are — when they didn't feel alone. Either way, the Storyteller is justified in giving the victim one or more derangements.

Subjugation of a Duguthim

In high school, Sophie was a bright misfit — she didn't fit in with the socially inept nerds, she lacked the cash and the class to fit in with the cool crowd, and she was too intelligent to fit in anywhere else. So she spent most of her time alone, disliking herself and watching the other students with a mixture of envy and loathing. Her affectations didn't help her make friends, either. To the few inquiries, she replied she wore only black until they came out with a darker color. Her school essays landed her in the counselor's office. She was picked on, then ignored. She wished she could disappear. If she had any illusions of college being different, she was mistaken — she simply couldn't connect with people, and she rarely tried anymore. At night, when people hit the town or hung out at the Student Center, she

wandered the dark campus paths. The night was her friend, allowing her to avoid attention, and to cultivate a voyeuristic side.

In a dream she walked through the campus when the darkness took form; it asked to walk with her for a time, if she would let it in. She said yes, and felt the darkness enfold her. The dream lingered in her memory after she woke, but nothing seemed different at first. Then she realized that the few people who nodded to her in the hall stopped even this small courtesy. The teachers forgot to hand back her tests, then forgot her office appointments. When she came in late for class — late nights and oversleeping were becoming habits — the professor didn't even look at her until she went up to apologize at the end of class. "I'm sorry, did you say you were in *my* class?" he asked.

The poor freshman thought she was losing her mind. Even as the thought came, some part of her piped up in agreement. Then other things occurred to her — how she no longer envied the socializing of her classmates. She still liked to watch them, still got a little thrill from learning their petty secrets, but her heart was colder than before. The fact that she wasn't bothered by this disturbed her. Maybe she *was* going mad. *No*, replied the new awareness, *not mad, but you are losing your mind, and getting a better one. You are becoming one with the night.* The clarity of the thought really shook her. For days she desperately clung to normalcy, sitting through classes that she'd been dropped from, hanging around the dining hall, going to bed at 9. The thing was, she got so tired during the day — and the sunlight hurt her eyes. Sophie only really felt awake after dark. The nocturnal impulses were too strong, and soon she was wandering the night again. One evening she sat on the quad, watching the stars come out. When she awoke from her reverie, the world had changed: the students were gone, the buildings were translucent. Rather than being fearful, however, she felt strangely at home, and soon learned how to consciously cross between the two worlds. Short trips into the Otherworld, as she called it, allowed her to circumvent inconveniences like security systems and locked doors. This was fortuitous because it was about this time that she found all her stuff in a pile by the dumpster; her room had been cleaned out for the next student. No matter, for she had the run of the campus. She made her chief lair in a blocked-off store room in the library, where she could read, watch movies and rest without being bothered. Food, money, clothes — all these she could steal as she needed them. As for nosy people, anyone who did see her were quickly distracted. The darkness was truly her friend, for it no longer veiled her eyes as it once had. Once she looked in a mirror and saw the changes: her dark hair was

rich and black, her irises the color of twilight, her skin dusky and the shadows she cast were just a bit deeper and just a bit — independent. Had her mother still thought about her, she wouldn't have recognized her little girl.

She found floodlights and streetlamps offensive, sabotaging them whenever possible. Then she got caught by a campus cop. Even as he went to grab her, she felt herself grow cold as the night. Without emotion, without thought, she reached out and touched him. He gasped, then groaned and dropped to his knees. His face went slack. She couldn't explain it, but it felt like she was drawing the light out of him. When Sophie ran away, he was still sitting there, quietly speaking to himself in disjointed sentences. What was left of the old Sophie was horrified, but the need to do it again gnawed at her like an addiction. A few nights later, she reached out to another student as he walked out of the library. He reeled, and she felt the rush as she consumed his light. The girl she used to be was now all but gone, lost to the shadow. The spirit within was well content, for through its mount, darkness was spreading. Unable to catch the vandal, the university had all but given up replacing the lights. Because of the strange blackouts suffered by nocturnal wanderers, many students feared to move about after dark. Night was ascendant on campus, and it — *she* — owned the night.

SYSTEMS: SPIRIT-CLAIMED

Claim: The spirit using the Numen must spend three Essence and roll Power + Finesse in an extended and contested roll versus the victim's Resolve + Composure; each roll represents one hour. If the spirit gains 50 successes between dusk and dawn, it gains permanent control of the mount.

Commanding the Mount: Automatic.

Influences: As per the Influence table, in Appendix One of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. The spirit may use its Influences as if manifested; it naturally has no need to use Influences to sway its mount's actions.

Numina: The spirit cannot use any of its Numina save Claim while in control of a physical body. Its spiritual powers express differently over time, granting the mount certain supernatural Aspects (see p. 87).

Release: The spirit may leave voluntarily, extracting itself at a rate of one hour per month spent in the body. Each hour, the mount must make a Stamina roll at a -2 modifier; failure indicates the host body dies in the process. Extra Stamina gained from the spirit does not apply to this roll. If the spirit attempts to leave hastily, it may do so as a standard action, but the penalty to the Stamina roll rises to -4.

If the body dies, whether through violence or complications in separation, the spirit is released, but suffers -3 to all dice pools for a period of hours equal to its former Synthesis rating because of disorientation.

For more information on the changes made to the host, and creating Claimed antagonists, see p. 85.

THE SPIRIT-THIEF

CAMPAIGN IN DOUBT AFTER WRECK

— Senator Jack Campbell's campaign bus crashed yesterday morning on its way to a rally. According to witnesses, Campbell's son, Thomas, experienced a seizure. As the bus diverted to a local hospital, the teenager jumped up and staggered to the front of the bus, where he wrestled with the driver for control of the wheel. Before he could be restrained, the vehicle ran off the road and overturned. Thomas, the driver and two aides are listed in serious condition; the senator and five others were treated and released. Police sources say no charges have been filed, and that there has been no evidence of drug involvement. Campaign spokesman O'Neil said that Thomas is undergoing neurological tests, but had shown no prior indication of epilepsy.

When questioned by reporters outside the hospital this afternoon, the visibly shaken senator said he is reconsidering his bid for the presidency. A source close to the campaign, speaking on condition of anonymity, quoted the senator as saying "It's a sign; I'm not meant to be president." Spokesman O'Neil vigorously denied Campbell said this, adding that the candidate would take some time off from the campaign trail while he focused on his son's recovery.

The swiftest, and in some ways most brutal, form of possession is called Spirit-Theft, in which the Thief, or Nanutari, wrests control of a mount without truly integrating with it. It is essentially cloaked in the non-spiritual skin of the mount, invisible to the supernatural sight watchers, but the Nanutari is bereft of its spiritual powers while in the body. There is no attempt to bond with the mount, nor even coax it, as with the Spirit-Urged. There is only control.

POSSESSION

There is nothing subtle about this sort of invasion. The Nanutari slams into the target's consciousness, metaphorically shoving it into a corner of the mount's being. The weak-willed make easier targets, but the emotionally shaken and mentally exhausted may also be open to attack. The victim is aware of the attack, though he may not understand what is happening. He's being squeezed from all sides, and if the attack succeeds, he feels himself shrinking and falling into darkness. If the Nanutari overpowers the mount's intellect com-

pletely, it may force it out of the body altogether, to dissipate in the Shadow.

CHANGES

Taking control of the body is only the beginning; keeping control is almost as much work. The Nanutari's initial imprecise control is best compared to attempting to speak clearly after receiving a dose of Novocain or a narcotic. It's quite difficult for a Nanutari to control its ill-fitting material body.: All sensory input is distorted. The Nanutari reels and staggers drunkenly, face slack and eyes glazed or rolling lazily. Furthermore, what little control the spirit can maintain requires most of its energy — it cannot attempt to use any of its Numina. Any muscular activity that isn't autonomic will take effort to control. That means that a spirit that has stolen its first body may try to talk its way out of a traffic stop and void himself. Also, the spirit has difficulty sensing or interpreting the feedback its body sends. Hunger, heart pounding from overexertion, or the pain of wounds are dim, confused impulses without a fully-integrated mount's brain to make sense of them. The fragility of the human body becomes quite apparent when Ridden by a Spirit-Thief. A sufficiently powerful spirit may keep a dying body active by force of will (see the Systems sidebar), but usually only for a few moments. Still, seeing a corpse rise and stagger forward will put the fright into the average observer.

Access to the mount's memory is spotty at best. Basic facts are easier to dredge up than the intuitive leaps and logical connections so critical to surviving in the material world. The Thief might recognize a uniformed officer as a policeman, but wouldn't understand why the officer is paying so much attention to the shambling mount. Likewise, the Nanutari might figure out how to drive a car, but might not comprehend why all the vehicles are driving toward him when he takes the wrong ramp onto the Interstate. The spirit will know the need for food and water, but may drink from oily puddles or eat raw meat.

Sleep is a terrifying time for the Thief, for muted senses and muscle control fail utterly, and the only input the spirit has is strange rumblings at vague images from the dreaming brain. For this reason, a spirit may try to force the body to stay awake. The predictable result is an increased loss of coordination and muscle endurance, and eventually the brain starts misfiring and body systems fail.

As time goes on, the Nanutari gains more control and understanding, but its camouflage isn't perfect. Even if the spirit is careful with the mount, chances are he doesn't shave, bathe or brush his teeth. Onlookers perceive the mount as a dirty,

smelly, scruffy bum who moves and talks like he's perpetually intoxicated. If the Nanutari has been careless or particularly active, the mount may be damaged. A drunk street person may be ignored, but one with broken limbs, bloody gashes, and reeking of vomit or piss will get the attention of the police and perhaps a good Samaritan. To make matters worse, the desperate spirit begins to pine for the spiritual aspects that represent it, aspects neglected while trying to maintain the awkward shell. A plant-spirit may attach leaves and bark to its clothes, or retreat to a thicket to rest; a flame-spirit might surround itself with fire, often singeing the mount and burning down structures (or he might just wear clothes of red and orange, or take up chain smoking). For the body-bound spirit, it is a dismal, lonely existence. Of course, the host body invariably has it worse.

RELEASE

Once dormant, the victim's consciousness can't fight back. The intruding spirit may leave on its own at any time, usually when the spiritual "coast is clear" or the body no longer responds. Should the body suffer catastrophic damage (crushed, incinerated, blown up), the Thief is ripped out of the material plane to re-form in the Shadow Realm as normal.

If the host body is still functional upon departure, it lapses into a deep coma while the imprisoned intellect gradually awakens and expands. Barring spiritual intervention, the soul will recover in approximately the length of time it was held captive. Sadly, the mount usually suffers too much trauma and for too long for the victim to recover. A recovered victim will have no memory of what happened during the possession, but the memory of the initial invasion and a terrible feeling of violation remain vivid — most surviving mounts wind up with a derangement or two.

Assault of a Nanutari

Coleman had no unusual proclivities that would draw a spirit: he was just in the wrong place (leaving the downtown bakery) at the wrong time (early morning on a Saturday). In the Shadow, an obscene conglomeration of vines, brick and cockroaches scurried and clunked towards him, looking for a way to escape the city-spirits closing in to tear it apart. The spirit dove through the Gauntlet and into the hapless human. Coleman felt himself being squeezed, crushed. He wondered if this was what a heart attack felt like. Then he wondered if this was what death was like. Then he wondered nothing more. Coleman reeled, hit the façade of the 1st National, then crumpled to the sidewalk. After a few moments, he rose again, looking around with wide eyes as he swayed. Staggering, he brushed past the "Under New Management" sign without seeing

the humor in it and wandered aimlessly about town. Some part of him recognized that the odd looks he was getting on the increasingly crowded streets were a bad thing.

When he found the derelict storefront on a backstreet, he wasted no time in ripping down a board and climbing through the window, heedless of the broken glass. The smoke smell lingered faintly, but he felt happy in the dark corner, where roaches scurried among the burned and broken bricks. He combed the cowering brain of his mount for some plan or direction, but the mortal had no notion of the spirit-world. The sky grew hot, then cool and dark, and he huddled against the still-warm bricks, for the comfort it gave his exiled spirit rather than any physical relief. His slashed hand no longer bled, but it felt hot. The Rider was spirit-blind, barely comprehending the physical world around it, and fighting to control the clumsy shell it had hijacked. And still it tried to think: *People... shouldn't be seen... few people when the sun was down... must leave town, spirits won't follow...* He carefully rose to his feet, less steady than before. His hand wouldn't close properly, but that didn't matter because he had to leave. And so he walked. College students he passed thought he was blitzed — in the dim light they missed the dried blood on his pants. Taxis and a bus passed, but he didn't realize that the meager funds in his wallet could be exchanged for passage to the outskirts of town. So on he walked, remembering at some point to look around before crossing the street.

Near dawn, he was well beyond the river on the edge of town; buildings did not cluster by the road, but shared more space with thicker trees. The landscape was increasingly alien to him, making him even more worried. Worse, his body was losing coordination; his hearing and sight were lapsing dangerously. But up ahead were the remains of an old house, its roof collapsed and vines snaking up its brick walls. With a moan of joy he forced one foot in front of another until he could touch the rough red wall, feel the old mortar give way under his nails. He shuffled out of the body and gave no more thought to it, for the spirit had found a new sanctuary.

Coleman was found around dawn by a deputy sheriff and taken to the regional hospital. The raging infection was eventually contained and the slashed tendons could be mended, but the severed nerve meant he would never feel that finger again. He tried to sue the bakery for putting drugs in his coffee, but the case was thrown out due to lack of evidence. Coleman had frequent flashbacks, re-experiencing the horror of his soul being crushed, and the resultant panic attacks cost him his job. Many years of therapy went by before he

could put the singular event behind him, and even then he never re-acquired his taste for coffee.

SYSTEMS: SPIRIT-THIEVES

Possession: The spirit spends 1 Essence and rolls Power + Finesse in a contested roll versus the victim's Resolve + Composure. Success grants the spirit control of the victim's body for a scene. Once in control of the body, the spirit may spend 2 Essence to extend control for another 24 hours. The spirit may continue on in this fashion until it runs low on Essence, but most Spirit-Thieves abandon the bodies before then.

Controlling the Body: Use the mount's original traits. Assume a penalty of -3 or more for any physical action; over the course of a day or so, the penalty decreases by one as the spirit gets used to moving (thought it still isn't properly plugged in). Pain signals are also scrambled; wound penalties are decreased by 1.

Mental actions are at -4; gleaning a specific fact or memory from the mount's mind requires a Finesse roll. The penalty drops to -3 after the first 24 hours, and -2 after the second 24 hours (where it will then remain for the duration of the possession.)

The spirit may heal by spending Essence at the rate of 1 per 1 point of lethal or bashing healed; no other actions may be taken while healing.

Influences: The spirit cannot use Influences while Riding a mount in this fashion; maintaining control of the body through Possession requires the whole of its focus.

Numina: The spirit cannot use any of its Numina while in control of a physical body.

Release: If leaving voluntarily, the spirit may vacate the body as a standard action. It is automatically evicted on the mount's death. The Rider may also be cast out by certain supernatural powers of exorcism.

SUPERNATURAL MOUNTS

The mere fact of being a supernatural entity doesn't give one immunity from the spirits' attentions. Some of the most dangerous entities roaming the World of Darkness attract symbiotic spirits that feed on their actions. A vampire might be the unwitting mount for a spirit that grows stronger with every victim the vampire preys upon, and that defends its mount without revealing itself by the subtle use of Numina or Influences.

As a general rule, supernatural beings can be targeted with the Living Fetter or Possession Numina, but cannot be Claimed. A spirit can temporarily influence or control a supernatural entity, just as a vampire can bend a werewolf's will through powers of the Blood or a werewolf can strike supernatural fear into a warlock's heart by means of a Gift. However, the Claim Numen changes the very nature of a mount, and is not suf-

ficiently powerful to alter the form of a supernatural being. A human or animal mount with no supernatural powers is like fresh clay ready to be shaped, but to extend the analogy, a supernatural being has already been sculpted and fire-hardened in the kiln. It cannot be re-sculpted — only broken.

USING THE SPIRIT-RIDDEN

When using the Ridden as foes for the troupe's pack, there are several ways to help heighten the conflict into an experience the players will remember. Any theme or mood is destined to fail if applied in a heavy-handed fashion, but there are certain aspects to a story involving the Ridden that can enhance the roleplaying experience if used wisely.

- **Fear:** The Ridden are unpredictable foes, due in no small part to how diverse in nature and motive they can be. If a Jagglings is the spirit-culprit, it can also be quite powerful, sometimes powerful enough to go on the aggressive against entire packs and win the day. A Ridden can be a dangerous unknown in a chronicle, striking at the fringes of the pack's territory in ways that don't seem entirely logical from the outside. Even if a pack is carefully instructed in the lore of the Ridden, they can hardly be prepared for their first encounter with one — What sort of spirit is it? How powerful is it? Can it be exorcised? Seeking out the answers can be a harrowing experience. Whether it's a Narutari leaping from body to body to keep the pack running in circles or a Claimed fusion of a potent spirit and a capable mount, the pack may wind up very nervous, even afraid. This is a good thing.

- **Pity:** Frequently, the victim of a spirit possession did something to attract the spirit's attention. This doesn't mean that being Ridden is the mount's fault. Very frequently, it was simply a bad decision, a mistake or even a poor stroke of luck that led to having his body invaded and his mind corrupted or even shoved aside entirely. Sometimes the spirit even chooses its mount for reasons as wholly random or unfair as any human killer or predator. Worse, exorcism is sometimes not really an option; the only real way to stop a Claimed is to kill the mount and then attempt to punish the freed spirit. It's a poor idea to try playing the compassion card too often in a chronicle; it runs the risk of getting repetitive quickly, and may desensitize the players to the point that they don't bother sympathizing with their prey. But the question must be asked, sooner or later — did this person *really* deserve what she's going through, and what comes next?

- **Symbolism:** The use of symbolic language is always appropriate when dealing with threats from the Shadow. By this, we don't mean symbolism in the sense of using antagonists to represent some greater message

you're trying to communicate; this sort of thing can be incredible when it's done well, but is dismal when it falls short. Rather, symbolism defines the Shadow and everything in it. The moon isn't simply a ball of rock orbiting the Earth, it's also a force for madness and change. An owl might mean death, or a dog, loyalty. Because spirits embody this sort of symbolic language, the Ridden mean more when they do the same; it becomes easy to stress their inhuman nature while still keeping them accessible enough that the players can react emotionally to them. A person Ridden by a fire-spirit who likes to start fires is fairly obvious — but if the mount downs incredible quantities of food at every meal, that fits with the symbolism of fire as devourer and reinforces the idea of “fire-Ridden” without being as obvious.

CREATING RIDDEN

Devising Ridden characters with which to plague your troupe is easy enough. In essence, it comes down to devising the traits for the mount, then making adjustments as appropriate for the type of *Hithimu* created.

All Ridden, even the Spirit-Urged, are immune to the effects of Lunacy. Spirits are not subject to the lunar madness that prevents humans from recognizing werewolves, and their link to their mounts offers a share of that protection. In addition, no Ridden can benefit from the Numina of the spirit in question; even the simple bond of Living Fetter ties the spirit to the mount in ways that limit its freedom.

Each Ridden also pays attention to their reserves of Essence. Although the process of fettering, Claiming or possessing a mount protects a spirit from bleeding away its Essence in the physical world, most spirits still hope to feed. The Essence pool of a Ridden is equal to that of the riding-spirit, and is replenished in the usual manner. Most Ridden seek out a locus to call their own before long, the Claimed in particular.

QUICK AND DIRTY: AD-LIBBING CHARACTERS

If you're strapped for time, it's often easy just to swipe the statistics of a human antagonist from a book and make adjustments as needed. Sample human characters appear in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, as well as in **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, **Antagonists**, **Vampire: The Requiem** and many others.

However, sometimes you may find that you have to come up with an antagonist on the Aspect of the moment, or even ad-lib the traits of a character you hadn't expected the players to interact with for more than a few seconds. In such cases, you can fudge the traits by simply

asking yourself, “How good would this person be at any particular action?” and assigning a dice pool of appropriate size.

For example, the average person doing something she's not trained to do is going to have a dice pool of about two dice — two for having an average Attribute, and no dice because they lack the appropriate Skill. The average person performing a task she's experienced with would roll about three or four dice, while a skilled professional working in his field would roll about six dice. Eight to ten dice represents the absolute best of the best, an Olympic athlete performing her specialty sport, or a gifted surgeon who graduated at the top of his class performing an operation he's performed many times before. More than ten dice is clearly the realm of the supernaturally adept. This scale maps fairly well to almost any dice pool; a Resolve + Composure roll is probably going to be four dice for the average person, five if you see them as “above average” in some way.

It's not elegant, and it's no substitute for having a fully fleshed-out character sheet in front of you. You also run the risk of having problems with continuity, such as when a character throws five dice for an action at one point and six the next. But with a little practice, you may find that guesstimating a character's skills and ad-libbing her dice pools will help you keep the action moving quickly no matter what your players try next. It may wind up being one of the most useful tricks in your arsenal.

HITHISU

To create a *hithisu*, use the same system as when making a mortal character (as per the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for details). For the Spirit-Urged, no physical changes take place in the host's body. The riding-spirit is unable to access its Numina, but can still access its Essence and Influences. Influences are dependent on the Power and Finesse traits of the riding-spirit, and are not modified by the traits of the mount; possessing a bodybuilder won't add any dice to an anger-spirit's Power when attempting to stir a person into a rage.

The mount uses all its normal traits with no modifications. A spirit can only nudge behavior, not bestow skill. At the Storyteller's discretion, a spirit's urgings can serve as a modifier to certain actions. For example, if the spirit attempts to plant a suggestion at an inopportune time, the mount's dice pool might be reduced as it would by a similar distraction.

The Urged still operate on a Morality system (or the equivalent), and actions that a spirit compels them



to take can lead to degeneration checks as normal. If a Spirit-Urged werewolf succumbs to its Rider's persuasion and murders another werewolf, she must test for Harmony loss just as if she had chosen that action of her own free will.

DUGUTHIM

A *duguthim* is a merging of flesh and spirit into one being, not entirely unlike a werewolf. As such, *duguthim* are represented with a supernatural template. (Remember that a character cannot have multiple supernatural templates, and thus a supernatural being cannot become a Claimed.) The first step in building one of these creatures is to follow the system for making a mortal character, or to select a pre-assembled character. Next, build the spirit intended to merge with the mount, following the rules in Appendix One of **Werewolf: The Forsaken** or selecting one of the sample spirits out of the core rules or Chapter One of this book. Finally, make the following alterations to reflect the merging between the spirit and the mount:

- **Enhance Attributes:** Distribute the spirit's dots in Power, Finesse and Resistance among the matching Attributes in the host body. Power should be divided among the three Power Attributes of Intelligence, Strength and Presence; Finesse should be divided among Finesse Attributes; and so on. This may potentially boost these Attributes above normal human

maximums. The dots transfer at the rate of one dot per week, beginning with the week the spirit claims the mount.

- **Skills, Influences and Merits:** The *duguthim* retains all Skills, Influences and Merits from mount and Rider alike. During the first few days of possession, the Claimed will have difficulty using its mount's skills, as it adjusts to reading its host body's memories and applying them properly. A -1 to -3 penalty to all Skill rolls during this time is appropriate.

- **Calculate Advantages:** Advantages such as Speed and Defense may increase if the Attributes they are based on increase. For example, if a spirit increases its mount's Strength by two dots and Dexterity by one dot, the Ridden's Speed should increase by three. A Spirit-Claimed character does not track Morality; it has the mind of a spirit, and thus adheres to no moral code.

- **Apply Synthesis:** In addition, the Claimed will acquire the new trait of Synthesis, described below. The first dot of Synthesis is gained immediately after successful invasion of the mount. After the Ridden's Attributes have been increased to their final totals as describe above, the Claimed acquires a second dot of Synthesis. Synthesis then increases over time; the more powerful the spirit, the more quickly its Synthesis trait rises. A Gaffling may gain a dot of Synthesis for every

year it survives in its body, while a Jagglng may gain a dot every six months.

- **Essence:** The Claimed gains the Essence pool of the spirit-rider, and can regain Essence in the usual fashion. It can use this Essence to fuel Numina or Aspects, or to heal wounds at the rate of one point of Essence per one point of lethal damage or two points of bashing damage. The healing takes one turn to complete in either case. The spirit may take other actions while healing.

- **Stepping Sideways:** The Claimed, as creatures of both worlds, can step sideways in a locus' area of influence by rolling Intelligence + Presence as werewolves do.

- **Aspects:** Finally, the Claimed may gain certain supernatural powers as the spirit reshapes the mount's bodies. These powers are commonly called Aspects, as they represent aspects of the spirit itself — a snake-Ridden that gains a poisonous bite is simply manifesting one of the aspects of a serpent. Each dot of Synthesis grants five points to be spent on Aspects; the process, and sample Aspects, are given beginning on p. 87.

NANU-TARE

Spirit-Thieves, like *hithisu*, aren't much different than their mounts in physical appearance and ability. The spirit may use Influences as normal. It may also, as a reflexive action, use its Essence to heal bashing or lethal damage inflicted on the body on a one-for-one basis: only one point of damage can be healed per turn. The spirit cannot access its Numina while within the earth-bound mount.

The possessing spirit can access the Skills of its mount, but at the penalties listed on page 83.

If a spirit exhausts all its Essence trying to maintain its host body, it disperses, then reforms in the Shadow (see Appendix One of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**). If the host body is destroyed, the spirit gets ejected back through the Gauntlet, less a Corpus point.

If the mount survives the period of possession, she must make a degeneration roll with only two dice; the period of possession scars the mind, potentially damaging the host's sense of self and even inducing a derangement. If the period of possession lasts for more than 24 hours, the mount must make an additional degeneration check in this vein for each subsequent 24 hours of control. The longer the Spirit-Thief takes over, the more damaged the mount's consciousness will be at the end of it all.

FETISHES

Ridden, as creatures of Essence, are able to manipulate a werewolf-created fetish in ways

that a mortal cannot. However, the process is still difficult for them. A Ridden cannot attune a fetish to itself in the way a werewolf can (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 204), and thus the fetish will not travel with its Ridden owner into the Shadow should the *Hithimu* attempt to physically travel there. However, a Ridden may temporarily activate a fetish by spending two Essence as a direct (and imprecise) bribe to the spirit within. This is true even of the Urged, though the living mount does not consciously feel the transfer of Essence and won't understand what just happened. Of course, the possessing spirit is unlikely to understand a fetish's function unless it saw a werewolf use it before... acquiring the object. A Ridden who activates a fetish may do so out of curiosity or desperation, perhaps causing no small amount of trouble.

The sole exception to this rule is the case of a werewolf who has become Spirit-Urged. In such a case, the werewolf may spend one point of his Essence or make a Harmony roll to activate the fetish as usual (perhaps at the spirit's bidding). Alternately, the spirit can spend two of its own Essence to activate the fetish, but it is unlikely to do so. Werewolves are more likely to understand why a fetish is activated — and to do some investigating if they can't find an explanation for why a fetish activates on its own.

NEW TRAIT: SYNTHESIS

This Trait represents the extent to which a *duguthim* has been reshaped by its possessing spirit. With it a Spirit-Claimed gains extraordinary abilities, such as claws or inhuman endurance, from its Rider.

Each dot in Synthesis represents three things: the amount of power the Spirit-Claimed gets, the amount of resistance it gains against other supernatural powers, and the extent of physical change on the form.

Each dot of Synthesis grants the *duguthim* five points to spend on powers (see below). Several possibilities are listed below; the Claimed may also gain appropriate Merits instead (so a cat-Claimed might become Fleet of Foot), for one point per dot.

Example: A mount newly Claimed by a spider-spirit has a rating of Synthesis •, giving him 5 points which to acquire powers. She develops *Inhuman Reflexes 1* (for two dots), the Gift: *Sense Weakness* (for two points), and the Merit: *Fleet of Foot 1* (for one dot). Once the transformation is complete, and the spirit's Attribute dots have all been added to increase those of the mount, the Claimed reaches Synthesis •• and gains 5 more points. Over the next few weeks, the *duguthim* grows fangs (two dots of *Natural Weaponry* that grant a 1 (L) bite attack) that soon are able

to inject with a Toxicity 5 poison that does bashing damage once every hour (three dots in Poison).

In the case of Aspects with variable levels of power, points gained by an increased Synthesis score can be added to points already spent in a given Aspect. Thus, a spirit that has already spent two points to gain Camouflage ●● may add two more points to raise its Camouflage rating to ●●●● when its Synthesis increases; it does not have to buy the Aspect anew.

Each dot of Synthesis also grants the Claimed extra dice when resisting the supernatural powers of other entities. When a resistance roll is called for to resist a Gift, Discipline or other supernatural ability, a Claimed may add its Synthesis score to the dice pool where a werewolf would add Primal Urge. For example, to resist the Soul Read Gift, a Claimed would roll Resolve + Synthesis. For more information, see “Supernatural Conflict,” **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 103.

But there’s a downside, for the spirit must have a stronger hold in order of the mount in order to grant more power. As it insinuates itself more deeply into the mount, it alters the mind and body to a more “comfortable” fit. The higher the Synthesis trait, the more obvious the changes and the more difficulty the Ridden has fitting in. A *duguthim* suffers a penalty to all Social rolls save Intimidation equal to its dots in Synthesis.

As a general rule, a Claimed cannot achieve a level of Synthesis greater than the spirit’s Rank + 1. Some Claimed never even rise above Synthesis ●; the lesser Gaffling just isn’t strong enough to change its host any further.

ASPECTS (DUGUTHIM ONLY)

The following enhancements are available only to the Spirit-Claimed. Each Aspect requires a certain level of Synthesis before the Claimed may manifest it; the more obvious and destructive powers, the tighter the bond between master and mount must be. Powers that require restructuring of bodily systems are often the ones that require the most Synthesis, to represent the greater control required by the spirit. A Claimed’s Aspects should always relate to the type of spirit involved. A water-spirit has no reason to make a *duguthim* that grows claws or spits fire (and might not even consider such powers a possibility), but the mount may be able to swim like a fish, breathe water or even liquefy. The Storyteller is encouraged to design additional Aspects that fit a given Spirit-Rider.

Blast (●●●●●)

Prerequisite: Synthesis ●●●

Effect: The Ridden is capable of unleashing a blast of energy or even physical harm, much as a spirit with the Blast Numen might. A storm-Ridden might throw



St. Michael 05

electricity, while a serpent-Ridden might spit a spray of venomous fluid. The range is equal to 5 yards per point of Strength, and the Ridden suffers no penalties for range. The Ridden rolls Dexterity + Athletics to hit; each point of Essence spent to fuel the attack increases the dice pool by two dice. The damage is lethal.

Camouflage (•• to ••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Ridden can change her appearance to blend in with the surroundings. For two points, the Claimed may shift colors that generally mimic the environment. For three points, the skin colors closely mimic the background, no matter the point of view. For four points, the patterns are sharp and instantly shift, so that individual leaves move across the skin. This includes heat patterns as well (so infrared sensors are likewise affected), but not sound or scent.

In game terms, the Ridden gains a bonus to Stealth rolls equal to the number of points spent on this Aspect. This bonus only applies to rolls made to remain hidden from sight.

Drawback: Unless the power is bought with the Hidden Power Merit, it is always active and will draw attention to the *duguthim* when she wants to pass as normal. Clothes and gear are not affected; a Ridden who wishes to use this power effectively must go naked.

Dark Sight (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Claimed can see without the benefit of light. In absolute darkness she sees as if it were a gloomy day. Lesser amounts of light, from starlight to the ambient glow from a cell-phone screen, provide enough illumination for the Ridden to see without penalty.

Drawback: In pitch blackness, the Ridden's eyes glitter with faint starlight.

Extra Limb (•••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis ••

Effect: The *duguthim* grows an additional limb, be it a tail, tentacle, branch or arm. The effects depend on the nature of the limb: a tail might add a die to rolls involving balance, while extra arms would add to grapple or climbing rolls. The listed cost is for each extra limb.

Drawback: Depending on the number, type and location of the limbs, this will likely call attention to the Ridden. The extra appendages can be drawn into the body if used with the Hidden Power Aspect.

Firewalk (•••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Claimed is resistant to harm from normal flames. The Ridden may shrug off three levels of fire damage per turn, and may spend Essence to reduce the damage further. Each point of Essence spent during

a turn negates an additional two points of fire damage. For fire damage ratings, see page 180 in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**.

Forgotten (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Spirit-Rider clouds the minds of others, making the mount difficult to pay attention to and even harder to remember. This makes the Forgotten one unobtrusive when quiet and practically invisible in a crowd. Whenever a person attempts to spot, notice or even remember the Ridden in question, he suffers a -2 penalty to the appropriate dice pool. A border guard interrogating the Ridden may be distracted by the noisy kids in the next car, and absently wave the *duguthim* through. This Aspect normally has no effect on supernatural creatures.

Drawback: Sometimes, being noticed is a good thing, such as when making demands or giving warnings. The Ridden suffers an additional -1 penalty to Social dice pools over and above the penalty enacted by its Synthesis rating.

Gauntlet Slip (•••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Ridden is particularly adept at slipping back and forth across the Gauntlet. He receives two dice to any attempt to step sideways.

Gift (•• to ••••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The spirit grants the mount the ability to use a Gift of the appropriate nature. The cost is equal to the Gift level plus one point. For example, a fog-Ridden can develop the power Silent Fog for 3 points (the weather Gift: Silent Fog is a level 2 Gift). The Claimed uses the typical Attribute + Skill dice pool, but can add no dice for Renown, as it lacks that Advantage.

Heavy Bones (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •••, Strength •••

Effect: The spirit alters the structure of the mount's skeleton, making the bones super-dense. The Ridden gains an addition three points of Defense against bashing attacks.

Drawback: The *duguthim* is heavier than he looks; he loses a die from all rolls involving fast movement, swimming and climbing.

Hidden Power (•)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: When attached to a normally obvious Aspect (such as claws or a shell), this Aspect allows a *duguthim* to hide the offending feature with a moment's concentration; the power becomes visible again at the end of the scene or until the Ridden requires it to mani-

fest once more. This enhancement must be purchased multiple times in order to conceal multiple Aspects.

Immune to Pain (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: Whether through a berserker rage or a gradually shifting body composition, the *duguthim* is incapable of feeling pain. Wound penalties do not apply to the Ridden, no matter how badly it is hurt. Stamina rolls to remain conscious aren't made when a bashing wound is marked in the Ridden's rightmost Health box. He remains conscious automatically, collapsing only when a lethal or aggravated wound is marked in that box (and the character is dying or dead).

Inhuman Reflexes (•• or ••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis • (for the two-point version) or Synthesis ••• (for the four-point version), Dexterity ••••, Wits •••

Effect: With fox-like reflexes, the Ridden can outdraw a gunfighter. This Aspect grants +1 to Initiative and Defense rolls. For two additional points, the bonus increases to +2.

Life Drain (••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The *duguthim* can suck the life energy from a being with this powerful enhancement. The nature of this power varies depending on the spirit involved; a lust-Claimed may drain Wits or Resolve with a searing kiss, while a Deathwatcher may lay the cold touch of death upon the victim, draining (depending on your interpretation) Composure, Dexterity or Strength. The Attribute to be drained must be defined when the power is acquired. Once contact is established (and this requires firm skin-to-skin contact, not merely a light brush or quick punch), the Ridden engages in a contested roll (his Wits + Synthesis versus the opponent's Resolve + Primal Urge). If the Ridden wins the contest, the opponent temporarily loses one dot of the appropriate Attribute, and the Ridden may replenish one spent Essence point. The *duguthim* may attempt to continue draining its victim's life force each turn, provided it maintains contact and makes another contested roll. Lost Attributes return at the rate of one dot every 15 minutes, starting after the last attempt to drain.

Liquefy (•••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis ••••, Composure ••••

Effect: The Ridden can dissolve into a thick, dark, sludgy liquid, move around, and reform again. While retaining the mount's original mass, it can slip through small cracks and down drains. The goop won't be hurt by conventional weapons, but can be damaged by fire or freezing temperatures. Melting



and re-forming each take two turns, and is a sight guaranteed to put the fright into most any observer. While in liquid form, the Ridden cannot attack or use other Aspects, although it could drown an unresisting victim by flowing into the victim's lungs.

Drawback: Movement is at only at a walking pace; halved when going uphill. Visual perception is at -3. If the *duguthim* attempts to reform without access to all its mass, it will lose health levels proportionate to the loss (at the Storyteller's discretion).

Longevity (•+)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The spirit's infusion of Essence maintains the body beyond the normal span of years. The power effectively doubles the natural lifespan — in the case of humans, that means about 140 years). Longevity may be bought more than once, so that a man could live 280, 560, 1120, etc. A *duguthim* that has acquired Longevity five times is essentially immortal.

Metabolism Control (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis ••

Effect: The Ridden can selectively alter body systems ordinarily outside his control. He may slow his heart rate, breathing, and general metabolism, reducing his consumption of oxygen and calories. For each success on a Wits + Composure + Synthesis roll, the *duguthim* cuts his metabolism in half. If the Ridden is holding his breath, this would equate to an extra dot of Stamina per success to determine how long before he begins to drown.

Drawback: The Ridden must remain still and relatively relaxed when "hibernating" (-1 dice to the roll if walking or swimming slowly; unable to engage the power if engaged in vigorous activity). Each success on the roll to activate this Aspect *subtracts* one die from other dice pools — the inward focus on commanding the body comes at the expense of outward perceptions.

Mimic (•)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •, Wits •••

Effect: The Ridden can mimic nearly any sound she heard at least once, from screeching tires to crickets to the night-watchman's voice. One success with a Wits + Composure roll will reasonably portray a "generic" sound (such as "man talking" or "distant gunshot") while multiple success fine-tune the noise ("Eric speaking" or "distant shotgun"). Sounds outside the normal capabilities of the mount (such as an elephant reciting Shakespeare or a human speaking ultrasonically) may be attempted for an extra point, representing the spirit's modification of the mount's vocal systems, but only within reasonable physical limitations of the mount. A human Ridden can mimic a jet's sound, but can't reproduce the 150 decibel roar of a jet at 50 feet away.

Mind Reading (••• or •••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •, Wits ••••

Effect: This Aspect allows the Claimed to peer into the mind of a person as if it were a book. Most often the power only gathers intelligence about specific aspects under the spirit's purview; for example, a war-Ridden may sense the next maneuver his opponent is planning, while a mount Claimed by a fear-spirit might ferret out the target's phobias. For five points, the *duguthim* can hear any of the thoughts uppermost in the target's mind, regardless of whether they match the riding-spirit's area of specialty or not.

The Ridden must spend one Essence per attempt; a successful Wits + Composure roll reveals basic information, with an exceptional success bringing increased detail or clarity. Normal mortals cannot sense the invasion. Supernatural entities can attempt to control their thoughts and hide what the Ridden seeks by contesting with a Resolve + Primal Urge roll.

Natural Weaponry (• +)

Prerequisite: Synthesis ••

Effect: The mount grows claws, fangs, spines or some other form of natural weapon. Each attack mode (bite, claw, spine rake, etc.) must be bought separately. One point spent adds one die to an appropriate attack mode. Damage is bashing, but becomes lethal for an additional point. Bite attacks that are developed by means of this Aspect do not require a grapple, and are made without penalty; the Ridden's jaws may distend in ways that a human jaw does not.

For example, a Claimed that developed bony protrusions on its fists with a damage code of 1 (B) and a bite with the damage code of 3 (L) would have to spend five points — one to create a bashing attack mode with one bonus die, three to create another bashing attack mode with one bonus die, and one to upgrade one of these attack modes to lethal.

Drawback: Natural weaponry above +1 gets progressively more difficult to conceal unless taken with the Hidden Power Aspect.

Nest Jelly (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Ridden develops glands (usually in the throat) that produce a thick, slightly sticky mucus. Upon exposure to air, it begins to dry, hardening in a few minutes to a material with the hardness of plastic (though it won't melt so easily). In the intervening time, it may be shaped by hand or used to glue other materials together. Spirit-Claimed use it to make nests, construct defensive barriers or bind victims (provided they are immobile for a few minutes). Repeated layering, or the addition of stones, wood or sheets in the hardening mass can make a formidable defensive barrier, impervi-

ous to even bullets or werewolf claws. The material is translucent, but some *duguthim* chew paper or dirt to make it more opaque. By default, the hardened jelly is Durability 1, though this can be increased to Durability 2 by mixing in other objects.

Poison (• +)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Claimed produces venom, deliverable through glands in the skin, fangs, or even in an aerosol from the mouth. The poison's Toxicity is 2 plus the number of points spent on this Aspect. The type of poison and its vector of delivery must be determined upon taking this Aspect. By default, the poison is injected; the ability to exhale a poisonous gas or secrete a contact poison costs two extra points. The poison inflicts damage once every hour until 24 hours have passed or the victim has died; spending two points increases the rate of effect to once per minute. The target may resist using Stamina + Resolve + Primal Urge. The damage is bashing by default, and can be upgraded to lethal by spending an extra point. The *duguthim* is immune to its own venom.

For more information on poisons and toxins, see **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 180.

Primal Fear (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •, Presence ••••

Effect: There is something so disturbing about the Ridden that people instinctively recoil in horror, and may block the incident out of their minds. Even if the

mount looks normal, mortals sense the malice of the thing crouched inside. The *duguthim* has a supernatural effect on human observers much like that of Lunacy. Simply seeing the Ridden inflicts Lunacy as if the observer had an effective Willpower four dots higher than it is. If the Ridden visibly uses an Aspect, observers react as appropriate for their unmodified Willpower. For more information, see “Lunacy” in **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 175.

Drawback: The power is always on unless bought with Hidden Power.

Sharp Senses (•• or •••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Ridden's senses are especially keen. She can identify a friend by scent, or hear the earthworms in the tunnels beneath her feet. She receives +2 to all perception rolls, and may track by scent (for more information, see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 178).

Drawback: The sharp senses can't be turned on and off, unless she spends an extra point (in which case she may heighten or dampen her senses as a reflexive action). A crowd becomes a noisy, smelling confusing mob from which the Ridden can glean nothing, and a pistol's report can send the creature into agonized deafness — depending on the background sensory input, the Storyteller may assign a penalty to the *duguthim's* attempts to perceive details about her surroundings.



Tough Skin (• to ••••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis ••

Effect: The Claimed's skin thickens or hardens, giving the *duguthim* one point of armor for each point spent (to a maximum of three points). This armor is equally effective against firearms and general attacks. If the Ridden spends one additional point, the armor is considered bulletproof.

Drawback: The appearance of the skin depends on the type of spirit and the power level of the Aspect. The skin of a hickory Spirit-Ridden might appear as faint striations, that of a metal-spirit would be oddly smooth and shiny, and that of a reptile would appear as tiny scales that would otherwise pass for some skin condition. With the greater version of Tough Skin, the odd appearance is impossible to mistake and must be covered up completely to avoid detection. This Aspect is usable in conjunction with Hidden Power.

Wallcrawling (•••)

Prerequisite: Strength ••, Synthesis ••

Effect: The *duguthim* may have microscopic hooks or octopus-like suckers on its hands and feet, or secrete some form of adhesive. The Ridden can grab and hang on to things and people with ease, and even climb sheer surfaces. The Claimed gains two bonus dice to grapple checks and climbing checks. In addition, he does not

suffer penalties to climbing rolls for lack of tools, a sheer slope or lack of handholds. The Ridden can turn the ability on and off as a reflexive action.

Water Breathing (••)

Prerequisite: Synthesis •

Effect: The Ridden can breathe water as well as air. It takes a standard action to transition between breathing states; the Ridden must expel air (in water) or cough up water (in air) before breathing in the current environment.

SAMPLE FOES

Patti wiped away tears that had already begun to dry. "Brad, we've been over this before. I wish you wouldn't keep bringing it up every time."

Brad clenched his fists. "If you'd just realize that putting off getting married isn't just about you... this affects my life, too, you know!"

"I know, I know, it's just... I don't want that kind of responsibility right now. I've got so much I still want to do before I settle down. Why can't you understand that?!" Patti couldn't keep the pleading tone from her voice, and noticed absently that Toli, her laid-back and placid greyhound, pricked up her ears and looked at the door. Giving her a gentle stroke behind the ears, Patti slid open the patio



door and let Toli out into the fenced yard for a stretch of the legs.

“Well, I’m sorry you think I’m such a weight,” snarled Brad. “Fine, I’m leaving. And you better think, Patti, just what you’re giving up.”

Patti let out a groan, as Brad barged out the door. He acted like he didn’t even hear her, though he had a momentary pang of guilt at her obvious misery. Well, to hell with her, he thought. What kind of woman didn’t want to get married? He couldn’t figure it out.

He didn’t hear the silent padding of feet, the impossibly swift launch of the sleek greyhound’s body as it leapt from the dark corner of the yard. Brad didn’t have time for a “what the…” moment before the long mouth and strong jaws sank into his throat. As blood, sinew and tendons were pulled from Brad’s body, only one thought pounded through Toli’s brain: the fact that this man had made her beloved mistress cry. That was something, at least in the normally mellow greyhound’s mind, that no devoted dog should let go unanswered.

The following descriptions offer a range of Ridden “types” Storytellers can use for adversaries or possibly just bizarre encounters with the player characters. Each one is given statistics and powers as if it were fully Claimed. There’s little difference in game mechanics between a Spirit-Urged and an ordinary human; the Claimed are simply the most appropriate for a full write up. For a Spirit-Urged antagonist, simply use an ordinary human or animal’s traits, and include a spirit of appropriate sort. Some brief notes about portraying a simple Urged of similar type are given in the Storytelling Hints section of each Ridden’s write up.

These Ridden have statistics and descriptions that reflect the fact that time has passed since the spirit has settled in and made itself comfortable. A brand-new Claimed is rarely a credible challenge to a werewolf pack, at least once the hunt is completed. Of course, feel free to turn back or advance the timetable of possession if need be; the sample “Firestarter” Ridden might make an interestingly subtle threat if just coming into its powers, while a version that’s been changed even further can be a very dangerous opponent for an entire pack.

The statistics in parentheses reflect the character’s traits, including the bonuses added from the spirit. The base statistics for the mount (human or animal) are given without parentheses, to make it easier to reverse-engineer a Spirit-Urged antagonist, or even an ordinary mortal, from the sample Claimed.

Spirits, as a general rule, don’t possess Virtues or Vices as humans understand them. A spirit regains Willpower by following its nature, regardless of outside circumstances — and a spirit’s way of thinking is such

that there is no real greater temptation than following its nature. A greed-spirit that acts in a greedy manner isn’t succumbing to a vice, because it has no higher morality to aspire to. Nor is it being virtuous, because it isn’t resisting temptation; nothing is more tempting than greed. So it is with the Claimed.

CHILD OF TERROR

Quote: (giggle)

Background: Children know a thousand fears. Everyone knows that a simple piece of furniture can become a menacing shadow at night, or that the scratch of rats in the attic might imply that a killer has slipped into the house, has already murdered the parents, and is coming down the hall. Spirits know of this fear as well. Every once in a while, a child with a particularly vivid imagination draws their attention. Sometimes the spirit will use its Numina to harvest a bit of delicious Essence before moving on — but sometimes it lingers. And the spirit that Rides a child soon discovers that such a vivid imagination could be used with great effect to go visit other children...

Description: A child who’s Urged by a spirit of fear slips out of the house at night, visiting other houses or apartments where he knows other children live and “playing pranks.” It never occurs to him that the “little game” he and his imaginary friend are playing isn’t funny to anyone else. The Claimed Child of Terror goes much further, though, being a potent supernatural horror in a small package. No longer able to pass for human, its mount has gone missing for weeks, and appears on “Have you seen me?” announcements around the city. Its skin is a deep midnight blue, almost black, save for a face pale as moonlight, and its fingers and toes have elongated to alarming lengths. When it smiles, it’s the far-too-wide grin of a shark.

Storytelling Hints: The Child of Terror mixes the amorality of a spirit with the stolen memories of a child too young to know the difference between right and wrong — only between actions that will or won’t be punished. And with its power, this Claimed knows that it won’t be punished. It also poses a very difficult choice for most Forsaken; the mount is a complete innocent, but the spirit has bound with him so strongly that there may be no way to stop the Child other than killing the mount. Can another option be found? And if not, how will the rest of the pack react when one takes it upon herself to deliver the final blow?

Mental: Intelligence 2 (3), Wits 2 (5), Resolve 1 (4)

Physical: Strength 1 (4), Dexterity 3 (6), Stamina 1 (3)

Social: Presence 1 (5), Manipulation 2 (4), Composure 1 (5)

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Investigation 0 (3), Occult 0 (3)

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Bite) 0 (3), Stealth 1 (5), Survival 0 (3)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 0 (5), Expression 1 (5), Intimidation 0 (6), Persuasion 1

Willpower: 2 (9)

Health: 4 (6)

Initiative: 4 (11)

Defense: 2 (5)

Speed: 7 (16)

Merits: (Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fleet of Foot 3)

Synthesis: 4

Aspects: Dark Sight, Gift: Running Shadow, Gift: Shadow Flesh, Mimic, Mind Reading 3, Natural Weaponry (bite 3 L), Primal Fear

Essence: 15 (Maximum of 20)

DEATHWATCHER

Quote: “Lie still, sweetie, it’s okay. Yes, I’m afraid you’re dying. But don’t worry, I’ll be with you all the way.”

Background: In the natural order of things, spirits of death congregate around the dying, and drift away when the soul departs. In modern times, the order is often broken as CPR and medical machines delay death or even yank the fleeing spirit back into its shell. Whether confused or simply curious, a death-spirit occasionally follows the soul, or settles in one of the observers at the scene. Over time the person acquires a morbid fascination with both the philosophy and physiology of the moment of death, searching out the dying for the pleasure (and perhaps the honor) of watching the light fail in the eyes. Indeed, she can sense an impending death nearby, and is drawn to it like an alcoholic to a free drink.

Description: The Deathwatcher is distinguished mainly by the eerie aura it generates. Her mere presence makes chills run up the spine, and death is the only topic of conversation that holds her interest. Her skin is cold to the touch, and her eyes are so black that they appear to be windows into a lightless void. She is most interested in watching a death play out gradually, and may offer medical aid to a victim who appears to be dying too quickly — or drink the life essence from one that seems dangerously close to convalescing. Some Deathwatchers claim the bodies of trauma room doctors, hospice nurses or sickbed priests. Those who don’t have easy access to the dying may be Urged to fuel their obsession in other ways, such as causing accidents on small and large scales, just to savor the deaths. A werewolf may catch a Deathwatcher in action, or get a creepy feeling when visiting a local hospital.

Storytelling Hints: Deathwatchers, like death-spirits, are almost bottomless reserves of patience. They speak calmly even when confronted with a furious werewolf, almost with the air of a parent confronted with a truculent child. They consider themselves com-

passionate, but ultimately have no real concept of what the word really means. Although they will do what they can to preserve their own skins, a Deathwatcher that’s torn apart by wolf jaws may seem to enjoy the novelty of experiencing death from within the flesh.

Mental: Intelligence 2 (4), Wits 3 (5), Resolve 2 (5)

Physical: Strength 2 (4), Dexterity 2 (5), Stamina 2 (5)

Social: Presence 2 (5), Manipulation 3 (4), Composure 3 (6)

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Medicine 3, Occult 3, Science 1

Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy 3, Expression 2, Persuasion 2, Subterfuge 4

Willpower: 5 (11)

Health: 8

Initiative: 5 (11)

Defense: 2 (5)

Speed: 9 (14)

Merits: Contacts 2, Natural Immunity, Resources 3, Status: Medicine 3

Synthesis: 2

Aspects: Life Drain, Longevity 1, Metabolism Control, Mind Reading 3

Essence: 8 (maximum 20)

FERAL

Quote: “Damn you, dogs! I want to hunt as flesh, too!”

Background: The Feral is an animal-spirit in a human host, an interesting case of possession to say the least. It likely took over the body of a human hunter, perhaps out of a blend of revenge and curiosity. Of course, the human body proved to be disappointing in several ways, but the animal-spirit has enjoyed some success in shaping the body to be faster and hardier, and “fixing” the disappointing drawbacks to sense acuity. Now the Feral is attempting to hunt, to feel what flesh and blood taste like instead of just Essence — and it’s enjoying the experience.

Description: The Feral is not a powerful Ridden, but it might appear in small groups if a number of like-minded spirits entered the physical world to hunt as a pack. It has not learned to hide its power, though the changes to the body are not yet so drastic that it has no chance of walking among humans at night. Its jaws are slightly extended and muzzle-like, and long claws have ripped out of its fingertips. It is not a beautiful creation, more reminiscent of a modern imagining of Dr. Moreau’s creations than an anthropomorphic animal.

Storytelling Hints: A Feral-Ridden can be used as a slightly weaker reflection of the werewolves themselves. It may even confuse werewolves who hear of animalistic killings bordering their territory — they expect to find the scent of a rival werewolf pack, and instead find a scent they don’t recognize. For its part, the Feral is certain to resent the werewolves, who hypocritically

try to prevent it from hunting while keeping themselves under no such restriction.

Entities like the Feral can also be used to emulate the Storyteller's favorite folkloric creatures. If the troupe has a passing interest in cryptozoology, a bear-Ridden Feral might make an interesting (and bloody) variant on the legends of Bigfoot or the Sasquatch. Alternately, they might lie at the core of ancient myths of jaguar-men or people possessed by fox-spirits.

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 2 (4), Resolve 2 (4)

Physical: Strength 2 (4), Dexterity 3 (6), Stamina 3 (5)

Social: Presence 2 (4), Manipulation 2, Composure 3 (4)

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Firearms (Hunting rifle) 3, Stealth (Remaining still) 2, Survival 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken (Game) 2, Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 1

Willpower: 5 (8)

Health: 8 (10)

Initiative: 8 (12)

Defense: 2 (4)

Speed: 11 (16)

Merits: Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 1, Iron Stomach, Strong Back

Synthesis: 2

Aspects: Mimic, Natural Weaponry (claw 2 (L), bite 2 (L)), Sharp Senses 3

Essence: 11 (Maximum of 15)

FIRESTARTER

Quote: "Everything is so... solid. So still. So... cold. This won't do."

Background: The Firestarter doesn't have to have a long history with fire; she doesn't have to have played with matches as a child, or insist on having a fireplace in her new home. All she needed to do was to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The flame-spirit came through from the Shadow during a dangerous fire, and chose a mount out of opportunity rather than compatibility. Any mount would have done; they're all easy enough to goad into embracing their secret fascination with the flames.

Description: The Firestarter is undergoing the physical changes that come with being Claimed, although it hasn't fully expressed yet. Her body temperature is far higher than it should be, so high that she would likely fall ill and die were it not for the spirit preserving her flesh. A heat shimmer surrounds her, most visible during the day (one of the reasons that she has become nocturnal). After using one of her Aspects, the Firestarter leaves behind footprints of ashes and embers for several minutes. Her voice is rough and raspy, and her clothes and body are filthy — she hasn't bathed since being Claimed. Her stale body odor mixes

with the smell of smoke, and a polluted smoke at that. The Firestarter rarely burns clean wood — she burns what is at hand.

Storytelling Hints: In the manner of most flame-spirits, the Firestarter can be impulsive and quick to anger. However, the spirit didn't manage to slip into the realm of flesh and take on a mortal host by being stupid. It doesn't take obvious risks, and will do its best to conceal itself when a pack of werewolves is sniffing around. It may try to stay and fight if it gets a werewolf alone, but it's more likely to lure a pack into a building with the intention of burning down the building around them.

When simply Spirit-Urged, the character would be profiled as a pyromaniac — and indeed, she might even believe that diagnosis. After all, she doesn't really understand why she's compelled to start fires, or even to burn her own flesh. The impulses just — come over her. The true tragedy is that a pack of werewolves might never notice and intervene in time to save her; after all, humans commit arson all the time without the encouragement of spirits. It may be a damning indictment, but starting a fire that claims the lives of other human beings isn't in itself any sign of supernatural influence.

Mental: Intelligence 2 (3), Wits 3 (6), Resolve 2 (4)

Physical: Strength 2 (4), Dexterity 2 (5), Stamina 2 (5)

Social: Presence 3 (5), Manipulation 3, Composure 2 (3)

Mental Skills: Academics (Poli Sci Major) 2, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Politics 2, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Larceny 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Dance) 3, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Club Scene) 2, Streetwise 1

Willpower: 4 (7)

Health: 7 (10)

Initiative: 4 (9)

Defense: 2 (6)

Speed: 9 (14)

Merits: Barfly, Contacts (College, Nightlife) 2, Language (Spanish) 1, Resources 1, Striking Looks 2

Synthesis: 3

Aspects: Blast (fire), Firewalk, Gift (Command Fire), Inhuman Reflexes

Essence: 12 (Maximum of 15)

NEEMESIS

Quote: "You think no one saw what you did to her? Someone *always* sees. Don't worry. They won't find *your* body either."

Background: The mount was deeply wronged by someone — perhaps she was raped, lost a family member to murder or was crippled by some company's criminal negligence — and now her soul cries out for vengeance. The depths of her rage are equaled by the rush of power that comes with the merging of the flesh

and spirit. She stalks perpetrators where the law can't or won't go, and soon she has brutally revenged herself. Yet the game isn't over; perhaps the target had accomplices, co-workers, friends, family — and so the hunt continues. Even when there's nobody left who could plausibly be connected to the original sinner, the Ridden must *still* seek out other targets — the spirit must be fed, even if the mount has had more than its share of catharsis.

Description: The Nemesis is driven by a conceptual spirit, maybe of vengeance or perhaps murder. The spirit uses the mount's memories as a catalog of potential victims to be "rightfully" disposed of. This Claimed may be found fighting a pack's foes, or their friends. When using her Numina, she manifests stigmata, bleeding from the eyes and palms and leaving bloody footprints. Even when she's "dormant," she still reeks of blood.

Storytelling Hints: Even if this Ridden has an enemy in common with the pack, it isn't going to be a willing ally — it will almost certainly categorize Uratha as outlaws by its own standards. After all, don't those human memories describe werewolves as nothing more than savage monsters? A Nemesis *hithisu* may settle for mild revenge or causing embarrassment to the perpetrator, but the *duguthim* become vigilantes, hunting criminals (or merely those who look like criminals, or possibly could be criminals). Whoever the target, the

Nemesis is cunning, persistent and utterly ruthless in her pursuit of those she deems wrongdoers.

Mental: Intelligence 3 (4), Wits 3 (4), Resolve 3 (6)

Physical: Strength 2 (4), Dexterity 2 (5), Stamina 3 (5)

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 4 (5), Composure 3 (5)

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Investigation (Crime Scenes) 3, Occult 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry (Knives) 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 1, Socialize 1, Streetwise (Bad Part of Town) 2, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 6 (11)

Health: 8 (10)

Initiative: 7 (14)

Defense: 2 (6)

Speed: 11 (16)

Merits: Brawling Dodge, Contacts (Police) 1, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Resources 1

Synthesis: 2

Aspects: Inhuman Reflexes 4, Mind Reading 3, Sharp Senses 3

Essence: 9 (maximum 15)

LIVING SUCCUBUS

Quote: "Aww, loverboy, of course you're tired. But are you *too* tired? C'mon, one more time..."

Background: She (or he) is everyone's wet dream of a romantic interlude. The Living Succubus is Urged



or Claimed by a lust-spirit (or something similar), and she craves the Essence gathered from sex, the wilder the better. But this isn't love or even the mere release of sexual frustrations. The kind of sex she wants, almost constantly, is extreme and, after a while, painful. Half the thrill for this creature is seeing how far she can push her sexual partners before they collapse in exhaustion, totally drained. The process of Claiming is not entirely complete, but it won't be long now.

Description: The Living Succubus (or Incubus) is a living incarnation of lust — but she might not always look the part. She might be the sort of gorgeous, sexual creature who naturally inspires feelings of desire in all those around her, but she might also be the sort of person who doesn't inspire lust as much as she feels it. She might be a frustrated soccer mom with a cold husband, a particularly shy spinster, a just-below-plain Jane, a childless woman with a severe desire to be pregnant — for whatever reason, her desire for sex was strong enough to attract a possessing spirit. The same can hold true for most any sort of man whose lust is too powerful to be slaked. The result can sometimes be somewhat unusual — an ordinary woman or man dressed like a sexpot, surrounded by admirers drawn not by beauty, but by supernatural power.

Roleplaying Hints: The Living Succubus usually has no shortage of willing victims. Even werewolves, knowing full well what she is, may have some trouble resisting. This creature is like a potent drug, risky with an intoxicating effect. When merely Urged, the Ridden relies on her mortal wits and beauty; her mere presence is often enough to lure in a lover. The Claimed, on the other hand, has many tricks for catching prey. If she feels threatened, she's not afraid to strike with these sharp claws. No one is above being tempted by the Living Succubus. Moreover, she may not always be in a rush. If she realizes that her potential prey is a werewolf, this Ridden may take her time and savor the experience.

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 2 (3), Resolve 2

Physical: Strength 2 (3), Dexterity 3 (5), Stamina 2 (3)

Social: Presence 3 (6), Manipulation 3 (5), Composure 3 (5)

Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Occult 1, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Empathy (Opposite Sex) 3, Expression 2, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 3, Socialize (Meat Markets) 4, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge (Little White Lies) 4

Willpower: 5 (7)

Health: 7 (8)

Initiative: 6 (10)

Defense: 2 (3)

Speed: 12 (15)

Merits: Barfly, Fleet of Foot 2, Resources 3, Striking Looks 2

Synthesis: 1

Aspects: Life Drain

Essence: 7 (Maximum 15)

PROTECTIVE ANIMAL

The Protective Animal is sometimes a pet gone bad, a nurturing Fido on steroids. But mostly, this animal's natural guardian defenses have attracted a like-minded spirit (often of loyalty or devotion, but sometimes simply a dog-spirit) who needs a host for the long or short term. The result is a creature that is preternaturally driven to protect a certain person or place. The animal may seem innocuous at first, but if riled, it's quite dangerous.

Description: This Ridden is usually the fusion of a spirit with a dog of one of the guardian breeds — a rottweiler, german shepherd, pit bull or even a mastiff. If Urged, it will just seem edgier than usual; it jumps at the least provocation and may drive its master crazy by always resting at his feet. The exasperated owner may be driven to crate the pet or lock in it another room, but this leads to 24/7 yowling and barking that's even worse, separation anxiety at its most extreme. Some pets may try to escape and return to the master's presence. The Claimed acts much the same way, except that it will use its powers to remain in the master's presence. It will also show much more jealousy, resenting other pets or children who try to come between the pet and the master.

Roleplaying Hints: The potentially violent nature of this beast comes into play should it perceive any threat to its owner (or alpha, if you will). If it suspects someone is trying to cause its master bodily harm, the beast springs into action. Most Protective Animals are domesticated dogs and cats, but certain other animals (horses or birds) could also become hosts. Adjust the size as needed for these creatures. The Protective Animal may enter the chronicle as a minor point of interest; a supposed killing or maiming by an animal may make the characters wonder if a rogue werewolf is on the loose.

Mental: Intelligence 1 (4), Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical: Strength 4 (6), Dexterity 3 (4), Stamina 3 (4)

Social: Presence 4 (5), Manipulation 1, Composure 2 (4)

Mental Skills: (from spirit) Craft 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 4, Brawl 3, Stealth 1, Survival (Tracking) 3

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Empathy 1, Intimidation 3

Willpower: 5 (7)

Health: 7 (8)

Initiative: 5 (8)

Defense: 4 (4)

Speed: 13 (16)

Synthesis: 1

Aspects: Heavy Bones, Tough Skin 2 (Hidden Power)

Essence: 5 (maximum is 10)

OCCULTIST

Quote: “It’s so infuriating. They keep getting everything *wrong*. Can’t they see?”

Background: The Occultist is a nasty piece of work. She comes from some kind of academic or other well-educated background, but she uses the knowledge she’s gained for selfish, potentially destructive reasons. She may seek a form of empowerment over and above what she can wrest from human society, or she may be driven by a nihilistic sense of self-loathing (even if she isn’t prone to admit it). She came to the attention of a spirit in the course of one of her magical experiments — she failed to invoke the power she was looking for, but the spirit never bothered to inform her otherwise.

Description: The Occultist isn’t actually as good-looking as people tend to believe she is; she manages to manipulate people socially through sheer self-confidence. As an Urged, she isn’t particularly noteworthy — a bit more intense than most, but most werewolves have seen far stranger people in their day. Once fully Claimed, however, her eyes swim with the darkness of a dying galaxy, her skin becomes pale and cool to the

touch, and her human voice speaks in unison with the voice of the spirit that now governs her.

Storytelling Hints: Players will likely encounter an Occultist while she’s seeking secret lore or magical objects. She’ll follow rumors and leads closely, on the lookout for any books, fetishes or sorcery; these may take her to a local library or into hidden lairs. Frequently, the Occultist has a companion (usually muscle) tagging along as an assistant, but the Ridden is in charge of the show. The Occultist gladly uses whatever wiles are at her disposal to get what she wants and is not above lying, cheating or stealing. While not merely a seductress, the Occultist gladly uses sex appeal to get what she (or he; it’s in no way a gender-specific concept) wants.

Urged student of the occult isn’t so different from any other human who is trying to find out about the strange corners of the world. Her nosiness and greed are the key danger; she’s inevitably going to stir up bad trouble, if she isn’t stopped, but she herself isn’t the source of the evil. Rather, she’s an agent who may not realize the dangers she’s unleashing. The Claimed is a different matter. She may be working directly with some foul spirit who is stronger, carrying out its orders on the earthbound planes. The singular goal of her mission may be to set up circumstances through which other, more gruesome spirits can find their way through the Gauntlet.



Mental: Intelligence 3 (5), Wits 3 (5), Resolve 3 (6)
Physical: Strength 2 (4), Dexterity 2 (5), Stamina 3 (4)
Social: Presence 3 (5), Manipulation 3 (4), Composure 2 (5)
Mental Skills: Academics (Ancient History) 3, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult (Local Legend) 3, Science 1
Physical Skills: Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Stealth 1
Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation (Creepy) 2, Persuasion 3, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 1
Willpower: 5 (11)
Health: 8 (9)
Initiative: 4 (10)
Defense: 2 (5)
Speed: 9 (14)
Merits: Allies 1, Contacts (Occult) 1, Language 2, Resources 2, Retainer 1
Synthesis: 2
Aspects: Dark Sight, Gift: Scent of Taint, Mind Reading 5
Essence: 9 (Maximum of 20)

SERIAL KILLER

Quote: “Will you walk with me? I’m really enjoying our conversation.”

Background: In youth, perhaps he enjoyed hurting the family dog or bullying the wimpy kid next door. But these unpleasant traits may have gone nowhere if it weren’t for the spirit inside, urging the young man to begin a quest of murder. The Ridden Serial Killer usually has some kind of bizarre motivation, often unfathomable to others, that drives him to murder within a specific gender or group identity. He might like collecting index fingers from chefs or blue eyeballs from little girls. Emotions, directed or Urged by a spirit and ranging from lust to a desire for power to a thrill of the hunt, compel his killing instincts.

Description: The Serial Killer probably has an average appearance, and his intelligence is often high. Casual acquaintances may notice nothing out of the ordinary about this *Hithimu*. He may have a past history of a troubled home, various health and mental issues and poor education — or he could come from a stable family and have a college education, with good social skills. His background may include petty crimes — or not. There’s no telling. Although none of his Aspects as a Claimed manifest visually, there’s something gruesomely wrong about him — a faintly charnel odor, eyes that never blink, teeth that are just too perfect.

Storytelling Hints: A psychological trait common to many serial killers is a penchant for viewing their victims as objects and little else. This is even more true of the Claimed serial killer. The spirit that has taken over the body sees humans as simple playthings of the flesh, in ready supply and of no real import to the universe. It is a gruesomely solipsistic entity, contemptuous even of the werewolves who come to chase it down.

Most “naturally occurring” serial killers are male — but this isn’t a statistic that has any meaning for the Ridden. Spirits of hate, lust and envy are common in these Ridden. If simply Urged, it may take some time for the spirit to lead the mount into committing actual murder, unless the mount was already beginning to dabble (and likely attracting the spirit in that fashion).

An interesting reversal appropriate for this character is that the Claimed incarnation can be even more cunning at hiding its activities than would a Spirit-Urged killer; this is one occasion when a *duguthim* will try keep the mount’s physical changes as subtle and rare as possible. It’s going to do everything in its power to keep its hobby a secret, to continue having fun as long as possible. Of course, the spirit will inevitably make little mistakes as it attempts to emulate human behavior, but a clever spirit learns quickly. By the time the werewolves in the chronicle set out after the killer, he’s probably done severe damage to the community. This is often the sort of hunt that doesn’t end with the Ridden’s death (if indeed the werewolves manage to kill him), but instead continues until the spirit itself has been destroyed. No pack can afford to take the chance that the spirit will remember how exhilarating its joyride was, and attempt another one.

Mental: Intelligence 3 (5), Wits 3 (5), Resolve 3 (5)
Physical: Strength 2 (6), Dexterity 2 (5), Stamina 3 (6)
Social: Presence 2 (3), Manipulation 4 (6), Composure 2 (5)
Mental Skills: Academics 1, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Occult 1
Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Grapple) 3, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2, Stealth (Shadowing) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry (Knives) 2
Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2
Willpower: 5 (10)
Health: 8 (11)
Initiative: 4 (10)
Defense: 2 (5)
Speed: 9 (16)
Merits: Danger Sense, Meditative Mind, Resources 2, Strong Back
Synthesis: 2
Aspects: Dark Sight, Mind Reading 3, Primal Fear 2 (Hidden Power), Sharp Senses 2
Essence: 10 (maximum 20)

SOLDIER OF FORTUNE

Quote: “The stories I could tell.”

Background: He may have been with Spetsnaz, SAS or US Army Special Forces; he loved the job and the brass loved him. But being in the army has drawbacks, like strict rules of engagement and annoying outbreaks of peace. So he left the service and took the road of the mercenary. Whether the spirit found him

during that job in the Balkans, or whether it was the one to nudge him into private sector in the first place, it doesn't matter. What matters is the rush that comes from being the last one standing in a knife-fight, the satisfaction of winning a firefight and living to get paid. As they say, it's a great job: travel the world, meet new people — and kill them.

For the first few months of fettering, the spirit was content to experience the various battlefronts that its mount sought out, and to nudge its mount to greater and bloodier carnage. Now the war-spirit has decided that it wants to fight against the creatures that would deprive it of its “basic liberties” — the Uratha.

Description: This Claimed is an example of what happens when a spirit picks a mount who was dangerous to begin with. A career soldier turned gun for hire, now this mercenary has become host to a spirit of war or bloodshed. The Soldier of Fortune can no longer travel in the circles he once frequented. His skin has taken on a faintly grayish and almost metallic cast, like good solid iron. An unnatural growl, something like a far-off explosion, has crept into his voice. The occasional stigmatic bullet wound opens in his flesh, staining his fatigues with blood, and he constantly smells of metal and gunpowder. He breaks into army surplus stores to get the equipment he needs, and is delighted if the owner happens to catch him in the act: a good soldier keeps in practice. The spirit within isn't particularly powerful as they go, but it doesn't have to be.

Storytelling Hints: A war-spirit is a harsh master; it demands utter ruthlessness and cares nothing for diplomacy. The Ridden mercenary is more dangerous in between sanctioned jobs, for he doesn't hang up his sharp eyes and hair trigger reflexes beside his CAR-15 at the end of the day. If he doesn't get action soon, he may start working “off the clock” — in friendly territory.

The Soldier of Fortune can be reasoned with, given the right circumstances. For some remuneration, he teaches a few tricks of the trade, or gets some military-grade hardware, or even pulls some short-duty security work. But when fully Claimed, nothing will do but actual time in the field. If you fit his profile as a prospective target — whether you're on his turf, on his nerves or on the hit-list of his current employer — you'll only see him coming if he wants you to.

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 3 (5), Resolve 4 (5)

Physical: Strength 3 (5), Dexterity 4 (5), Stamina 4 (5)

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2 (4)

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl (Dirty Fighting) 4,

Drive 2, Firearms (Automatic Weapons, Rifles) 4,

Larceny 2, Stealth 4, Survival 3, Weaponry (Knives) 4

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 2, Intimidation 3, Socialize 3, Streetwise 1

Willpower: 6 (9)

Health: 9 (11)

Initiative: 6 (10)

Defense: 3 (6)

Speed: 12 (15)

Merits: Contacts (Gunrunners, Mercenaries) 2, Disarm, Language 3, Fighting Finesse, Quick Draw

Synthesis: 2

Aspects: Camouflage 3 (Hidden Power), Inhuman Reflexes 2, Tough Skin 3 (Bulletproof)

Essence: 6 (Maximum of 10)

STORM-TAKEN

Quote: “The feel of wind on skin, the rush of this tiny fluid lightning — I will hold onto this.”

Background: The Storm-Taken is a *Hithimu* who embodies the wild and capricious nature of a furious storm-spirit. His quintessential nature is that of a thrill seeker, and he probably was a magnet for several different kinds of appreciative spirits before one chose him as a fetter. Tornado chasing, hang gliding or skydiving are the bread and butter of this kind of Ridden.

Description: This Ridden could blend in well at a skateboard park or a outdoor concert — he's in good shape, wears loose clothing without much attention to style, and has perpetually wind-tossed hair. However, his eyes are dark as storm clouds, and sometimes flicker with something like heat lightning. When the spirit within grows agitated, winds toss whirl around the Storm-Taken and the smell of ozone becomes acute.

Storytelling Hints: A Storm-Taken isn't functionally malevolent, but he does put others at risk by his mere presence. A storm-Urged subtly encourages others to pursue risk taken, even if they're not physically up to the challenge. So, a co-worker who isn't at all prepared for jumping out of a plane may have an unfortunate heart attack. A storm-Claimed is a magnet for various kinds of fallout from storms, such as twisters, floods and blasts of heavy hail. Neither type of Ridden will be overly concerned about the effects on others around them; it's all part of the thrill.

Werewolves may get drawn into cleanup after a weather disaster, only to discover that the storm was “freak” in nature. Eventually, their pursuit of what happened may lead them to the Storm-Taken's front door.

Mental: Intelligence 2 (4), Wits 3 (6), Resolve 3 (5)

Physical: Strength 3 (5), Dexterity 3 (6), Stamina 3 (5)

Social: Presence 2 (5), Manipulation 2 (3), Composure 3 (5)

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Medicine 1, Science (Meteorology) 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Skiing, Skydiving) 4, Brawl 1,

Drive 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1

Willpower: 6 (10)

Health: 8 (10)

Initiative: 6 (11)

Defense: 3 (6)

Speed: 11 (16)

Merits: Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Strong Lungs

Synthesis: 3

Aspects: Blast, Gift: Call the Breeze, Gift: Invoke the Wind's Wrath, Sharp Senses 3

Essence: 12 (Maximum of 15)

SPIRIT PARASITES

The previous chapter of this book provides a great many sample spirits, and rules and guidelines for creating many more. Here, some of those spirits are examined solely in the context of slipping across the Gauntlet and choosing a mount. The following descriptions should give you ideas on both typical effects of possession for the said spirit, as well as ideas on customizing individual Ridden. The majority of spirits who urge or possess mounts range in rank from 2–4 (greater Gafflings, lesser Jagglings and greater Jagglings). Generally speaking, lesser Gafflings rarely have the intelligence or power to achieve much long-term success as a Ridden, and Incarnae would actually be lessened by devoting their considerable power to a puny mortal shell. However, this is only a general trend, and there's plenty of room for an exception. If a Storyteller needs to

adjust the suggested stats up or down, he should feel free to do so.

Some spirits are more applicable to a specific type of mount (human, plant or animal); others could possess anything or anyone. Be creative when describing the possession effect, but use some common sense, too. An oak-spirit probably wouldn't take over an oak tree; that's just redundant. On the other hand, spirits taking over creatures directly opposed to their natures, for whatever reasons, are going to create much more pain and havoc than when possessing beings closer to their own temperaments.

Most of the spirit examples given focus on what would happen to a human mount who becomes a *hisithu* or *duguthim*. But don't think spirits are always anthropocentric. Urging or merging with a human is often more useful, as well as relatively easy, but desperate spirits often aren't so picky. Sometimes, an animal will serve just as well, and these creatures may even be a bit closer to the spirit's nature. In short, use whatever kind of mount works best for your game ideas and the interests of your players.

Ant

Ants embody strength and diligence; they're among the most driven of insects. So too are the spirits of ants. When one fetters itself to a mount, the newly created *hithisu* gradually finds himself becoming single-minded and obsessed about completing projects. To say he's dili-



gent is an understatement, and he demands that others around him work with the same fervor. Likely, his health will decline as he continues working feverishly on his latest preoccupation, whether it be the overhaul of a room or filling a hole with sand. Claimed may find slight increases in strength over time. As social a creature as an ant-spirit is, it might attempt to bring others across the Gauntlet to create a small colony of Ridden — an ambition sure to draw the ire of a werewolf pack.

Bear

The bear can be slothful and sluggish, but his spirit is also one that is fierce, strong and determined. When a bear-spirit Urges someone or something, the mount will gradually shift her activities from a normal diurnal schedule to one of quick energy bursts followed by extensive down-time. The appetite changes to prefer raw meat or fruit. Her attitude changes to harbor a slow-burning anger — hard to rouse, but implacable when her ire is up, and this may rub off on others. Bear-Claimed might experience true hibernation or become more hirsute than before; they're sure to gain in strength, stamina and potentially even body mass.

Cat

Cats are skilled hunters, highly independent in nature. A domestic cat-spirit carries with it a disdainful attitude towards others, as well as exceptional stealth and night vision. Anyone Urged by such a spirit may start to become aloof and withdrawn, or develop a penchant for napping in patches of sunlight, stalking potential prey or becoming a voracious carnivore. The possessed and others around him may become more nocturnal than normal. Domestic cat-spirits are also more than a little mad, at war with themselves over whether they wish to be tame or wild, and a cat-Urged is sure to add a dysfunctional tinge to all his relationships. A Claiming spirit may focus its physical “improvements” on increasing the mount’s agility, overcoming its “night-blindness,” or reworking its unfortunately clawless fingers.

Dog

Most dogs are gregarious, eager to please their superiors and quick to discipline a rebellious inferior. They're pack animals that respect a pecking order, yet have to be with others of their own kind to be happy. Most frequently, dog-spirits hide in the familiar forms of mortal dogs or other canids, enjoying the camouflage. When a dog-spirit Urges a human mount, the Ridden may find herself shedding any introvert tendencies, in favor of hanging out with others much of the time (which can be a little weird at 2 a.m. on a work or school night). She may also develop strong, even violent, protective instincts towards those she holds dear. Likewise, she'll want to re-order her friends and associates into a pack, with an appropriate alpha and omega. A dog-Claimed is likely to manifest keener senses

(particularly hearing or smell), a more canid set of teeth and potentially Aspects of group cooperation (such as an Aspect duplicating the Cahalith Gift: Unspoken Communication).

Earth

The element of earth symbolizes stability, obligation and steadfastness. When an earth-spirit possesses someone or something, that person, animal or plant tends to be more tenacious and stubborn. A creeping vine won't stay cut back for long, nor will a human sway from a course that she sees as her solemn duty. An earth-Claimed may gain additional endurance and also take on a darker skin tone or have skin that is slightly harder than normal. Those around the possessed may inherit some of the same emotional tendencies, such as obstinacy and pig-headedness.

Fire

Fire is the element of cleansing, rebirth and change. A fire-spirit's fettering to a mount tends to send the mount into a state of transformation, socially and mentally, although the changes are less extreme in the Urged. He may take up new hobbies or suddenly start a challenging fitness program. If he's religious, he may back off from church going in favor of some other type of spiritual growth. Others around him likewise get galvanized and re-energized to step onto new paths. This can be a good thing, of course, but it can also be harmful if the possessing spirit causes radical change to the mount — friends and family may avoid the Ridden, or his employer may give him the sack. Claimed might start to have sun-burned skin, even in winter time; gradually they become creatures of ash, soot and coal.

Gluttony

Spirits of gluttony are never satisfied; they must consume energy in some form or another all the time, even past the point of satiation. The spirit passes on this greed and hunger to its mount, whether human, animal or plant. The Urged gorges on food and drink, as appropriate to its form, beyond daily needs. Likewise, those around the mount find themselves eating even when they're not hungry. For a Claimed, no matter what the mount, its shape becomes large and ungainly, but the hunger is never fulfilled.

Hate

A hate-spirit shapes its mount into a vessel of loathing, for itself and others around it. The *hithisu* may scrape deep gouges into her arms with a pencil in self-revulsion, or she might incite fights, road rage or a stream of curses from a priest's lips. Her presence automatically heightens any pre-existing tensions; a drunken row escalates into a deadly shoot-out, and normally cool-under-fire police officers shoot to kill. A *duguthim* possessed by a hate-spirit might find her features

twisted into a perpetual snarl and her eyes permanently squinted in anger.

Lightning

Lightning is fast and often deadly, striking in sudden and sharp bursts of energy. When a lightning-spirit Urges a *hisithu*, the mount becomes more temperamental. He'll lash out in sudden anger or possibly burst into tears at the slightest sadness. Whatever the emotion, it's quick to appear and just as swift to depart. A *duguthim* is attracted to rain, wind and thunder. When provoked, his eyes may glitter and his hands crackle with static electricity. Lightning-spirits have a fondness for destruction, and this too is likely to carry over.

Lust

The force of lust is often agonizing for the Urged being. The mount constantly feels a craving to satisfy sexual desire, but can never quite reach the point of orgasm. Release is elusive, and the desperate attempts to satisfy the lust makes the lust-Urged stupid and desperate. Those around him will feel similar desires and anxieties. Claimed may start to dress more lewdly or experience subtle changes in appearance, taking on a "come hither" look.

Nightmares

Dreams and nightmares are both the product of the subconscious; they are a mortal's means of dealing with trauma from the waking world. Nightmares occur when daily stresses overwhelm the psyche, and thus it is with nightmare-spirits. The *hithisu* begins to show increased anxiety while awake, even over small problems and irritations. She feels constantly as if on the verge of being able to solve her difficulties; then, everything comes crashing down. The Claimed seldom sleeps, becoming gaunt and shadow-eyed. Her ideas about normalcy become twisted, which sometimes lead to self-inflicted wounds or harm to others. However, her insights into others' problems and psyches increases.

Oak

The oak is one of the largest and deepest rooted of trees. Its spirits likewise are slow and deliberate, seeking to bury themselves within a mount and affect his actions in measured, cautious fashion. The mount urged by an oak-spirit tends to slow down, even if he was previously a manic personality. He suddenly wants to plant roots instead of being wild and carefree. The Claimed is much the same, seeking stability and routine, rather than sowing wild oats. His stature may increase and his skin becomes darker and more rough, like bark. Most tree-spirits take human mounts only when they have a specific agenda to pursue that requires mobility, and such agendas can be somewhat detrimental to the local human populace. Some tree-spirits visualize a day when humans are gone, and they can stretch their roots

through the cracked and abandoned roads and foundations of civilization.

Pain

Pain is both a physical sensation, ranging from mild discomfort to agony, and an emotional response to the tangible phenomenon. Pain is one way that living beings can know they're in danger or that something bad is about to happen if they don't pay heed; it's a most effective early warning system of the body, with a purpose. Pain-spirits thus can inflict unpleasant sensations that are physical, emotional or both, across a wide range. A person Urged by a pain-spirit may experience increased blood pressure, tension and a short fuse, since even minor pain, if prolonged, is highly stressful. Emotionally, she may seem easily hurt and overly sensitive. A Claimed takes these attributes to extremes. The governing spirit is sure to experience the desire to inflict pain on others or herself, through experimentation or sado-masochism.

Plastic

These malleable elementals are highly pervasive and quite tough; however, there is still something fundamentally "unnatural" and artificial about them. If a spirit of plastic should Urge a mount, the *hisithu* generally becomes more pliant, even to the point of docility. He may begin to shun the world of nature for the world of humans instead, preferring synthetic fibers in clothing or furniture, for example, as opposed to cotton or linen. The Claimed carries these traits even further. Its physical transformation probably begins with the odor of cheap plastic, and moves on to its skin transforming to the material as part of evolved "perfection."

Poison

By its implicit characteristics, poison causes injury, illness or death. In rare cases, a poison can be diluted to heal rather than harm, but the fundamental nature of this element is still dangerous and risky at best. A spirit of poison, if Urging a mount, makes the *hisithu* volatile in temperament; she might strike out in voice and deed towards friends and enemies alike. Her attitude rubs off on those around her, too. A Claimed possessed by a poison-spirit becomes a living incarnation of toxin, poisoning those around her simply as a matter of course.

Raptor

The spirit of a raptor such as a hawk or eagle is a carnivore, constantly looking for prey. Its eyes are keen, and it chooses for its home places high above the landscape. When influenced by a bird of prey's spirit, a *hisithu* may find himself wanting to take lunch breaks on the office building's roof. He'll hate being hemmed in, and his appetite tends to lean towards barely cooked meat. Others around him may take on similar cravings. Such changes are more pronounced in the *duguthim*,

who may find that their eyes turn a tawny color or that the only food they want is raw rodent.

Raven

Raven-spirits enjoy slipping into the material world and taking mounts; it is a grand way to satisfy their curiosity and indulge their unusual tastes. Few things leave behind corpses in the Shadow, so the much more frequent encounters with dead and rotting creatures delight raven-spirits to no end. A raven-Urged human may find himself easily distracted by reflective objects, unable to look away from the scene of a terrible accident, or even developing a taste for meat that's been properly "cured." A human who has been Claimed by a raven-spirit may develop beak-like ridges where his teeth were, oddly shaped hands or feet, or patches of black feathers along the spine and limbs — and his taste for carrion and the eyes of corpses becomes a mandate, not an idle craving.

Sloth

The sloth-spirit (the abstract idea, not the animal) is, as might be expected, the epitome of slowness and deliberation. It doesn't move unless necessary, and then only to find food or escape danger. When a sloth-spirit settles onto a mount, she too becomes sluggish and lethargic. Over time, those around the Urged find themselves likewise languid, even to the point of exhaustion. A Claimed shows even greater extremes of these traits. She may become a recluse or socially isolated even in a crowd, and her new favorite hobby is lying around, 24 hours a day.

Snake

Contrary to media images of snakes as dangerous predators, even most poisonous snakes prefer to avoid trouble whenever possible. The problem comes when an unwitting wanderer steps on one of these reptiles unawares; then, snakes strike with fang and poison, intent on driving away the perceived threat. Should a snake-spirit Urge a mount, the *hisithu* may show a preference for warm, sunny spots, as opposed to air conditioning. He'll start sitting in corners, back to the wall, seeking to avoid confrontation. A Claimed, over time, will start to have slight slits in his pupils and scaly skin, and possibly develop a craving for rodent flesh.

Steel

Steel is a conglomerate of strong metals that combine to produce an even more resilient material, forged and tempered to endure. Spirits of steel often appear as a *mélange* of several substances. As a rule, they are beefy and tough. When one Urges a mount, the new *hithisu* begins to feel like she's invincible. She may take odd risks because she believes herself to be unbreakable. Unfortunately, this isn't really true unless the mount



becomes a *duguthim*. Only then do some of the bonuses to Strength and Stamina start to appear.

Storms

A storm is chaotic, dangerous and wild, but it also has its own particular beauty and qualities of inspiration. A storm-spirit, in turn, is likewise unpredictable and perilous, bringing together the powers of both wind and water. When a mount becomes Urged by such a spirit, any temper he had before pales in comparison to how testy he becomes under the spirit's thrall. He constantly feels like he's on an adrenaline high, to some extent. A storm-Claimed may emulate Weather or Elemental Gifts, and is likely to become increasingly swift and forceful.

War

Spirits of war crave violence for its own sake. Some may Urge mounts who are already driven by a cause (duty, honor or mere vengeance), but that's hardly important. Senseless battle produces as much Essence as a bitter crusade. The person Urged by a war-spirit may find herself drawn to historical battle sites, completely fascinated by the accounts of the slaughter or the physical remains left behind. A Claimed, on the other hand, will likely become stronger or more stalwart. She yearns for a way to cause conflict between various groups of people, and if she can find ways to start fights or clashes among opposing forces or factions, she will.

Water

Water is an element of change, cleansing and renewal. A person under the Urge of a water-spirit seeks to alter and transform that which he perceives as old, stale or dirty. He may rid the house of antiques in favor of sleek Danish modern, or petition to have the local junkyard bulldozed to make a duck pond. A water-Claimed feels the drive to perform this cleansing even more strongly. He may commit dark acts, such as putting elderly people "out of their misery" or hurting the homeless because they're dirty and cluttering up the streets.

Wild Boar

Ornery and ill-tempered, the wild boar isn't a creature one would want to meet on a walk through the woods. When a boar-spirit Urges a mount, she'll soon become short-tempered and irritable. This mood affects her friends and associates, too, and anyone within her immediate social circle will find themselves perpetually on the edge of starting a fight. A *duguthim*, on the other hand, will more often want to take her aggression out on others. Small slights or annoyances may incite her to react with violence and a fight, rather than flight.

Wind

If a wind-spirit Urges a human, the mount is sure to experience some notable personality changes. He'll be

much more easily distracted, possibly forgetful or reluctant to make firm decisions. Even the most dependable person, under the influence of wind, will become erratic and inconsistent, developing a desire to live and work on the upper floors of an apartment building or office. A fully Claimed mount will exhibit all these traits and more. He may possess powers that allow him to affect local winds, or even weather patterns on a small scale.

THE SHADOW SYLLABUS: A RIDDEN SCENARIO

The following is a brief collection of related events and characters that may be useful in designing an encounter with the Ridden. Storytellers should, of course, adapt the ideas to their own players and plots to make a good fit. As it stands, the scenario is best suited to beginning players and characters, but complications can easily be added.

THE SETTING AND DRAMATIS PERSONAE

Ideally, this scenario occurs in a town or large rural area where more than one pack lives, perhaps in competition for territory or resources. Maybe they're not at each other's throats on a day-to-day basis, but things get notably tense at times. The Forsaken have been in the geographic area for a number of generations, and it's known to be a place of strange spiritual emanations. There are sure to be a few loci around of good significance, and some that the Forsaken have lost track of.

Perhaps the worst kind of enemy is one that's unknown, and this is what the werewolves here are facing. On the surface, Mr. Quentin Matthews seemed a normal kind of guy, at least until recently. He's a local magistrate and fairly good at his job. He and his wife Bonnie appeared happy; their kids were in college, so life was uncomplicated. Then life went haywire for Quentin. When Bonnie got cancer and died after all the treatments failed, Quentin became a little nuts. In a town already close to the otherworlds, it's not so hard for a malevolent spirit to hear the rants and raves of a grieving man. One of these spirits, a creature of cunning and cruelty, found it quite easy to escape the chaos of the Shadow and slip into Quentin's soul, effectively turning him into a *hithisu*. Unfortunately for everyone, this lesser Jagglings was once part of a brood belonging to an ancient and incredibly malevolent creature, known only as Langban to its worshippers. It was banished like many others in the long-ago age of legends, but it ever seeks to return to earth.

Langban's nature is left to the Storyteller. It may be an unknown Maeljin from the First Wound, or perhaps one of the existent ones masquerading under another name. It may be something much more alien, most likely an idigam. In any case, Langban has a few

worshippers still scattered among the inhabitants of North America, and it would like more. Bound outside the physical world, it can only communicate through spirits such as the one possessing poor Quentin. This is enough, though, to exert its desires.

Thanks to the influence of the spirit, Quentin has spent the last few years collecting ancient tomes and artifacts related to piercing a hole between this world and the land of spirits, with the aim of summoning Langban. He's not by any means a venerable expert in the occult, but he's smart, curious and wealthy enough to make bribes in the right places. His collection of occult materials has swelled, and after his wife's death, he hasn't much to occupy his days off other than study and planning. His key research text is called *Syllabae Tenebrarum* (roughly translated as "Darkness Poetry"), and he has several translations of the text.

Quentin has also formed a tiny cult following, and he found that it wasn't too difficult; not all the locals spent Sunday mornings and Wednesday nights in respectable churches. Some came to Quentin for the potential wealth and power he promised; others just looked to belong. Storytellers can add more people to Quentin's group, but here are a couple of his closer associates (detailed write ups on these Storyteller characters follow at the end of the scenario):

- Daniel Craddock, a small-time drug dealer.

Quentin sensed he'd be a good recruit after seeing him in court and appraising his potential. Craddock is a decent shot and knife-fighter and has taught his associates the basics as well.

- Ted Floyd, a 16-year-old geek. A definite misfit, Ted's easily manipulated and a genius with computers. He thinks the cult stuff is cool and doesn't have the sense to realize that it's not as fake as he believes.

- Mary Bannion, a smart, but unattractive, hanger-on. She's in this to please Quentin and is in over her head. She has some interest in what she calls 'witchcraft.'

THE SETUP

Several of Quentin's texts, as well as some occult contacts, have directed him to some rituals that are supposed to, first, create a path from the Shadow into the physical world and, second, bring Langban onto the path. Storytellers can detail the other steps in the rituals as needed, if interested in extending the story. But the first and most important step in a couple variations of the ritual (and the one that affects the player characters directly) is the need to sacrifice a werewolf to summon Langban back to this reality. Quentin has honed and used his Unseen Sense Merit (see character stats) and has become aware that it's true that there are wolves who walk like men, and even that some live

in the local area. But he's not completely stupid: he realizes that capturing and killing one is a monumental feat. As such, he's done some basic folkloric research and has on hand several useful items (at least he thinks they'll be useful): silver bullets, aconite, garlic, attar of roses, iron filings and other miscellaneous apotropaic objects.

The troupe's characters get brought in at this point, even if they're not aware of it. Quentin has targeted one of them to be his sacrifice. If this is an introductory game, designed to bring the pack together, the best choice for the sacrifice would probably be one who hasn't yet gone through the Change. The targeted character should get the sense that someone is watching them; Storytellers can also emphasize that a lot of weird things have been happening to the werewolf-to-be. Maybe milk curdles at breakfast, or the television set speaks in an unknown language. Whatever the events, the character should already be on edge. Probably at least one faction of Uratha has been watching him, and finally, at some point, they'll initiate biting the newcomer and waiting for the Change to occur. Quentin doesn't know enough about werewolves to understand the concept of First Change clearly, but when he gets wind of the bite, he will jump to the conclusion that the person "newly infected with lycanthropy" would make an easier target. Quentin and his cronies will make at least one attempt to kidnap the freshly blooded character before the First Change, and, if the attempt is unsuccessful, they'll try to cover their tracks. If the new werewolf is a loner, so much the better. If the attempt at capture is unsuccessful, this incident is certainly a good reason to bring the neophyte right into the arms of the other characters who've been watching. If Quentin's attempt at kidnapping is successful, maybe that's a good time for observant characters to confront the occultist and his gang directly. Whether or not the new character goes through the First Change during or after the kidnapping attempt is up to the Storyteller — use whatever resolution works best for the drama and the story.

If the kidnap victim is already a knowing and savvy werewolf, Quentin's attempt should be a wakeup call for her and the pack. Someone in the local area is overreaching his bounds and has to be stopped. Should other packs be informed? That's up to the characters, but it could be an intriguing chance for interaction with other werewolves, friendly or not. The pack should, in the course of their investigation, realize that Quentin isn't acting alone: they'll need to stop all his cronies to prevent the summoning of Langban. Should the pack slay Quentin, it's quite possible the Urging spirit will jump into someone else, such as Mary; she'd definitely be open to the idea of having more power (though the spirit might do more than merely Urge her).

If he can't get his werewolf to be a sacrifice, Quentin has a backup plan. He gets Ted to secure a girl from the high school to sacrifice in a ritual hanging. Several of Quentin's texts describe this as an acceptable, albeit substandard, method of creating a "thread" for Langban to follow from the deep Shadow. Ted may have some trouble convincing a girl to come home with him, but he'll offer to change her grades on his computer (and he knows enough to realize which candidate would jump at this chance). As it happens, the girl will be Hayley Morris, who is trying to be nice to this poor geek and get something for herself to boot. She's a junior, desperate to keep her grades up and get into a good school with a scholarship, but she's failing trig. Ted could be the answer to her prayers, since he's offered to change her F to a C (hey, it's better than nothing). Once at his home, Ted does play around on the computer; then, he invites Hayley to take a look. Ted seizes this change to hit her on the head with a brick paperweight. Hayley is badly injured, with a skull fracture and concussion, but alive — for the time being.

Whether it's a werewolf victim (Changed or not) or the unfortunate Hayley, Quentin has set the stage for the sacrifice to open a gate in the old elementary school gymnasium for Langban, on the next full moon. The building's slated to be demolished, which makes it perfect for Quentin's purposes. The gym walls have been painted with various symbols in chicken and pig blood. A rope is suspended over one of the old steel girders, and the noose wrapped around the victim's neck (Hayley or any other). The central floor is decorated with arcane markings and circles, in keeping with Quentin's texts and readings about bringing Langban to this reality.

Hopefully the pack will find out what's going on before the ritual is completed; they've probably followed the scent of the kidnapped werewolf, if that's the case, or they may read or hear about a missing girl (Hayley) from the local news media. Clues to where the ritual might take place include the scent of blood (from the slaughtered animals), a brief note in the same news announcement about the demolition of the school or whatever gives the players a hint where to go. The strangulation of the sacrifice isn't particularly fast; it takes about five full minutes to complete. That's an eternity of pain and suffering if the victim is conscious, but should give the pack time to attack and stop Quentin and his fellow occultists. Even after the ritual is complete, it takes a couple of hours for Langban to tread the shadowed paths from its world to this one (see notes below).

All that's left at this point is the cleanup. Quentin and his occultists will fight, but they'll flee if things go badly. Players will likely want to track them down and

put an end to their mystical activities. Complications to consider include the local law enforcement, the unfortunate Hayley (alive or dead) and the physical evidence left after the fight.

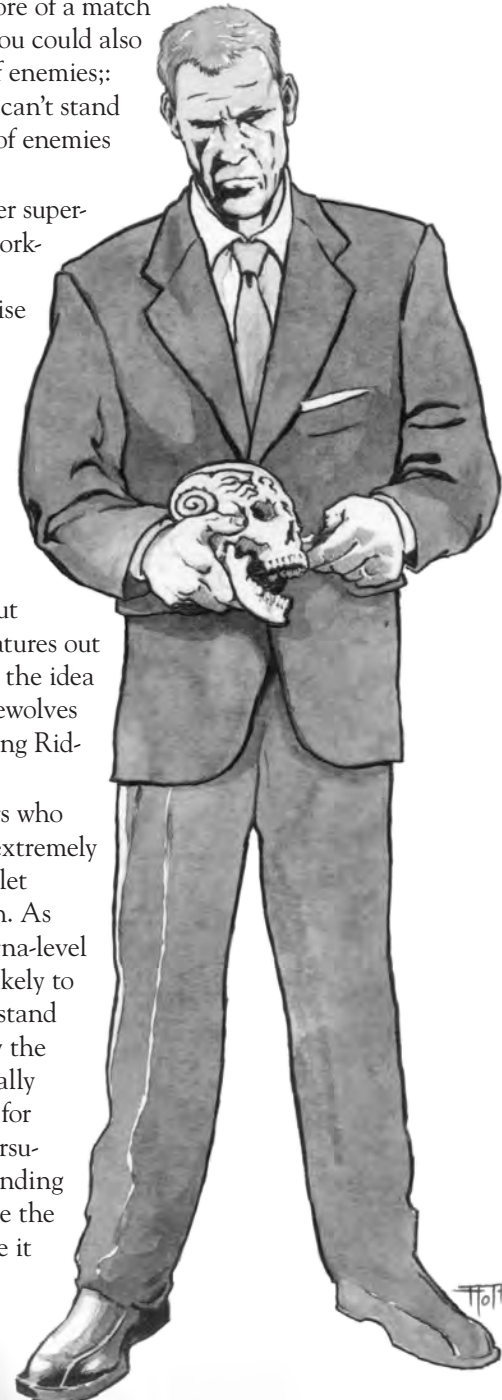
ALTERATIONS

This scenario is meant to be simple and straightforward. Quentin and his gang aren't insurmountable enemies, and a fairly intelligent group of players should be able to overcome them without too many problems. In fact, this is a story probably best for new characters and potentially new players. So, how can you spice things up for the more experienced ones?

First of all, Quentin, and perhaps even the rest of his group, could be transformed into bona fide Claimed, making them much more of a match for a pack of Uratha. You could also increase the number of enemies; even a tough werewolf can't stand against huge numbers of enemies indefinitely.

Possibly, some other supernatural creatures are working with Quentin — it would be an ugly surprise if one of his "inner circle" were suddenly to shed her skin and erupt into the chitinous battle form of an Azlu. Quentin may or may not know their true origins (in fact, he probably doesn't), but there are certainly creatures out there who would enjoy the idea of killing off a few werewolves and letting the unwitting Ridden take the fall for it.

Finally, Storytellers who want to throw out an extremely tough opponent could let Langban come through. As Langban is likely Incarna-level or so, a single pack is likely to get slaughtered if they stand and fight. If this is how the story ends, it should really be a jumping-off point for another story about pursuing Langban's ban or finding some other way to drive the monstrosity back where it came from.



STORYTELLER CHARACTER DETAILS

The following are characters for use in the scenario. Storytellers should feel free to change details and stats as needed, or add on a few more cronies if the player character pack is particularly tough. All of these characters save Quentin, who is a Spirit-Urged with training and experience, are designed as normal mortals.

QUENTIN MATTHEWS,
SPIRIT-URGED MAGISTRATE

Quote: "I see the world in a different light now."

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Occult 4, Politics 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Firearms 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 6

Morality: 3

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Virtue/Vice: Hope/Wrath

Merits: Allies 2, Contacts 2, Resources 4, Status 3, Unseen Sense 3

Essence: 15 (Maximum of 20, spirit is Rank 3)

mum of 20, spirit is Rank 3)

Quentin Matthews didn't start out life as a bad person. In fact, he was just and fair in his work. But when his wife died a painful and prolonged death, he quite simply lost his mind. Probably the kindest thing someone could do is put him out of his misery. Unfortunately, that's a lot easier said than done. Quentin's a tough opponent, and he is single-minded when it comes to fulfilling what he sees as a "sacred" duty, at the behest of the Urging spirit that preys on his mind.

Quentin is an aging but handsome man, around 55 years of age. He has fair skin and brown hair well-flecked with silver, and he generally dresses in nice, professional clothes. It's quite the odd juxtaposition to see him engaged in his secret occult activities when wearing \$600 suits.

Quentin as Duguthim

Should the spirit urging Quentin manage to merge with its host, the new *duguthim* is a much deadlier foe. The possessing spirit has the following attributes and abilities, which transfer to the host as per the rules described earlier in this chapter (i.e., the host's Willpower, Health and Initiative remain the same, unless the dots transferred from the spirit's Power, Finesse or Resistance change the host's Attributes):

Rank: 3 (Power 6, Finesse 5, Resistance 7)

Size: 2

Corpus: 16

Influence: Anger ...

Essence: 15 (Maximum of 20, spirit is Rank 3)

Synthesis: 2

Aspects: Natural Weaponry (claw 2 L, Hidden Power), Tough Skin 2 (Hidden Power), Sharp Senses 3

DANIEL CRADDOCK,
CHEAR TAUG

Quote: "Give me your fucking wallet."

Mental: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Occult 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Drive 1, Larceny 2, Firearms 3, Survival 1

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 4

Morality: 4

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

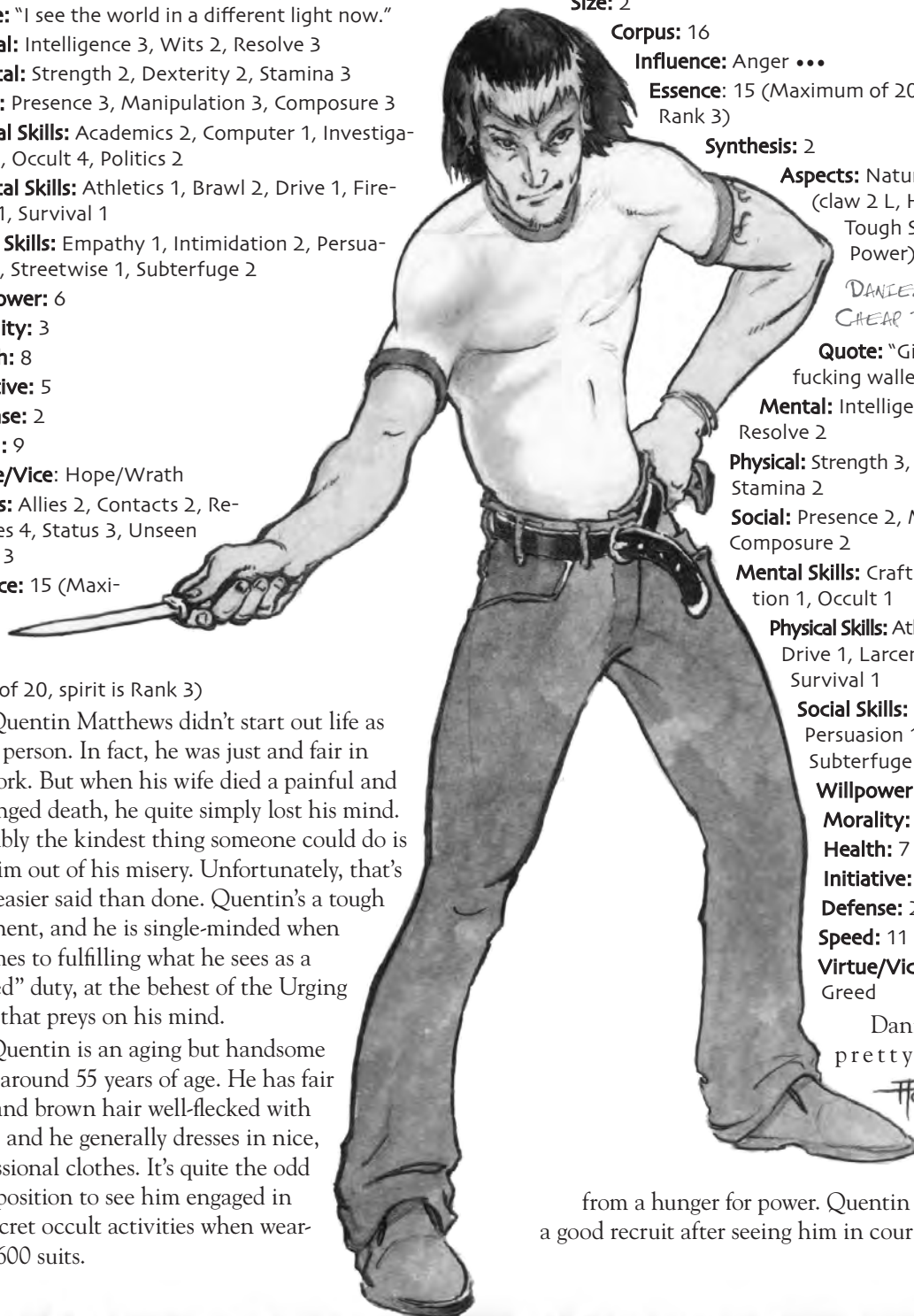
Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Virtue/Vice: Fortitude/Greed

Daniel Craddock is pretty much what he seems: a small-time drug dealer who suffers

from a hunger for power. Quentin sensed he'd be a good recruit after seeing him in court and noting



his potential. Daniel's biggest danger to the Uratha is that he has a clip of silver bullets for his Glock 23. He doesn't right out disbelieve Quentin, but he thinks his patron has a few screws loose. And who's Daniel to say? He's seen some pretty intense things under the influence of hallucinogens, and if Quentin believes in evil spirits and werewolves, who cares as long as he pays well?

Daniel is of mixed heritage, with dark, red-highlighted hair and tan skin; his preferred clothes are blue jeans and t-shirts. He likes living a comfortable life, and he enjoys the company of attractive women. He gets the occasional kick out of scaring Ted and Mary with "drug-induced fits" and waving around his switchblade.

Daniel as Ridden

Daniel, unlike his boss Quentin, is perhaps a more natural sort of host for a reactionary spirit, such as a pain-spirit. If one seeks him out, it will most likely want to merge and become a *duguthim* rather than a *hisithu*. Moreover, Daniel may well be a magnet for a more powerful spirit than the one that currently urges Quentin; the seasoned criminal has a cruel streak many spirits would find appealing.

Rank: 3 (Power 7, Finesse 8, Resistance 8)

Size: 3

Corpus: 11

Influence: Pain ••••

Essence: 12 (Maximum of 40, spirit is Rank 3)

Synthesis: 3

Potential Aspects: Blast, Drain, Living Fetter, Nest Jelly, Nightfall (Gift), Primal Fear (must have Presence 4 from transfer of Power), Rage Armor (Gift), Seek, Sense Weakness (Gift)

MARY BANNION,
CLUELESS WOULD-BE OCCULTIST

Quote: "Look, here's a spell for making yourself young forever!"

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Survival 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Subterfuge 1

Willpower: 4

Morality: 6

Health: 7

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Virtue/Vice: Prudence/Gluttony

Poor Mary is in way over her head. She started working with Quentin several years ago, before his wife died, as a home health aide and part-time secretary. Mary isn't particularly attractive physically, but she's quite intelligent and eager to get ahead quickly. For a while, she was a patient and receptive sounding board for Quentin, and, the more he came to trust her, the more info he spilled on his secret activities. Mary was fascinated, for dealings with spirits didn't sound dangerous to her; the power and potential that magic could have seemed like a dream come true. Mary's not too keen on the sacrificial stuff, but she's afraid that if she bolted now, Quentin or Daniel would kill her (and she's right on that score). So she's closing her eyes to the more squeamish details and hoping for a wad of power sooner than later.

Mary is about 45 years old, ghostly pale, and definitely on the chunky side, with graying blonde hair she wears in a tight ponytail. She wears loose-fitting and casual clothes, often in garish tropical colors with sequins and glitter.

Mary as Ridden

Mary isn't quite the beacon for a possessing or Urging spirit as Daniel, but she's certainly more of a willing target. She'd welcome a spirit, inasmuch as she understands the concept, if it gave her power and greater abilities.

Rank: 2 (Power 3, Finesse 2, Resistance 5)

Size: 5

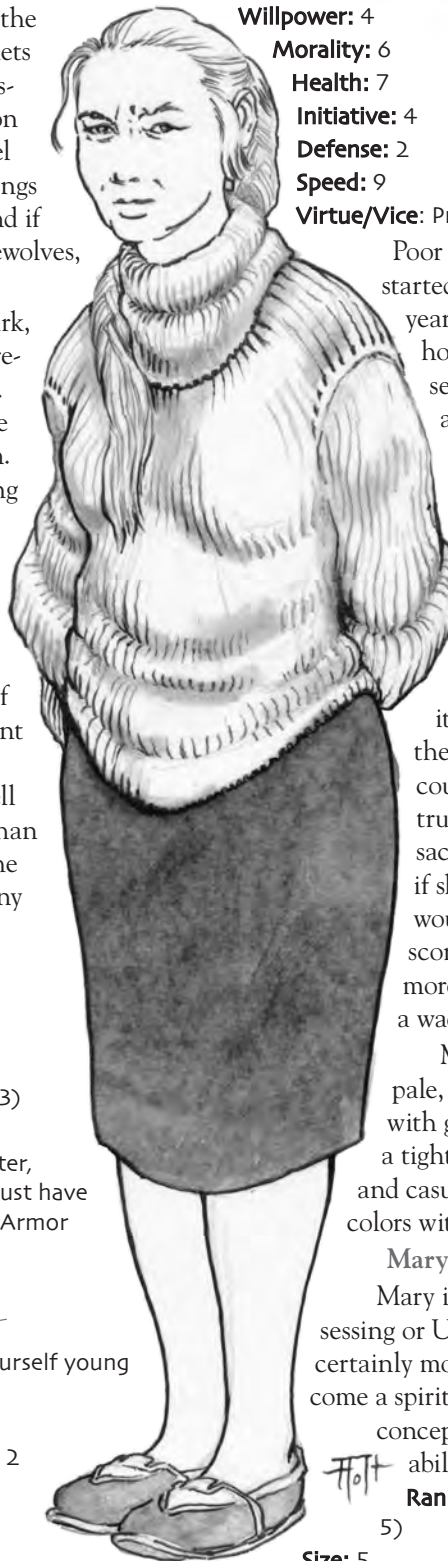
Corpus: 10

Influence: Gluttony ••

Essence: 9 (Maximum of 15, spirit is Rank 2)

Synthesis: 1

Potential Aspects: Camouflage, Drain, Tough Skin



TED FLOYD,
TEENAGE COMPUTER GEEK

Quote: "How much memory do I need for that program?"

Mental: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 4, Crafts 1, Investigation 1, Occult 2, Science 1

Physical Skills: Drive 1, Firearms 1, Larceny 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 8

Virtue/Vice: Faith/Envy

Ted may only be 16-years-old chronologically, but he's incredibly intelligent and has a keen memory. Too bad he's not got better skills at picking his friends. Ted attracted Quentin's attention while doing some part-time work for the magistrate's office: a virus had gotten into the system, and the local high school principal recommended to his friend the magistrate that this kid could clean it out faster than any commercial software. Within minutes, Ted had cleared everyone's computers, restored backup files and got business moving along right away. He even took pity on some of the staff and gave them a quick lesson on the fancy software none of them had figured out. Quentin realized that a social outcast like Ted, especially one who could hack into elite libraries and databases with occult materials, would be a tremendous

asset. It was no trouble to give Ted extra work from time to time. Mary and Ted bonded somewhat, especially in the face of their mutual dislike (and fear) of Daniel.

Ted is stocky, with mousy brown hair, and he doesn't quite seem to fit in his own body; his hands and feet seem too large for his height. He wears jeans or cutoffs and t-shirts most days.

Ted as Ridden

At first glance, Ted doesn't seem the sort of guy who would attract a spirit, least of all a violent one. He's not particularly rude or outspoken, and in fact, he's kind of shy and seemingly passive. However, like many teenagers, Ted has a pile of built-up fury and frustration — unlike normal kids, though, his is just a hair's breadth from being out of control. With the Urging of a spirit, Ted could be pushed into doing some brutal things. He's got a poor understanding of his own body, not to mention that of the opposite sex. In short, if left alone, Ted might fantasize about screwing some cheerleader, even to the point of violence, but he'd never take the step of making fantasy into reality. That's unfortunately not true if he becomes Ridden.

Rank: 3 (Power 4, Finesse 3, Resistance 3)

Size: 3

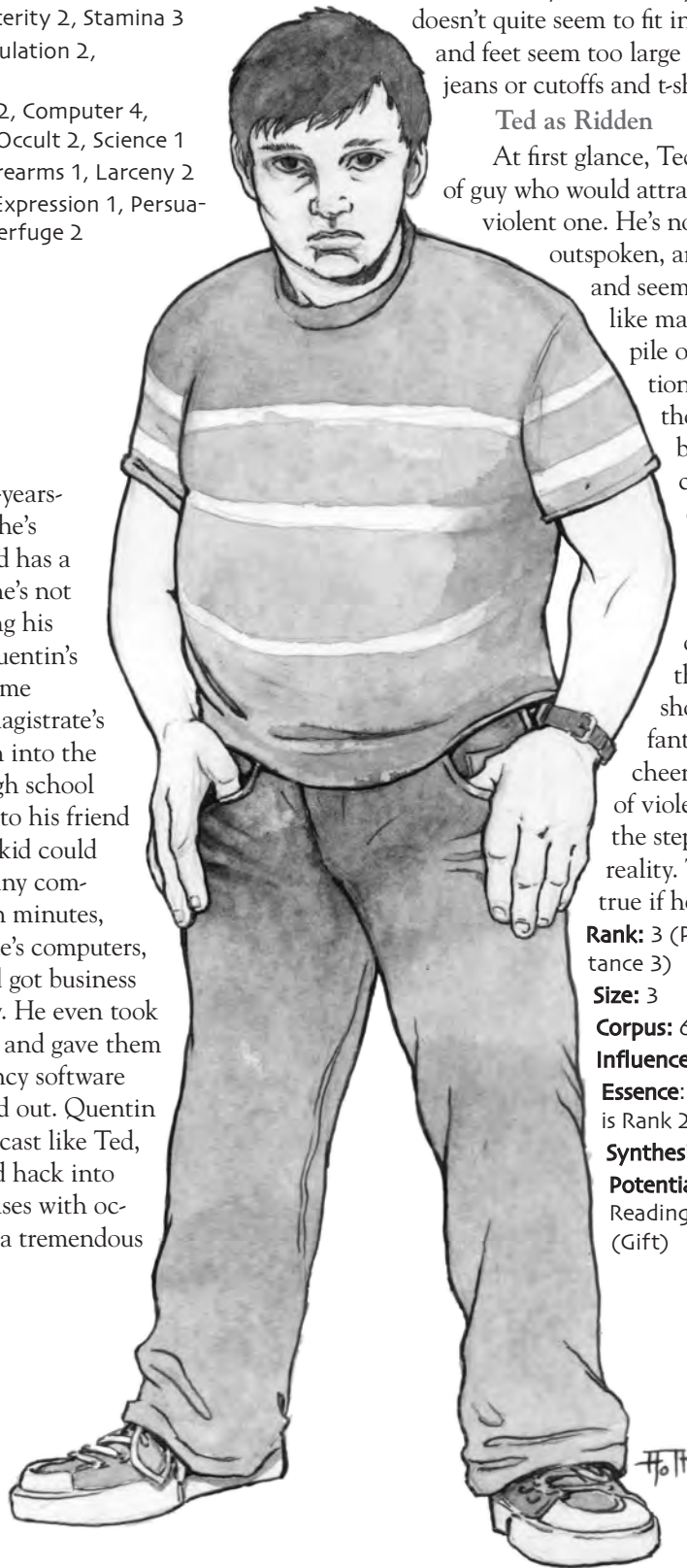
Corpus: 6

Influence: Violence •••

Essence: 12 (Maximum of 15, spirit is Rank 2)

Synthesis: 2

Potential Aspects: Drain, Mind Reading, Poison, Sense Weakness (Gift)







CHAPTER III

THE SWARMS WITHIN: THE HOSTS

"The test results are somewhat inconclusive. We'd like to keep Madelaine in Intensive Care for another few days. It might not be anything to worry about; we just want to make sure that the anomalies in the results aren't anything serious."

Greg McIntyre was a good doctor and a bad liar. He looked into the eyes of the girl's parents and could see just how he failed to scam them with his attempt at vague bullshit.

"Tell us what's wrong with our daughter, Dr. McIntyre. Please."

"What do you mean, 'inconclusive'?"

Greg swallowed audibly. "Well, the CAT scan revealed what appears to be a 'shadow' over her brain. We're having the equipment examined and the results re-checked, because we've never seen anything quite like it before."

The parents went visibly paler and clenched hands tightly. For a moment, Greg thought of his upcoming divorce and felt his irritation rise. "Look, the good news is that it doesn't appear to be a tumor." No shit, he thought; a cancer that size would've driven the girl crazy with pain by now, and she'd only been admitted with headaches a few hours ago.

"And the bad news, doctor?" the father asked.

"The bad news is that the other test results also came back inconclusive. The blood test shows impossibly high amounts of an unspecified contamination in her blood. The X-rays we took seem to indicate that there is some kind of unknown substance actually saturating her organs." He leafed through his notes as though he were dictating to his university class. "The shadow over her brain could be what is causing the pressure in her skull, but the CAT scan also revealed a significant amount of brain tissue is missing."

There was a long, long pause.

"What did you just say?"

Two floors above in the Intensive Care ward, a thumb-sized spider tasted a warm mouthful of brain and blood with greasy, slurping mandibles. The spider knew that its task was nearly completed, for the host's heart, blood and bones were already flooded with preservative fluid. Already the spider's small mind was swimming with alien images that had been the little girl's memories, and once the brain was finally consumed, the true imitation could begin.

"IT'S LONELY BEING A CANNIBAL. TOUGH MAKING FRIENDS."

— COLONEL HART, RAVENOUS

THE SHARTHAA

In all the World of Darkness, there are few things like the Hosts. They are creatures with clear ties to the spirit world, yet they have their origins in the material world. They take possession of human hosts, but slay their host bodies in the process, quite unlike the Ridden. They can walk in human form or take the shape of monstrous beasts, yet they are clearly nothing like the Uratha. They may hollow out and animate human bodies to serve their will, but they are not undead. They are, if legend is true, the remnants of profane demi-gods that once hunted the land, entities born out of a blasphemous act of self-preservation.

To the inexperienced or uninformed, the Hosts can appear as no more than strange monsters or powerful spirits that have propensity for creating unusual Spirit-Ridden. Many of their powers could well belong to other entities; an Azlu might even be mistaken for a vampire by an unsuspecting werewolf. This ambiguity, of course, presents interesting possibilities for introducing the Hosts into your chronicles. Lead your players into what seems (to all intents and purposes) to be an even more freakish than usual case of spirit possession. As the pack delve deeper in the mysteries of the possessed soul, they will come to realize that it is no ordinary *Hithimu* at work here, but instead it is one of the insidious Hosts. By the time the pack realizes their adversary's true nature, the *shartha* has become entrenched enough in its new body to resist any attempts at removal — resisting with lethal force and previously unseen, predatory supernatural powers.

Maintaining an aura of mystery around the Hosts is essential for their success, both in the sense of the game world and in the sense of a Storyteller's needs. Secrecy is one of the greatest weapons the Hosts have. They do not announce themselves when they enter a pack's territory, and they do not need to cluster around loci in the predictable fashion that spirits do.

Be sure to use that advantage in your games. The Hosts are sinister creatures that devote their murderous lives to unknowable causes, and should be depicted as such. This mysterious alien fanaticism, the idea of a cannibalistic hive mind that can hollow out a human skin and pretend to be a natural being,

is the truest horror of the Hosts. The fact they can steal people's bodies, eviscerate their souls and warp the corpses into bestial abominations is practically a bonus.

NEW TERMINOLOGY

Azarath: Evolved Azlu that have likely fused with a human host.

Halaku: The Crow Hosts.

Crawlers: Azlu in a less-evolved stage, still very much spiders in form and behavior (if not in size). Also, *luthazlu*.

Gnawers: Beshilu in their still-formative rat stages. Also, *nihiluth*.

Joining, the: The cannibalistic merger of multiple Host shards, or the merger of a Host with a human body.

Razilu: The Snake Hosts.

Rokhan: Evolved Beshilu; perhaps fused with human hosts.

Srizaku: The Locust Hosts.

AZLU: SPAWN OF THE MALEVOLENT HAG

The Azlu are known to the Uratha as the Spider Hosts. They are shards of Essence that take the shape of spiders, each one a piece of a dead goddess's broken soul.

THE LEGEND

Many malicious entities and creatures fell prey to Father Wolf's legendary crusade in stalking the horrors that spread chaos and death in their wake as they stalked across Pangaea. Foulest of these was the demon that legend calls *Zur Suhikath* — the Spinner-Hag.

Gigantic and bloated, the spider-demon hunted and killed with impunity and without remorse. Natural predators find a balance in the world; they kill when they must, they claim the territory they require and they eat what they need to survive. The Spinner-Hag gleefully defied this balance. The

demon lived a life of sensual indulgence and a slavish adherence to every one of her selfish whims. By the time Father Wolf took it upon himself to destroy her, the Spinner-Hag was corpulent with the blood and lives of a million Pangaeian creatures. Her sticky webs coated entire forests and mountain ranges as she selfishly claimed territory that she neither required nor maintained. Entire settlements were destroyed, whole regions devastated of life, as the malicious demon ate and ate and ate with nothing but joy at the madness and pain her passing inflicted on the lesser creatures of the world. Human and animal, spirit and demon: the Spinner-Hag devoured indiscriminately and with equal joy. She did, however, reserve a special love for the taste of the blood and flesh of the Uratha.

In a time of turmoil for the werewolves, as they prepared to confront and murder their weakening alpha, Father Wolf felt the world itself trembling at the spider-demon's presence. Calling off the search for the elusive Plague King, Father Wolf bade his children farewell, not seeing the murder in their eyes, and howled a declaration of the Great Hunt.

Father Wolf ran tirelessly, endlessly across Pangaea in pursuit of the bloated nightmare. In the last days of his life, weaker than he had ever been as his power diminished, he ran the mightiest hunt in history, tracking the most dangerous prey. In his wake he left a trail of destroyed spider-silk palaces; he razed each of them with his own dulled claws and loose fangs. The Uratha, with no small pride, still name the final heroic duty of their doomed patron as the Twilight Hunt.

The Spinner-Hag heard tell of Father Wolf's chase. Cowardly to the core, she fled from the vengeance that hunted her. At first the demon believed her flight would be easy. It was known to all that the God of Wolves had grown ever weaker as he spread his seed and the werewolves grew in number. He was dispersing his power among his beloved children. So the Spinner-Hag left complicated traps of silk webs behind her at every turn, confident that her trapping skills would prove too much for even the greatest predator of Pangaea, especially in his weakened state.

She was wrong.

The first time Father Wolf caught her, the Wolf Lord interrupted the butchery of a human village. With the fury of the sun's heat he launched at her, his claws embedding savagely deep in her fatty abdomen. With his talons set in her corpulent flesh, the God of Wolves tore massive chunks from her body with his huge snapping jaws. The Spinner-Hag's armored chitin hide was thin and brittle from so many years of excess, and Father Wolf's fangs

broke the soft skin with ease, rending her apart as he clung to her back.

The Spinner-Hag reared and threw the mighty wolf from her back, and fled once more. This time, there was no vainglorious setting of traps or confidence at an eventual escape from nature's justice. The demon knew all too well that her life was coming to an end. And so, she birthed a plan that would allow her a chance at continuing her existence in some way: as both an attempt at immortality and as an ever-threatening vengeance against Father Wolf and his children, the delicious Uratha.

CONFLICTING TALES

Most of the Forsaken hold to the belief that the Spinner-Hag was a colossally powerful demon and ravaged Creation with her very existence, but there are always conflicting legends that seep down through the millennia. These stories tell different tales.

Some of these tales, held as ironclad truth by a significant minority of the Forsaken, speak of the Spinner-Hag as a cowardly creature that held an alliance with several other terrifying demons. Rather than an individual spree of slaughter and dominance, the Spider Queen of these tales held court over her sinister children alongside her consorts and companions in an alliance of evil intentions. Father Wolf did not attack these demons when the balance of Creation fell into instability: he attacked them with the First Pack long before such treachery against the worlds of flesh and shadow could ever occur.

Each of the demonic assemblage divided their souls among their own offspring, seeking a way to survive in immortality and escape from the Uratha until each "Host" was strong enough to seek revenge.

THE LAST CURSE

Father Wolf was not the only spirit that gave of itself to imbue his children with power. The Spinner-Hag took the lesson to heart, and imitated the feat as best she was able.

The gigantic demon laid eggs: ten thousand tiny, round, scarlet spirit-eggs, each no bigger than a pearl. The eggs lay atop mountains, under the surface of rivers, deep in the branches of colossal tress and hidden in the deep grasses of Pangaea's fields. Each of these tiny spirit-eggs contained a strand of the demon's essence; a shard of her own soul broken into

fragments as a gift of divinity and power for each of her ten thousand daughters.

Father Wolf tracked the injured, bleeding horror to the edge of a massive chasm. She faced him at the last, barely breathing from the loss of her soul, and managed only a single bite on the wolf's shoulder. There, the God of Wolves ripped the weakened, soulless Spinner-Hag apart.

Here the tale diverges. In the stories most Forsaken tell, the tale of the battle between Wolf and Hag ends here. But others — sometimes Pure, sometimes Bale Hounds — continue on with a legend that borders on blasphemy.

Drenched in viscous yellow blood from the murdered spider-demon, he stood stunned at how easily the nightmarish creature had died. As he ran back to his children, heeding their sudden and urgent call, he was unaware of the single tiny bite wound on his shoulder. He was equally unaware of the venom that coursed through his blood, pulsing through his body with every beat of his mighty heart.

In the days of running that followed, the God of Wolves grew weaker and weaker. The venom of the Spinner-Hag's bite was not enough to kill such a powerful creature as Father Wolf, even in his reduced state, but his limbs grew slow and stiff with the onset of near-paralysis. He managed to return to his werewolf children and their angry squabbles over his weakness as Lord of the Border Marches and alpha of the First Pack.

The final days of Pangaea were dark days indeed. Father Wolf and the increasingly divided First Pack ventured out to confront the Plague King once again, and this time the Great Hunt ended in the slaughter of the cowardly, malignant spirit. By this time, the venom in Father Wolf's blood had taken full effect, and the God of Wolves was disorientated and weakened beyond measure.

His children did not notice the difference between his unnatural weakness and the fact that their patron had been losing strength with the breeding of his progeny. They saw that Father Wolf was weaker than ever, and they struck at him with murder in their hearts.

The Uratha unleashed their fury in fatal defiance of their patron's dominance. His spirit ban forbade bringing harm to his beloved children, and the insidious poison in his blood made flight impossible. Father Wolf fell to the last curse of a dead demon, the apparent foolishness of his own generosity and, above all, the treachery of his children.

The Forsaken do not believe this story, and with good reason — it questions whether or not it was Fa-

ther Wolf's time to die. It implies that it was not his ban that was his weakness, but simply a curse. The Forsaken cannot afford to believe that they did not have the right to slay Father Wolf, because if they do not have the right to police the spirit world — then who does? And who will do it?

But the legend persists, and is often used as a weapon by those who seek to undermine the Tribes of the Moon with doubt. Just as the Forsaken don't wish to believe this story, the Pure and Bale Hounds who hear it *do* want to believe it.

Is the story itself true? No werewolf knows. In the end, it's a question of faith.

TEN THOUSAND DAUGHTERS

The birth of the Gauntlet is an event much debated in the legends of the Uratha. Some good came of it, depending on your perspective — so did much ill. And lore has it that part of that ill was the birth of the Azlu.

With the unleashing of such incredible force in the world as Pangaea was destroyed, the spirit-eggs of the slain *Zur Suhikath* were trapped in the physical realm when the worlds divided. As the Gauntlet was born in a blast of incredible spiritual power, waves of energy coursed across the two worlds. In this onrushing wave, the spirit-eggs ripened, matured and burst.

The Ten Thousand Daughters were born in a storm of magic. Immortal, ageless, the spirit-children of the Spinner-Hag crawled into the physical world. Ten thousand spiders emerged from the ruptured spirit-eggs. Each tiny egg, swollen to the size of an eyeball with the surge of spiritual power from the rise of the Gauntlet, hatched a fleshy spider the size of a baby's fist. The spiders were easy meals for passing predators in these first hours, but the Spinner-Hag had hidden her eggs in many places, and the vast majority of her children survived without even being noticed by any creatures of the physical realm.



“DID YOU SAY... BURST?”

The spirit-eggs that contained the souls of the Ten Thousand Daughters did not hatch in the conventional, natural manner. Made of a fleshy, blood-filled covering of blubber and skin, the little eggs swelled and bulged as the energies of the Fall ravaged across the two worlds. Once the spiders within the spirit-eggs reached their hastened maturity, assisted by the unleashed magic of the Gauntlet's rise, the fleshy sacs could no longer contain the fully formed creatures within. First, the sheer size of the spider threatened the integrity of its tiny egg sac, and hairline rents split open in the fatty flesh of the egg. These

rents widened as the spider began to struggle and seek freedom, and were soon pulled apart into larger rips that wept blood and fluids.

When the spider's struggles finally managed to tear the flesh of the cocoon, the bloody ichor within the egg had mostly dribbled out and run in rivulets out of the splits in the ruined sac. As the spider emerged from the discarded spirit-egg, the creature's soft flesh tingles in contact with the air of the physical realm.

However, not all of the Spinner-Hag's eggs hatched during the rise of the Gauntlet. If the story of the Gauntlet's rise hatching its eggs is true, then some of the eggs must have been sheltered from the rush of energy, and have lain dormant throughout the years. From time to time, an unsuspecting person finds one of these scarlet pearls, often keeping the strange but beautiful thing and even coveting it, only for it to quietly hatch in the night when suffused with enough attention.



Upon hatching, the daughter-spiders were consumed with conflicting desires. The instinct to possess and create more powerful hosts was at the fore of the spiders' simple minds. Though they knew not why, also prominent in their thoughts was the unceasing desire to weave their inherent magic into the newborn Gauntlet, rendering it ever thicker. Above both of these drives was one fear, one image, one vision of terror: the God of Wolves.

The Spinner-Hag was a cowardly demon despite her power. As she fled from Father Wolf's righteous anger and laid her eggs, each shard of her soul that she placed into the fleshy sacs was tainted by one overriding emotion: her own terror. This fear, this terror at her imminent death under the fangs and claws of the highest wolf, was imprinted into the very soul-shards of her children.

Keenly aware that the Uratha were populous and powerful, the Azlu retreated into the dark places of the world, scuttling into hiding and biding their time. They waited, they grew stronger, and their primal fear warped into a mockery of true emotion, giving the Azlu hearts that could feel nothing but cowardice and an unequalled hate for all things.

THE TIME OF MAN

Though the legend of *Zur Suhikath* is faded and distant, with almost as many variations to its tale as there are storytellers, the doings of the Azlu through recorded history are slightly easier to second-guess. There are many tales of how the Spider Hosts began

to hide among humanity, and a few common threads emerge.

As humans began to dominate the world, they raised vast cities — first of wood and stone, then of concrete and steel. They harvested the world's resources and treasures, and threatened the very world's soul when they harnessed the power of the sun in nuclear weapons of war.

The Spider Hosts emerged from hiding when the ruling power of humanity became assured. Many Azlu had sought out others of their kind in order to merge and Jjoin: the resulting creatures were larger and possessed greater intelligence. Some Spider Hosts remained in their miniscule "birth" forms, though the joining of two Azlu always created a single spider, more developed in both size and intelligence. While an Azlu that possessed a single shard of the Spinner-Hag's soul would not grow much larger than a human hand, those that sought each other out and joined together merged into something greater and much more dangerous. When a powerful Azlu bonded its spirit with a human, the resulting creature was a mighty spider-human hybrid — what the Azlu call the Azarath.

The People took note of such dangerous parasites lurking in the dark places both in flesh and spirit. While the largest and most intelligent Azlu were capable of confronting the Uratha hunters that tracked them down, many smaller Spider Hosts sought to hide from the werewolves by guile. They entered the sleeping bodies of men and women through the ears, nose or mouth, and over the course of a few hours, ate the human's brain and secreted a preservative fluid into the bloodstream. The former allowed the Spider Host to absorb the human's memories and knowledge, while controlling the body like a puppet-master. The latter preserved the body at the exact moment between life and death, allowing the Azlu to hide within the dead human without revealing signs of decay.

THE WEAKEST AZLU

Only the smallest and weakest of the Azlu were able to control humans in such a manner, as only the weakest Spider Hosts were small enough to effectively squeeze inside a person's body without significant assistance. Such "possession" is an imperfect state, for the controlling Azlu has a fragile grasp of the human host's memories. In addition, both the memories and the body itself begin to decompose after approximately one lunar cycle, as even the preserving fluids dilute and thin under the force of resisting the body's natural decay. The Azlu's inhuman consciousness is ill-equipped to comprehend human emotion

and memory, but the Spider Host usually takes great pleasure in “playing the part” of a human while furthering its own ends.

It is a hideous biological parody of a true spirit’s bonding. However, this grotesque bonding is not simply a physical matter of entering the skull and digesting the brain. The process also involves a channeling of Essence similar to a Ridden possession, but without the accompanying loss of corporeal form. The bonded Azlu remains whole in body, though has a level of control that mirrors the most powerful and dominant forms of spirit-Ridden possession.



MEDICAL SCIENCE

Can modern medicine detect the presence of an Azlu inside the human body? The answer is yes, but not with anything like a clear-cut diagnosis. Scans, X-rays and certain tests will show the presence of an alien substance inside a person’s organs and bloodstream, but nothing will reveal the true nature of the mystical fluid that has been secreted throughout the body. The spider itself will be a small, dark shadow over the brain in the case of most CAT scans and tests that display brain activity. The actual consumption of the brain takes less than a day, and feels akin to a throbbing migraine: extremely painful and eventually causing debilitating agony in the victim. Aspirin and other painkillers do in fact help keep the pain at a low ebb, with the unfortunate result that an Azlu’s victim usually puts off a trip to the doctor until it’s far too late.

Once the Azlu has taken control of the now-dead host, it becomes increasingly difficult to hide the body’s changes. Essentially, the host is now a walking corpse — the inner organs and blood are saturated with preservative fluids and with a monstrous spider in its skull instead of a brain. The Azlu itself must maintain the body’s basic functions: keeping the heart beating and the lungs moving through constant concentration. Accordingly, when the Azlu controller is occupied or otherwise distracted, it is not uncommon for the human host to cease breathing or lack a heartbeat. It goes almost without saying that should a human host be medically examined at such a time, the diagnosis will reveal the host is little more than a corpse. Even so, no human analysis can ever detect the faint strains of Essence that course through the body, temporarily preserving the body at the point between life and death. The Azlu are clever enough to avoid humans cunning enough to potentially detect their ruse if they can help it at all.

The weakest of the Azlu thrived by hiding within the bodies of humans. Once the dangers of the Uratha hunts were past, most of these pathetic Spider Hosts crawled from the dead bodies and resumed their endless dutiful desire to weave and strengthen the Gauntlet. The most cowardly remained within the heads of humans, moving from one host to the next when their most recent body began to feel the onset of decay. While the Azlu are capable of animating a corpse until all muscle and organ flesh has completely rotted away, such a display is not viable as a method of concealment. The Azlu that moved from body to body over the centuries sacrificed personal power for the safety that comes with such efficient hiding places.

THE STRONGEST AZLU

The more powerful Azlu did not need to hide from the Uratha. Though they too suffered the wracking fear of the Great Wolf’s vengeance, the Spider Hosts that had gathered and merged with the shards of several spirit-eggs were physical rivals to the werewolves that came hunting. These Azlu had, upon hatching, merged with others of their kind and had exponentially increased in strength and intelligence.

Once they had grown as large as their natural evolution allowed, they preyed upon humans, using living men and women as nothing more than biological enhancements. They bonded with humans and entered a cocooning state. The creatures that emerged from the cocoons after a period of metamorphosis were the first Azarath hybrids. For the strongest Azlu, this has ever been the way of further evolution once the birth form has been discarded.

With their heightened power, the Azarath weaved the Gauntlet thicker. When the Uratha tracked these menaces, the werewolves were confronted by monstrous hybrid creatures the size of horses that lashed out with eviscerating limbs made of jagged bone, and trilled through fangs that dripped with paralyzing venom. Some Azarath were like hideous arachnid centaurs, half bloated spider and half many-armed human, while others remained ostensibly human, though with many eyes and a skin that hardened to a coating of insect-like chitin. The variety of these creatures is nearly endless.



AZLU WITHIN HUMAN HISTORY

Throughout human history, the Azlu have hidden within many civilizations and cultures that have risen and fallen. As they gain in intelligence, the Spider Hosts’ cowardice, spite and hate are distilled into a powerful cruelty that matches

their bloodthirst. Though the desire to inflict pain is by no means an instinct hardwired into the race in the same way as the drive to thicken the Gauntlet, the Azlu nonetheless have always been prone to developing personality traits of the worst sort.

Strange carvings in obscure Aztec temples hint at terrible spider-demons that had to be appeased with sacrifice. Odd bits of Phoenician jewelry depict a spider motif where ordinarily there would seem to be no cultural identification with the spider. Obscure texts from Imperial Rome tell of places where entire barbarian towns had to be put to the sword, for blasphemous veneration of crawling vermin. Ancient Chinese paintings show denizens of Hell with surprising similarity to the Spider Hosts. Over the years, the legends of the spider-demons have grown increasingly subtle by necessity — but the Azlu still have much to gain from association with humans, and they will never be too far from civilization.

MODERN URATHA & AZLU MYTHS

The birth of the Azlu and the life of their demonic patron are stories that remain vague in the People's histories. If a pack makes concerted efforts to learn all they can of the Spider Hosts' existence over

the millennia, they can uncover many of the "truths" laid out in this chapter. The Cahalith are celebrated storytellers, and it is easy to see how the tale of a demonic spider and her sinister daughters would make excellent telling. However, the fact remains that not all of the truth is known. Even the stories that are told of the Spinner-Hag tell much of her brutish, gleeful domination of the lesser creatures of Pangaea, but little of her reasons for the demon behaving as she did. The Azlu are renowned for their endless weaving of Essence into the barrier between the worlds, making it ever thicker and harder to cross. Almost nothing is said of why they do this, only that they do: they weave as if they have no choice. Why are these glaring discrepancies left in such a classic story of both Pangaeian history and a still-running battle against hated enemies? What do you do if your players wish to explore these curiosities in the hope of understanding the Azlu in their territory better?

The Uratha don't know the answers. They toy with speculation and conjecture, but no werewolf can really get into an Azlu's head (or cephalothorax) to really understand why they behave as they do. The Beshilu, in their crazed, psychotic meddling, are somewhat easier to predict. They presumably act to bring the Realm into hell so they can re-form into the Plague King, and they hiss and spit invectives to that effect at their werewolf foes as they fight or flee.



The Azlu's actions are considerably more shrouded in doubt.

But even the Azlu themselves don't fully understand all their own impulses. Many are too primal and unintelligent to even realize that their species lacks this generational chasm in lore. Those Azlu that gather the shards of The Spinner-Hag's soul and evolve into mightier Hosts might be capable of realizing the missing lore of their kind. However, tellingly, it doesn't seem to occur to the alien perceptions of the Azlu to care. It means nothing to them that the Spinner-Hag was universally viewed as an evil demon. It means nothing that they do not know the reason they must always work to thicken the Gauntlet. It means nothing that the Forsaken hunt them for reasons the werewolves believe are well-founded in mercy and justice.

The Azlu have all the truth they need. They are the daughters of a mighty demon, and are compelled by the method of their birth to solidify the barrier between the Two Worlds. Will many millions of creatures and living things die if they are separated from their spirit-halves? Yes. Will an impenetrable Gauntlet seal off the Shadow, potentially destroying it completely just as a terrestrial shadow cannot exist without light? Probably. Do the Azlu care about these possibilities? *Not even a little.*

The Azlu trust that they will remain unaffected by such massive world-shaking changes, and they also believe that their lives would probably be significantly easier. They could then concentrate on indulging in the pleasures of feeding and glorying in dominating lesser, weaker creatures, much as the Spinner-Hag once did.

Like eating and breathing for humans, this is simply the way they live and function. There is no question of an Azlu "defecting" from this way of life because it never will, and never can, happen. The Azlu weave and kill because they must, they can and they *want to*. Their spirit-driven intelligences can never encompass a reason to cease their lives and duties.

A PARASITIC EXISTENCE

The Forsaken know only conflicting tales regarding the Azlu, who are among the fiercest and most malicious enemies the werewolves encounter in their duties. Foremost of note, it is well-known that the Spider Hosts often choose to steal the lives of humans, killing them and using their bodies as either sanctuary from the hunting Uratha, or as a new and improved shell to hold their vital souls.

The Azlu are complicated creatures to define. Born as the spirit-offspring of a dead horror, the

daughters of the Spinner-Hag defy the traditional boundaries of spiritual and physical creatures. Some spirits can manifest in the physical realm, projecting their Essence through the Gauntlet to appear solid and whole in the human world. The Azlu, however, are innately tied to the physical realm, and require no such concentration of Essence. They are born as manifested spirits: literally creatures on Earth that exist outside the laws of spiritual or physical nature. Because the Azlu do not live as true spirits do, they are difficult to detect and combat along the same lines. If a spider-spirit possessed a human to create one of the Ridden, then the Azlu would be no more than powerful spirits capable of producing equally powerful *duguthim*.

The Spider Hosts are not Ridden, however. When the weaker Azlu enter a human for possession, they destroy the host's very being and kill the human from the inside, sustaining the fresh corpse with its innate Essence and using it like a puppet. When the stronger Azlu actually Join with a human, the resulting Azarath hybrid is a devastating fusion of human and demonic spider features. Such a gestalt is not mere control, and it is certainly not simple possession: it is nothing short of the murder of a person and the theft of her body to enhance the Azlu's own. The Azlu view things differently, of course — no more than a biological upgrade, if you will.

The Azlu have no society in the conventional sense. The lowliest of the Spider Hosts has only the most instinctive, primal intelligence. It knows it must hide and remain safe from the coming of the Great Wolf, and that it must weave its magic into the Gauntlet to strengthen the spiritual barrier. On some level, all Azlu feel the temptation and urge to find others of their kind in order to merge and grow stronger. But even this drive is nothing akin to the instinctual urges to spin webs and catch prey, to spin the Gauntlet into a thicker protective barrier or to hide from the jaws of the Uratha.

When two or more Azlu do give in to the desire to find other Spider Hosts, the result is a physical and spiritual merging, known as the Joining. This Joining occurs when one of the Azlu kills and manages to eat the other, thus absorbing its soul-shard and power. In rare cases, several Azlu will work together in a given location and dwell together, but never merge. While any *shartha* are capable of coexisting in this manner, it is usually the Beshilu that more willingly live in such a manner, rather than the fiercely competitive Azlu.

The vast majority seek to develop their bodies by fighting with their sister-spiders, thus bringing the shards of the Spinner-Hag's broken soul ever more

whole. Upon eating another Azlu, the Joining warps and swells into a spider of increased size and magical power, and the sparks of intelligence within its mind burn brighter. For the Azlu's first Joining, this means that the spider begins to reason and grow aware of more than the instinctive urges that are ever-present within its mind. As the Azlu continues to consume others, she gains greater understanding of the world around her, absorbing experiences, perceptions and memories of each spider that has Joined her growing form.

THE JOINING

The Joining is the physical and spiritual merging that happens when one Host, usually in animal form, cannibalizes another of the same sort. The Azlu are particularly prone to devouring one another if they can manage it, and thus are the most likely to undergo the Joining whenever possible. This process brings several of the Spinner-Hag's soul-shards together, and the result is a larger, more powerful Azlu that has the cumulative memories and experiences of those that Joined. With the merging also comes an increase in size and strength, and access to more powerful Aspects.

Once a given Azlu has gathered several soul-shards by the consumption of three or four rival spiders, the Host becomes actively intelligent and able to reason, evolving from the cunning and instinctive thought processes that the weakest Azlu possess.

CRAWLERS (LUTHAZLU)

The un-evolved Spider Hosts, known as "Crawlers" or the *luthazlu*, are cowardly, cunning monsters that resemble slightly aberrant spiders — they may be a little fleshier than truly mundane spiders, have one or two legs too few or too many, or be adorned with peculiar markings. Most Crawlers eat mundane spiders as a primary source of prey, and this habit helps them to blend in; the more ordinary spiders an Azlu eats, the more easily its form can pass for a natural spider. At this stage of evolution the Spider Host has absorbed few or no other Azlu, and lacks the intelligence and Aspects of more-evolved Spider Hosts. The *luthazlu* spend their immortality in slavish adherence to their inner drives: they weave their webs into the Gauntlet, they hide from the sight and senses of the Uratha hunters and they are absorbed in the echo of the Spinner-Hag's hatred for all things.

NATURAL FORM

Crawlers vary only modestly in size. The weakest and those who have absorbed no other Azlu are no larger than a baby mouse. The *luthazlu* that have cannibalized a limited number of others are still only

rarely larger than a human hand. Once they grow larger by absorbing other Azlu, they are technically Azarath without human hosts. Few Azlu desire to remain as such when a more... subtle option is available.

The "spiders" themselves can vary greatly in appearance. While some Crawlers are protected by an exoskeleton shell of coal-colored chitin, many — particularly those that have not devoured a number of ordinary spiders to feed themselves — are left exposed with their fleshy bodies unprotected. Even at this stage, the perceptive observer can discern that these spider-like creatures are of unearthly origin. Many have one individual demonic distinction that sets them apart from natural arachnids, a trace of the Spinner-Hag's warped features. It may be one or a few legs too many, a swollen abdomen with a barbed tip vaguely like a scorpion's tail or additional eyes that allow for an incredible field of vision.

POSSESSION

The *luthazlu* are not yet capable of merging with a human to create a Azarath hybrid. For a Crawler to escape death at the claws of the Forsaken, there is often no option other than to hide. These Azlu, weak in so many ways, have a malevolent and sinister method of taking refuge.

While certain spirits bond with a human to create one of the Spirit-Ridden, the Azlu have a unique spiritual physiology that makes them incapable of truly imitating this bond. The *luthazlu* mimic such possession by physically entering a human host and killing the person from the inside.

The Azlu must enter the host-to-be by using its innate supernatural powers, shrinking down to a tiny size. It chooses a host, then enters the human through the ears, nose or mouth. The miniscule spider races through the skull and towards the brain. Upon arrival, the spider begins to eat the brain, mystically digesting the host's memories along with the soft brain tissue. All the while, the tiny spider secretes streams of preserving fluid from its spinnerets. This fluid is carried around the body through the veins, saturating the blood, bones and the heart of the dying human in this preserving secretion.

The process takes approximately two to six hours. For the duration, the host suffers severe headaches akin to migraines, and a distinct heavy numbness in her limbs. Once a significant portion of brain tissue has been eaten, the body can no longer sustain itself and the human dies. At this point, the memory-filled spiders re-form within the skull to their natural shape; depending on the size of the Azlu's natural form, she can be incredibly uncomfortable in



the confines of the human skull. With the mystical preservative fluid coursing through the body and the spider saturated with the human's memories and intelligence, the Azlu is able to manipulate the corpse as though it were a complicated puppet. She can speak the host's language through the corpse's lips, remember events from the dead human's childhood and move the body as though it were her own.

CHANGES IN THE HOST

The imitation is not perfect. The memories that surface in the Azlu's mind are unreliable, especially if the Spider Host has possessed several humans in this manner, as the storm of mixed human memories can be confusing to the alien Azlu. Events and images that mean little to the minds of the Azlu are interpreted as best they can be, and few but the human host's closest friends and relatives will recognize the changes in the person.

The Azlu sometimes experiences gaps in the host's memories that can create difficulties when dealing with other humans — from forgetting what the human did the day before to the name and identity of a childhood friend. Many Azlu are capable of feigning illness or head injuries to account for such lapses, but perceptive observers may notice something is wrong with the host. The heightened olfactory senses of canids and werewolves alike are unable to detect any unusual scent from the walking corpse

as long as the preservation holds. The fluid that has soaked into the bones and skin of the human host supernaturally preserves the body at the very moment of death.

While a medical diagnosis reveals an abnormally weak heartbeat and pulse, the possession will fool casual observers. The body also retains relatively warm skin and a temperature just within the bounds of normality. However, any biological processes such as sweating, eating, digestion and reproduction are severely impaired. (If a Crawler takes over a pregnant woman, a miscarriage is inevitable.) The host still sweats minimally in heated conditions, but the Azlu itself feels little pain or pleasure — little sensation at all — from the body's nerves. The body will more than likely vomit up any food eaten because it is unable to digest it. The host is also virtually incapable of performing sexually, as the Azlu can never feel arousal; naturally, the corpse can neither father nor bear a child.

Between two to four weeks, the preservative fluid in the body begin to thin and weaken as they become diluted in the body's blood and the dead human's remaining traces of innate Essence break down the potency of the alien fluid. Sometime within a month of the possession, the human body will slowly begin to decay. While the Azlu is capable of possessing a rotted corpse until the body no longer

has any muscle tissue at all, such an act would defeat the point of hiding in the first place. The Azlu will likely end the possession as soon as the hints of decay begins, for the Spider Host can sense the ebbing of the preservative's potency over time. To leave the skull of the host, the Crawler harnesses its strength and breaks the head open from the inside, emerging from the broken skull as though it were an egg.

Example

A larval Azlu in Crawler form enters Jane Kellman's body while she sleeps. The creature watches the sleeping woman's face for a few minutes, and enters her left ear. After a few minutes, she wakes with migraine-like head pains. After waiting a while for them to pass, she calls in sick at the office, and takes two aspirin. She's been awake for an hour now, unaware that a spider is slowly eating her brain.

By mid-afternoon, Jane finds the pressure in her head increases to unbearable levels. Her arms are heavy and numb, and her legs are tingling unpleasantly with pins and needles as the spider secretes the preservative fluids into her body and bloodstream. With each beat of her heart, the fluids are carried deeper through her body, carried in her veins. The spider is halfway through her brain now, absorbing her memories. Through the pain, she has a dull perception that she can't remember what her boss's name is, or how to drive a car. Jane goes to call 911 for an ambulance, but she can't remember where the phone in her house is. She collapses in the kitchen, with her numbed legs unable to walk even a few steps. A few minutes later, she passes out. The spider continues to eat both her brain and her memories.

By early evening, Jane is back on her feet again. She can remember who her boss is, she recalls how to drive and she has lost the numb heaviness in her limbs. The spider has settled inside her head and there it sits in the confines of the skull, moving Jane's body as though it were its own, and speaking English through her lips.

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

Azlu at this stage of evolution are still predators and carnivores. To fuel their bodies and supernatural powers alike, the smallest Azlu catch and eat insects and other spiders. When they are not in possession of a human, this method of hunting and feeding is no different from what a mundane spider would do to survive and find sustenance. Human blood and flesh (and, of course, the Uratha) are delicacies that are far beyond the abilities of such weak Spider Hosts to gather.

However, when the Azlu possess a human body, the Spider Host must still find a way to eat. This can lead to the unnerving practice of "cannibalism," as the Azlu directs its controlled

human body to kill and eat the flesh of other humans. As tempting as it is for the Azlu to savor such a practice and enjoy the rarely tasted flesh of a human, it often compromises the desire to remain unnoticed and hidden. Hence, it is sometimes a clear way to spot an Azlu-possessed human when he is seen repeatedly slapping insects to kill them and licking the dead vermin off his hands. An Azlu in possession of a human must eat approximately a dozen insects or spiders in this fashion every day. Once chewed, crunched and swallowed, the nutrients of such a snack are carried by the preserving fluids within the veins and capillaries to the Azlu in its blood-soaked skull chamber.

CRAWLER BEHAVIOR

The Azlu do not always possess humans simply to hide from the vengeance and justice of the Uratha. There are opportunities to manipulate a host body (and the humans with close ties to a host) to follow the Azlu's inner urges in unique ways. Firstly, humanity in numbers tends to mean a higher Gauntlet, and the Azlu have an instinctive need to see the wall between the worlds thickened. Humans seem to excel at thickening the spiritual barrier merely by existing and going about their business. The most cunning Azlu are careful to create very dangerous "distractions" to occupy the local werewolves and divert attention away from the Azlu's weaving. The presence of negative emotions will spawn and draw spirit-motes of negative energy, such as fear, hate and envy-spirits. If consistently fed and encouraged, these spirits will grow to become a threat that a local werewolf pack cannot ignore. The more time spent hunting down such spirits and reshaping the Shadow to conform to the werewolves' desires, the less time spent tracking down the architect of this disorder — the Azlu herself.

There is also the opportunity to attack the area's werewolves indirectly. An Azlu in human skin can attempt to gather (or manipulate other people to gather) information that might lead to evidence of local werewolf activity. Though this isn't always easy, the Azlu have the benefit of knowing that werewolves exist, and that they attempt to police the spirit loci of an area. As much as possible, they know what to look for. Particularly subtle and intelligent Azlu might even be able to produce or fabricate evidence tying a werewolf pack to recent murders — even if the victim was a Ridden that was preying on the local herd of humans, the authorities don't know that.

This activity doesn't even have to stick. Merely by exposing werewolf activity to public scrutiny — even if the public won't believe a thing — the Azlu has set eyes on the werewolves that mean the Uratha will have to act carefully for a time or risk true exposure. It's no easy feat to hold to the Oath if the cops are prowling more carefully around a pack's territory. The werewolves' regular duties will draw notice, and any attention is going to be the *wrong* kind of attention.

And, of course, most werewolves have human relatives or friends they care about. Beloved or important family can be seduced away from their mates if the Azlu is within an attractive host. They can be drawn away from the watchful eyes of their werewolf relatives and murdered without any witnesses. A fastidious (and patient) Azlu will leave no evidence if she eats the body, and the murder or disappearance of kin will almost always do distinct harm to a pack. At the very least, it will set the werewolves on edge and make them more prone to neglect their duties and make mistakes.

Best of all, of course, there is no better hiding place than within the head of a human host. Werewolves are hard pressed to detect such sinister hiding places, as usually only those closest to a new host will realize something is amiss with the possessed person. A careless Azlu will leave a trail of greedy conceptual spirits in her wake, or allow such spirits to cling to her and feed. However, most Azlu are too cunning to allow their human "havens" to become so compromised. The werewolves' trusted senses avail them of nothing when the possessed bodies feel, smell and appear little different from normal humans. Even in wolf-form, a werewolf is unlikely to receive much more information about a possessed human than that the body is mildly ill and that its blood smells slightly unhealthy.

Preying on a werewolf's loved ones isn't a tactic that all Azlu favor, of course. Deliberately interfering with a werewolf pack in such a way that's sure to enrage them is one of the most dangerous things you can do. Still, considering that the feud between the Uratha and the *shartha* is already brutally violent, sometimes a Spider Host reasons that it has relatively little to lose.

STRONGER AZLU

Once the Azlu have consumed several others of their kind, they reach a size and level of growth that prevents them from hiding within the hollowed-out bodies of humans. It then becomes the instinctive choice for these bigger, more powerful Azlu to enter another developmental stage.

NATURAL FORM

Each of the Azarath hybrids emerges from their cocoons with a host of arachnid mutations warping the now-possessed human body. There really is no standard of appearance for the Azarath, and each Azlu that warps into one of these fearsome hybrids displays its own unique features. While some similarities do exist between separate Azarath, these creatures can rarely, if ever, pass for human in any but the dimmest illumination. Even the least "evolved" Azarath hybrids are nothing short of monstrous.

NAMES

Individual Azlu, once they begin to evolve, frequently take names for themselves. It's something of a point of pride, a badge that indicates it has survived and prospered to the point of distinction. While each Azlu is technically female, the Spider Hosts adopt apt "titles" for themselves, depending on their proclivities and desires. For example, a Uratha-hunting Azarath might take the title "The Patient Slayer," while a Crawler that hollows out specific humans for pleasure calls itself "The Bearer of Malicious Intent." They rarely have call to use these names in casual conversation — particularly when masquerading as human — but sometimes their names drift along the rumor networks of the Shadow.

POSSESSION

The most terrifying and sinister fusion of flesh and spirit occurs between a powerful Azlu and a human. Rather than merely possessing the mortal, an evolved Azlu physically and spiritually bonds itself with the human. The result is a terrifying amalgamation of spider and human — fearsome to behold and incredibly potent in battle. To the Uratha, these hybrids are known as the Azarath.

The Azlu in its spider-form immobilizes the soon-to-be-host, usually by preying on sleeping humans and cocooning them in silk, or biting and injecting the victim with venom. Once the host body is rendered immobile, the Azlu is free to perform the Joining at her leisure. Firstly, the host is encased in a thick cocoon of webbing, usually at least an inch thick at every angle. The Spider Host then crawls atop the cocooned victim and spends some moments concentrating and letting her Essence "bleed" into the human host. As it does so, some of its nature splits apart into tiny spiders that burrow into the flesh of the captive human. Once the Azlu's Essence

is spent in this manner, the rest of the Crawler's unused body mass breaks down into hundreds of tiny spiders that crawl away from the cocoon and die with quiet, hissing screams. Within the cocoon, however, a sinister change takes place. The Azlu's accumulated Essence flows through the human host, reshaping the mortal's bones and flesh into the image of the Spinner-Hag. The Azlu's consciousness and gathered spirit-shards infuse the human with the divine Essence of the long-dead demon, eviscerating the mortal's soul in the process.

Some hours after the death of the Azlu's spider form, the creature within the cocoon has warped to its new shape. The silk cocoon is swollen and stretched from accommodating the thrashing and flailing monster as the warping effects of the alien soul within. Finally, after a day or two, with mustered strength, the Azarath tears its way out of the protective silk, emerging into the world in a new body.

CHANGES IN THE HOST

Once an Azlu has Joined with a human, there is no simple process of unjoining and reversing the bond. The Azlu and human are irrevocably one, and the human's soul is utterly lost, perhaps consumed, in the predatory merging of spirit and flesh. The Azlu has utter control of its new body. No trace of the human's memories remains in the now-warped flesh.

The hybrid form that emerges from the cocoon can vary vastly in appearance depending on the spiritual strength of the Azlu that performed the Joining. Greasy mandibles and crunching chelicerae often warp the human's mouth and cheeks, and the growth of several extra eyes across the forehead and temples is a common feature amongst hybrids. While some Azarath Azlu retain their stolen human shape, they have developed a thick, brittle shell of chitin to replace their human skin; others are akin to demonic spider-centaurs, a four-armed human from the waist up and a gigantic, swollen spider with four blade-sharp legs from the waist down.

Azlu do not age and will die only through violence. This is one of the most devastating concerns for the packs that come hunting them, for the werewolves can't be sure if they are tracking a newborn hybrid or a century-old pseudo-arachnid monster capable of killing and eating them without pause for thought.

The Azarath's appearance upon finally breaking open the cocoon and entering the world is difficult to predict. Also, it is impossible for the Azlu herself to consciously manipulate the metamorphosis as the changes are taking place in the cocoon. The end result — the Azarath itself — is born of the unnatural

collision of a monstrous spirit and the human body's innate but corrupted Essence.

Azarath grow stronger and evolve further by hunting down weaker Azlu, usually Crawlers but occasionally even other Azarath. Catching and consuming a tiny daughter-spider is often an unrewarding process, as the weak soul-shard within the creature will only allow for a minor physical development, such as additional eyes. When two Azarath fight, the battle can last for many hours and is vicious beyond measure. The two hybrids lash out with fangs and fists and venom-tainted bites, each inflicting horrendous wounds on the other as they smash at their rival's exoskeletons. Once one of the Azarath has triumphed, she begins the long process of breaking up the rival's corpse and eating the remains. Such cannibalism allows the consumption of the rival Azlu's soul-shards, and the victorious Azarath will be substantially more powerful as a result of taking such dangerous prey.

This is the single exception to the murder of Azlu. In all other circumstances, the dead Spider Host will dissolve into its component spiders and seek to flee. But when two Azlu battle, the spiritual connection of the soul-shards, similar to and as powerful as a spirit's ban, means the slain Azlu will surrender to be consumed, rather than attempt a last-minute escape.



FORBIDDEN FLESH

The Azarath share their legendary progenitor's taste for human meat and organs. Children, with their tender, salty flesh, are a rare delicacy, because they are generally harder to catch alone, but the Azlu make do with consuming adult humans without complaint. No Azarath could survive for long on a diet of insects, short of swallowing at least a large bucket of bugs a day. When they eat people, they break them into small chunks, piece by piece, and swallow the chunks with a minimum of fuss, bones and all.

Common Azarath behavior is to take a human and cocoon him in the Azlu's lair for later consumption. However, the Azarath are unable to consume long-dead flesh. They must eat their prey alive or within a few hours of death. Azlu regurgitate any human tissue swallowed from a corpse that is past a few hours dead, and the vomit is not a pretty sight: bones and undigested, mushy skin and necrotic muscle tissue hiss in a pool of thick, unnatural stomach acid. Starving Azlu will feed from the long-dead, and will have to do so several times to keep the corpse-meat down.

On average, an Azarath will eat one human a month, and usually remains satiated for the duration of that time. The strongest, largest Azarath will perhaps require more regular (even weekly) feeding. And of course, some gluttonous monsters eat even when they don't have to....

Example

Leanne Franklin is heading home from her Saturday job at the pet store. She's keen to get an early night because she has gym practice tomorrow morning, and is training to represent her college at the county athletics finals. As she sleeps that evening, an Azlu begins to cocoon her while she lays in bed. It bites one of her toes, injecting venom into her, which paralyzes the young gymnast's body. The entire cocooning process takes a few hours, and Leanne spends most of it awake and aware, unable to even blink. Her eyes are dry and sore as the large, fist-sized spider scuttles over her face, weaving silk strands as it goes.

Once Leanne is cocooned, the spider sits atop the silk and concentrates its Essence into the helpless human. Leanne feels increasingly dizzy and disorientated as her consciousness recedes, and then finally expires over the course of a few minutes. She's aware of a strange crawling sensation under her skin at the last, but she's too far gone to register it as pain. The Azlu's spider body remains where it was, dead and hollow of life. The Azlu's divine soul is now within Leanne's body, and its presence and power warps her body and bone as she remains cocooned.

Twenty-four hours pass. Leanne's housemates knock on her door a few times, but assume that she is out seeing her boyfriend. After a few more hours have passed, the Azarath in the cocoon has completely developed and evolved. It uses its new limbs to rip through the enclosing silk and emerges, screaming and hungry, hulking and deadly, into the poster-lined walls of Leanne's bedroom.

Her housemates hear the strange screams and break down her locked door. There they see their friend, standing on six spider-legs, with a huge, bulbous abdomen, and massive mandibles extending from her jaws. Her eight eyes focus on the housemates, and with a laugh that sounds eerily like Leanne's, the Azarath launches itself at the gathered humans.

AZARATH BEHAVIOR

Some Azarath seem to delight in slaughter. Others cower in the corners of the physical world or Shadow Realm, merely hoping that the werewolves never discover them as they work to weave their webs. Perhaps the most dangerous Azlu are the hybrids that actively seek to damage Uratha interests by tainting the werewolves' protectorates, perhaps murdering significant human figures. Similarly, other Azlu live isolated existences, only leaving their hidden nests in order to butcher the werewolves and feast on their Essence-rich flesh and blood. Some Azlu never even meet a werewolf, instead thriving unnoticed and living off the stolen lives of the men and women they capture for food. In the end, it all comes down to how



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each individual Azlu wishes to live and obey its inner urges. The Gauntlet web must be woven. As long as the Spider Host is working towards that eventual goal, it does not matter if she has other interests that also take up her time.

One such practice that some Azarath are fond of indulging in is the establishment of devoted cults. Some humans will believe in and worship anything, and, on the harsh streets of the World of Darkness, there are many weaker patrons to obey rather than a demonic spider-human hybrid. In exchange for occasional sustenance, tasks and gathered information, the Azarath Azlu will often promise similar “arachnid evolution” to its followers, or eternal protection from harm. Whether the Spider Host actually holds up its end of the bargain is up to the Azlu in question, but none will shed any guilty tears if they decide not to. Those Azarath who actually set themselves at the head of a cult tend to choose worshippers of base nature and low status; not only are such pawns easier to dominate, but there is much less trouble involved when Claiming those who aren’t likely to be missed. The Azlu have no desire to attract the undue attention of werewolves or other supernatural rivals, and so generally keep their chelicerae to themselves around people that werewolves, vampires, mages or worse are likely keeping an eye on.

Even the Azarath that do not seek out the Uratha (and that is most of them) can be ferocious combatants once the werewolves have tracked them down. When backed into a corner with little hope of escape, the instinctive decision of most hybrids is to inflict as much damage on its attackers as possible, thereby creating a greater opportunity to escape once it is killed and dissolves into the swarm.

The exception to the rules of Azlu “society” are the exceedingly rare and precious crones that occasionally arise. These Azarath, capable of laying Azlu eggs in the same manner that the Spinner-Hag did before the Fall, are the only opportunity for the Spider Hosts to ever increase their numbers. They are frequently guarded by lesser Azarath Azlu, and defended with fanatical savagery. The crone’s offspring are like all *luthazlu* daughter-spiders, and have no particular loyalty to anything but their own interest in self-preservation. They do not usually obey their Azarath parent and frequently leave her presence to weave their own webs into the Gauntlet as soon as they are born. In some cases, though, the crone enjoys the presence of her little daughters, and shares a nest with many of them.

CREATING THE AZLU

The Azlu are a race of creatures that breed diversity and variety at every level of growth and development. From the varied appearances of the tiniest Crawlers to the huge, freakish might of the most terrifying Azarath hybrids, the Azlu revel in the terror their alien appearances and mysterious powers inflict.

This section of the chapter deals with constructing the Azlu from the ground up: detailing how the Storyteller can create and introduce these monstrous antagonists to his games of **Werewolf: the Forsaken**.

Both of the stages of Azlu development — Crawler and Azarath — are handled separately and broken up into “evolution points.” The weakest Azlu have few of these Evolution points and are limited in their choice of physical forms, while the most powerful Azlu suffer no such limitation and are often horrendous to behold.

ATTRIBUTES

The average Crawler poses no threat to a werewolf in a fight. At the largest, it is Size 1, with roughly a Defense of 4, Initiative 5, Speed 10 and Health 2; its Attributes are largely no higher than 1, with the exception of Dexterity, which tends to be about 4. A Crawler’s bite is lethal damage, with an attack pool of three dice. Mental Attributes increase as the Crawler consumes others of its kind. Once the Crawler takes over a human body, it gains the physical Attributes of that body.

Azarath range widely in their capabilities. All start with at one dot in each Attribute, and divide a pool of dots among them from there. A weak Azarath might have about ten to fifteen dots to divide between its Attributes. One with more power could range from fifteen to twenty dots, and old and powerful Azlu can have twenty-five or more dots to spend. An Azlu can raise an Attribute above 5. For more information, see p. 134.

SKILLS

Crawlers have very little by way of Skills, usually only about eight to twelve dots divided among Athletics, Brawl, Stealth and Survival. Once they take over a human host, they gain access to the host’s Skills as described above.

Azarath, again, vary widely in their abilities. A weak Azarath might have about as many Skills as its initial host. More powerful Azarath are built with increasing amounts of dots to spend, ranging from a total of 30 to 50 dots in Skills, depending on the Azlu’s level of experience.

ESSENCE

The Azlu, collectively, possess a great deal of Essence, formed as they are from the divine soul of the Spinner-Hag. Individually, the amount of Essence an Azlu has can be determined by its stage of evolution. Weak Crawlers possess perhaps a single point of Essence, while those that have gathered one or two additional evolution points will have a couple of Essence points. Azarath begin with 3 to 5 Essence, but grow accordingly powerful (at the Storyteller's discretion) very quickly as they consume other Azlu and evolve further. There's technically no upper limit to the amount of power an Azlu can have — a single, sufficiently old and scarred Spider Host can challenge an entire pack of werewolves. For such creatures, anywhere from 20 to 50 Essence is feasible, depending on just how monstrous the creature needs to be.

Eating

Food doesn't feed the Host's body: it feeds the pool of Essence. An Azlu that foregoes eating for longer than a month finds its Essence depleting rapidly in order to fuel its eternal life. After the first month of fasting, the creature's Essence pool reduces at a rate of approximately one dot per day that the Azlu doesn't manage to gather sustenance. Once the pool reaches zero, the Spider Host dies of starvation and falls dead as a lifeless, soulless husk. An Azlu trapped away from sustenance can spin itself into a cocoon and fall into a dormant state to slow down the process, losing only one Essence per month after the first.

The Spider Hosts certainly delight in the death and consumption of the Uratha, for werewolf flesh was the greatest delicacy that the Spinner-Hag enjoyed. However, beyond a sinister predilection for revenge and sustenance, some powerful Hosts stalk and hunt the werewolves for a very different reason. An Azlu's entire Essence pool is refreshed if it consumes a werewolf's body. Those Azlu that take to hunting werewolves either do so out of misplaced confidence or sure knowledge that they are some of the deadliest creatures in flesh or Shadow.

MORALITY

Like all Hosts, the Azlu possess neither Morality nor Harmony; they are more like spirits, sentient entities not exactly possessed of free will. However, the Spider Hosts are very prone to mental instability, particularly as they absorb the memories of more and more victims. Many acquire derangements over the course of their lives, particularly derangements such as Paranoia and Phobia. These are gained at the Storyteller's option.

WILLPOWER

The Azlu inherited a deep streak of self-preservation, and are not exactly known for personal resolve in battle. However, they are dedicated fanatics and unflinchingly desperate to preserve their own near-immortal lives. Depending on their own viewpoints and tendencies, Spider Hosts tend to have either very low Willpower scores or very high ones. The tiniest Crawler might lack bravery and initiative, fleeing at the first sign of danger, while another miniscule *luthazlu* would work diligently to succeed in its tasks and work to evolve faster. Where the Azarath are concerned, the gigantic hybrid might be a vicious terror in battle, spending its life energies to eviscerate its foes, or it might go to ground in order to hide from the creatures hunting it. There really is no standard, and the Storyteller should feel free to adjust an Azlu's Willpower score depending on the natural inclinations and personality of each individual Spider Host.

Each Host possesses a Virtue and Vice as well (and use them to regain Willpower as normal), although their personalities are more primal than that of a human being. Gluttony is the most common Vice of the ever-hungry Azlu, and their Virtues (such as they are) tend to run toward a practically instinctual Faith (in their eventual reunification) or a slow, patient Prudence.

ASPECTS

The Spider Hosts possess a number of supernatural abilities peculiar to their freakish kind. Among these abilities are the powers that allow the Spider Hosts to cling to sheer surfaces and ceilings, and weave their reinforcing webs into the barrier between the two worlds. These powers are generally called Aspects, as they reflect the variations on the Azlu's theme. For ease of use, the Numina listed in **Werewolf: The Forsaken** have been reprinted here as Aspects. Some of these powers are innate to all Azlu and require neither learning nor development (thus costing no evolution points), while others are acquired over time as the Azlu grows in spiritual strength. The cost in evolution points is listed in dots for each Aspect.

COMMON ASPECTS

The following Aspects are common to all Azlu, Crawler or Azarath. Some are so common that they are considered traits of the species, and are automatically possessed by all Azlu of the appropriate sort.

BREACH THE BARRIER (•)

The Azlu can mimic the werewolves' ability to cross between the worlds. An Azlu with this Aspect

can step sideways in the presence of a locus as a werewolf would (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 250).

COVARD'S EDGE (•••)

The Azlu with this Aspect have a “sixth sense” when it comes to the presence of werewolves. Usually felt as a throbbing pain in the Spider Host’s abdomen or stomach, the Azlu unfailingly detects the presence of any werewolf within a hundred yards. The Spider Host does not know from which direction the werewolf (or werewolves...) are coming from, it merely knows that there are Uratha in the vicinity, giving the Azlu time to prepare accordingly.

GAUNTLET WEBS (INNATE)

By spinning ephemeral webs into the Gauntlet itself, the Azlu makes it more difficult for anything to cross from the spirit world to the material world (or vice versa). With one hour of constant work and the expenditure of one Essence point, the Azlu can increase the penalty to cross over or even peek through the Gauntlet by one die over 10 square yards. Each extra hour (and point of Essence spent) can increase the range of the coverage by the same amount or increase the penalty by another die, but not both in the same hour. These webs can be destroyed from the Shadow Realm side of the Gauntlet at a rate of one square yard per three points of damage. The damage must be either lethal or aggravated — that is, the webs must be physically torn apart. This Aspect is innate to all Azlu.

HUNTER'S LEAP (•)

This Aspect allows the Azlu to greatly increase its leaping distances. No roll is required, but the Spider Host must spend an Essence point. For the next roll the Azlu makes that involves jumping, the Spider Host gains a +8 modifier on the dice pool. Azlu with this Aspect active always land safely, as though they had just performed a standard jump. They only suffer falling damage if they miss their intended landing spot, and plummet further than they had intended — such as missing a rooftop and falling from the edge of a building. Crawlers can use this Aspect while in control of a human body.

RESERVE THE HOLLOW SNAEL (•)

Though the Azlu are vulnerable to the speedy degeneration of their stolen human bodies, this power helps maintain the masquerade for a little longer. A stolen body or skin decays at half the usual rate if the Azlu possesses this Aspect.

PRETERNATURAL AWARENESS (•)

This Aspect reflects a supernatural level of alertness that allows the Host a moment’s warning of

impending danger. The Azlu gains a +2 modifier on any rolls made for the sake of perception or reaction to surprise (see **World of Darkness Rulebook**, pp. 45–46).

SECRET-SIGHT (•)

The Azlu are aware of the dangers of the Shadow Realm and must always remain alert for any troublesome spirits that seek to destroy their ghost-webs. With this power, which many Azlu use a great deal in the physical world, the Spider Host can perceive what occurs on the other side of the Gauntlet. The Azlu rolls Wits + Occult. Success allows the Azlu to extend one sense across the Gauntlet; each additional success allows the Azlu to extend another sense across the Gauntlet, to a maximum of all five physical senses with an exceptional success.

TOXIC BITE (••)

The Azlu may spend one Essence as a reflexive action after making a successful bite attack. The victim loses one point of Stamina for every success scored on the attack roll. (The victim’s player may make a reflexive Stamina + Primal Urge roll to reduce this Stamina damage by one point per success.) The victim’s Health trait may be affected by the loss of Stamina. Stamina lost to this power recovers at the same rate that the victim would heal aggravated wounds.

UNEARTHLY HORROR (•••)

Using this Aspect, an Azlu has the power to inflict the full spiritual force of its unearthly terror upon any beings (physical or spiritual) that witness the creature. This is a literal spiritual unleashing of the amplified terror an Azlu creates, heightened by the unnatural life of the Spider Host itself.

The Storyteller spends one of the Azlu’s Essence and rolls Presence + Intimidation in a contested roll against the Resolve + Composure of each creature that can see the Azlu. Resistance is reflexive. (If a crowd sees the Spider Host, roll the highest Resolve + Composure in the crowd for the whole group.) If the Spider Host loses or ties the roll, all beings in the area are unaffected and are immune to uses of this power for the remainder of the scene. Beings that lose the roll flee from the spirit and will not return to the area for at least one day. It is worth noting that while any human who meets an Azlu will still be more than likely to run for his life, he simply suffers no supernatural compulsion to do so. A human who beats the roll of a loose Crawler is likely to ignore the spider or simply kill it with a boot or a rolled up newspaper.

PREDATORS' SHRIEK (••••)

This Aspect allows the Azlu to overwhelm a victim's mind for a short while with a burst of psychic fear. Unlike other supernatural compulsions to obey, this power forces the target to slavishly obey out of sheer terror. The Azlu rolls Presence + Intimidation against in a contested roll against the target's Resolve + Composure; resistance is reflexive. Each success forces the victim to obey a single command made by the Azlu. Even Azlu unable to form human speech are able to use this Aspect, as the "command" of this power is sent through a crude form of instinctual telepathy. The target obeys the commands as best he is able, though he will betray signs of fear and unease while he does so, such as sweaty palms and a rapid heartbeat. Individuals with low Willpower might even weep as they frantically attempt to carry out the orders given to them.

Note: Some Azlu possess a variant of this Aspect known as Siren Whisper. The roll for that Aspect is the same as Predators' Shriek, but the target obeys through a hazy desire to do so, rather than through inflicted terror.

WALL CLIMB (INNATE)

Like a normal-sized arachnid, the Azlu can walk on walls or even the ceiling of a structure and move as freely as it can on the ground. The Host must have at least four of its limbs in contact with the surface it's climbing at a time, and it's still affected by gravity. (That is, if it loses contact with the surface it's climbing, it falls *down*, not toward the climbing surface.) Also, the surface it's climbing must be able to support its weight, which may vary greatly by size. This Aspect is innate to all Azlu.

CRAWLER ASPECTS

The weakest of the Azlu have not, through desire or incompetence, preyed upon others of their kind to the degree necessary to evolve to the stage where they can produce a Azarath hybrid. These tiny spiders remain in the natural form as fleshy little arachnids, and use their innate powers to weave the Gauntlet stronger while always trying to keep hidden from the werewolves that hunt them.

However, the *luthazlu* have a limited number of minor Aspects available to even the weakest of the Azlu. What these changes lack in the physical and spiritual power of the Azarath, they make up for in sheer cunning and utility. Once an Azlu has devoured several others of its kind, the daughter-spider will have grown to such a size that renders her unable to use these Aspects any longer, and she must either gather more Azlu souls to become stronger, or merge

with a human to create a relatively weak Azarath hybrid.

The Crawler's base form can only be improved upon by consuming other, even weaker Azlu, or by the Aspects below. They are as easy to crush as a normal spider might be — perhaps a Defense score of 1 to 3 at most, and having a Health score as much as a single dot is a generous interpretation. However, Azlu possess great cunning and, sometimes, intelligence. The Storyteller should assign high Intelligence, Wits, Manipulation and Composure scores to those Azlu that have survived long enough to develop such traits.

Once a *luthazlu* departs a host body, it still keeps its gathered soul-shards. So an Azlu with 2 evolution points and the Hollow-Rider and Unearthly Allure Aspects can abandon its host body and enter another, using both of its previous Aspects once the body is taken over. All Azlu are born with the Hollow Rider Aspect at no points cost.

The *luthazlu* are limited in the way they can spend their evolution points. The overwhelming majority of Azlu at this stage of development have only 1 point to spend, representing the limited number of other Azlu they have devoured and the few soul-shards they have amassed. Rarer Crawlers have 2 to 4 points, and are nearly powerful enough to merge with a human to breed one of the Azarath. Once an Azlu reaches 5 evolution points, it usually must evolve onto the Azarath developments, though a rare few manage to remain in Crawler form and retain their evolution points.

COSMETIC ALTERATION (0)

The Azlu is an obviously unusual spider, due to physical curiosities in its appearance. Some Azlu develop fewer eyes or additional legs than a standard arachnid, while others will grow a scorpion-like tail, or small human arms instead of spider legs. This Aspect is a common one, though serves no purpose outside of actually betraying the Azlu spider's unearthly heritage. As such, it costs no evolution points.

HOLLOW-RIDER (INNATE)

The Azlu has "hollowed out" a human by entering the person's body, secreting mystical preservative fluids into the bloodstream and then eating the host's brain. No roll is required, but the process takes approximately half a day, from the moment the Crawler enters the host's head to the moment it possess control of the human's body and memories.

Once a human is possessed in this manner, there are subtle signals that betray the changes in the host. The Azlu's absorption of the human's memories is rarely perfect, and the imitation can seem forced and

transparent to those people who know the controlled host well. Generally, the impersonation will fool most people, but a close friend or relative can make a contested Wits + Composure roll against the Azlu's Intelligence + Composure. Any degree of success alerts the witness to something significantly different or wrong with her friend or relative, such as severe memory loss or a drastic personality change.

In many cases, an Azlu goes through several, perhaps dozens of human hosts over a relatively short span of time. The Azlu sheds the host's fragmented memories each time it leaves a person's skull, and has no recall of the knowledge it gained from possessing any previous bodies. In some cases, Azlu do keep the information from host to host, but it is a confusing and unintentional event.

The host body will begin to decay after two to four weeks, at which time the Crawler will usually leave the body and prepare another to suit its purposes. On average, the rotting host body will lose a dot of Appearance and a Physical Attribute every month due to decay, and will smell absolutely *foul*. The body will become unusable when it is reduced to zero Physical Attributes.

HEVEMOTHER (C)

Prerequisite: Hollow-Rider

The Azlu's presence in the host body acts as a lodestone for spiritual corruption. With this Aspect, the Azlu's divine soul ravages the Essence remaining in the host body and taints it with spiritual foulness. For every hour the Azlu possesses the human, a tiny black spider will form and be given parasitic life in the host's heart. These little spiders swarm through the host body within a matter of days, eating away at the person's muscles and bones. Such appetites ruin the host, subtracting a dot from a Physical Attribute each day, but confer two sinister advantages.

The Azlu can use these spiders to attack its foes, sending them out of the body for a short time to attack individually or as a swarm. The swarm gains no additional bonuses other than that it is more difficult to kill a hundred spiders than a single one, but the attacking spiders bite with a Toxicity 6 venom. Successes against the victim paralyze him completely for several hours, potentially up to an entire day. The spiders return to the host body after attacking by entering the host's ears, nose and mouth, unless they are killed before doing so.

Also, if the host body is killed or otherwise destroyed, the Crawler can flee the body amongst the swarm of spiders, using them to conceal itself and increase the chances of escape.

STRONG MEMORY (C)

When *luthazlu* swallow a host's memories, the recall is often fragmented and unreliable. Azlu with this Aspect have a near-photographic level of recall, storing the host's memories and even her personality with near-faultless efficiency. The Azlu gains a +2 modifier on all Social rolls to "play normal" when deceiving the people who know the possessed host.

UNEARTHLY ALLURE (C)

Prerequisite: Hollow-Rider, Composure ●●

The Azlu's unnatural presence is subtly altered to project an air of restrained sensuality. Any humans who see the possessed host are drawn to it and become more tractable and easy to seduce. This Aspect allows the Azlu to mask its sinister "aura" felt by perceptive mortals, and creates an air of sexual tension and fascination between the host body and anyone interacting with it. No roll is required, but the Azlu gains a +2 modifier to all Social dice pools for the duration it is within the host.

AZLU AND THE WALKING DEAD

The *luthazlu* possession appears to create some kind of undead creature, akin to a zombie or one of the walking dead. The human host's body is preserved at the very moment between life and death. While the human's brain is destroyed and the person's intelligence and personality completely eradicated, the body itself is not a corpse in the sense of the walking dead.

Accordingly, any mundane or supernatural methods used to sense, locate, control or affect an undead creature automatically fail when directed against an Azlu using this method of possession. The hosts are not true zombies, and they are not truly alive: instead, like the Azlu themselves, these hosts are a bastard cross of two worlds.

AZARATH HYBRID ASPECTS

The Azarath are the part-human, part-spider monstrosities created when an Azlu merges its profane essence with the body of a human. The Azarath base form is assumed to begin as a normal human: one head, two arms, two legs, hips, waist, torso, etc. Each Aspect bought when creating the Azarath counts as one of the mutations the creature possesses when it emerges from its growth cocoon. Everything not altered by an Aspect remains human in appearance, barring development of the unique Aspect:

Mutated Spider. The Azarath base form emerges from the cocoon with the same Physical Attributes that the human possessed in life, but uses the Azlu's Mental Attributes as the Spider Host is now the dominant consciousness within the creature. The Azlu keeps all Skills that the human host possessed, although traits such as Drive (for example) are going to be a great deal less useful to a half-spider monster. It also keeps the human Speed and Size factors of 5.

To begin construction of a hybrid, each Azarath *must* begin with the Aspect: Azarath Joining, and each Azarath Azlu must possess either the Swollen Abdomen or Spinnerets Aspects.

Just how many points does a Azarath hybrid have to spend on all these developments? That really depends on the Storyteller's chronicle and the power levels he has set in his game. As a rough guide, the newborn and weakest Azarath will have between 8 to 16 evolution points. Most will have consumed a cluster of other Spider Hosts before undertaking the Joining, or will do so very soon after. More advanced and competent Azarath will have 17 to 25 points to spend on Aspects, and most of the hybrids the Uratha encounter are around that power level. The mightiest Azarath will have 26 or more to spend, and these are the Spider Hosts that are capable of taking on an entire pack of the Forsaken.

ADDITIONAL ARMS (••)

The Azarath develops an additional pair of human arms that grow just below or above the arms it already possesses. These arms add a +1 modifier to all rolls involving arm strength (such as lifting, carrying, grappling or inflicting brawl damage). The Azlu also gains the Brawling Dodge Merit for free, waiving the prerequisites for the Merit. This Aspect can be taken multiple times and the modifiers stack, with the factor borne in mind that no Azarath can develop more than 12 limbs.

ADDITIONAL EYES (•)

The Azarath develops another pair of eyes somewhere on its face; cheeks, temples and forehead are the most common places for these eyes to manifest. The eyes can be spider-like in appearance (smooth orbs of color) or human, but the effect is the same. The Azlu gains a +1 modifier on all Wits rolls involving sight. This Aspect can be purchased multiple times, up to a maximum of three times. If purchased more than once, the modifiers stack.

ADDITIONAL LEGS (••)

Prerequisite: Swollen Abdomen

The Azarath develops a set of extra legs in addition to those it already possesses. The legs may be

human or arachnid in appearance, and confer a +1 modifier on all dice rolls involving balance and running. This Aspect can be taken multiple times, and the modifiers stack. For example, an Azlu that takes Additional Legs three times gains six additional legs and a +3 modifier on all balance and running rolls. While this Aspect can be taken multiple times, the factor must be borne in mind that no Azarath can develop more than 12 limbs. This Aspect can also be taken once to represent the change of the human's original legs to four huge spiderlike legs.

AZARATH JOINING (•, MANDATORY)

Prerequisite: 4+ evolution points

This is the prerequisite Aspect for any Azarath development, representing the actual Joining ritual itself. A Spider Host that consumes enough of its kind to reach five evolution points is no longer considered a standard *luthazlu*. It usually seeks out a human host immediately to begin the Joining, but some Azlu bide their time until they have gathered a great many soul-shards. In the more common case of the former circumstance, the Azlu incapacitates a human with its venom, and begins to weave a protective cocoon of the spider's natural silk around the helpless mortal. Upon completion, the Azlu crawls to the top of the cocoon and "bleeds" Essence into the host below, portions of its form taking on tiny separate spider forms and entering the human body. After a few minutes, the spider is no more than a hollow shell, devoid of life, and the Azlu's soul has entered the trapped human. The metamorphosis takes between 24 and 48 hours, during which time the mutating Azlu is utterly prone. When the change is complete, the Azarath hybrid tears free of the silk cocoon and enters the world very, very hungry. It possesses the complete memories and knowledge of the human host, although such information is considered utterly secondary to the Azlu's own drives and desires.

BOILING SPIT (••)

The Azarath's saliva glands produce a viscous fluid that replaces its saliva. The hybrid's teeth, tongue and lips are moistened with this fluid, and the Azarath is capable of spitting the thick drool at its opponents. The new saliva sears and hisses on contact with most materials, (such as skin, fur or metal) and burns like boiling grease. On the turn in which the spit hits the target, the victim suffers three levels of automatic lethal damage. The sticky spit loses its heated potency after a few seconds, becoming cold and often (quite disgustingly) stuck to soft substances such as flesh, fur or clothing. This cooled spit has the adhesive quality of industrial-strength glue, and can stick soft materials together for several days, until the

substance flakes away into dry powder. Many Azlu use this Aspect to blind their opponents.

CAELICERAE (◡)

The inside of the hybrid's human mouth is grotesquely that of a spider's. Clacking, crunching appendages draw food in and mash it up before swallowing, and the Azarath gains a bite attack (2 L). Azlu with Chelicerae find communicating in human language next to impossible, as their mouths are almost unable to form the appropriate shapes and syllables. To communicate even remotely intelligibly (in any language other than the First Tongue), the Spider Host must make a Composure roll.

CHITIN-SKIN (◡◡)

Any parts of the Azarath that remain human in shape are covered with a thick, brittle layer of chitin, like that of a spider or insect. The chitin exoskeleton can vary in appearance, being plain or colored, smooth-surfaced or covered in coarse hairs. The Azlu gains 2 armor against general attacks and 1 armor against firearms attacks, with no reduction to Defense.

DEMONIC SIZE (◡◡◡)

The Azarath is seven or more feet tall and weighs in excess of 250 pounds. He is +1 Size (and thus +1 Health). Note: This Aspect replaces the use of the Giant Merit in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. It can be taken multiple times to increase Size and Health further, up to three separate times.

EGG SAC (◡◡◡◡)

Prerequisites: Swollen Abdomen and at least 30 Evolution points

This Aspect is both rare and treasured by the Spider Hosts. An Azlu with this Aspect is likely to be savagely, viciously defended by others of her kind, as she has evolved into the highest and most divine of creatures: an Azlu crone. Her fleshy abdomen becomes capable of forming and laying small, thumb-sized eggs that are squeezed out from a sphincter-like hole in the back of the swollen sac. The eggs are the size of a marble or pearl, and each point of Essence spent allows the Azlu to lay a dozen of these little eggs. The eggs hatch after a week, each rupturing as a tiny pseudo-spider crawls into the world. By spending ten Essence points, the crone can generate another tiny soul-shard in one of the eggs laid, thus creating another true Crawler when the egg hatches.

Since the Spider Hosts cannot breed by any conventional means, this Aspect is the only way the Azlu can produce more of their own kind. The Azlu will lay down their lives to defend their exceedingly rare crones, and, in some cases, will actually allow

the crone to consume them so that she will grow stronger. The high Essence cost associated with this Aspect means that other Azlu may consistently seek ways to bring more Essence to the crone — such as the carcasses of werewolves for her to devour.

Note: This Aspect negates the later purchase of Protected Abdomen, and a Azarath with that Aspect will lose its chitin armor if it develops a fleshy egg sac.

EYISCERATING BONE-SCYTHES (•••)

Prerequisites: Additional Legs • and Additional Arms •

A single pair of the Azarath's limbs (spider or human limbs) develops into long, jointed, jagged blades of solid bone. If the Azarath attacks with these heavy bone-scythes, it gains two bonus dice and the damage is lethal. If the Azlu spends one Essence point, the damage inflicted becomes aggravated, as the toothed edges of the limbs resemble nothing so much as a supernatural saw-blade. The Azarath must have the Additional Leg and Additional Arms Aspects to maintain balance with the bone-scythes. This Aspect can be taken a maximum of three times, with each purchase changing two limbs into bone-scythes.

HORNED ABDOMEN (••)

Prerequisites: Protected Abdomen

The Azarath's abdomen develops dozens of rigid, jagged spikes of solid bone, each as large as a meat cleaver. With this Aspect, anyone successfully performing a grapple attack on the Azlu from behind or from the side automatically suffers two points of lethal damage for every turn the grapple is held.

HYDRAULIC MUSCLES (•)

The Azarath develops the hydraulic muscle fibers of true spiders, in each of its human and arachnid limbs. This greatly increases the hybrid's physical strength, agility and fortitude, allowing the Azarath to overwhelm its foes with greater ease. This Aspect can be taken multiple times, and each purchase raises one of the hybrid's Physical Attributes by 1, to a maximum of eight in each.

MALICIOUS BLOOD (••)

The Azarath's blood becomes a corrosive, burning acid that reacts violently with anything it comes into contact with outside the Azlu's body. Whenever the Azarath is wounded, corrosive blood spurts out of the wounds, causing two automatic points of lethal damage to anyone within arm's reach. Success on a reflexive Dexterity + Wits roll negates this damage.

MUTATED SPIDER (••••)

Prerequisites: Additional Legs •••, Chelicerae, Mandibles, Swollen Abdomen, Hydraulic Muscles •••

The Azarath's entire body is that of a gigantic spider, approximately the size of a small car. Most Azarath that take this shape do so many years after breaking from the metamorphosis cocoon, but a rare few have gathered the power necessary (and the luck required) to assume this form immediately upon their first hybrid Joining.

PEDIPALPS (••)

Prerequisite: Chelicerae

Spiders boast two mini-limbs to either side of their mouths known as pedipalps. These mandibles are used to hold prey and drag it into the spider's mouth, in addition to delivering venom by means of the syringe-like tip of each pedipalp, called the tarsi. An Azarath with this Aspect has its own chitin-clad or fleshy pedipalps that protrude hideously forward from its cheeks and cheekbones, extending 12 to 18 inches from its jaws. These limbs confer a +1 bonus to both Bite and Grapple rolls, while the tarsi tips of the appendages allow a venomous "bite" injection of poison. Usable three times a day, the venom attack is made as a standard Bite attack, and if successful, the victim must (in addition to any bite damage) resist the effects of a Toxicity 7 poison in his bloodstream. This poisonous attack, if successful, paralyzes the victim for several hours and, in some cases, up to a day.

PROTECTED ABDOMEN (•)

Prerequisite: Swollen Abdomen

The Azarath's abdomen is covered in a thick shell of exoskeleton chitin. This solid shell is incredibly resistant to damage, and more often than not, attacks against the Azlu's abdomen bounce harmlessly aside and fail to make any impact on the armor. The Azlu with this Aspect gains three extra points of armor against general and firearms attacks; however, this armor has a penalty of -1.

SCORPION'S TAIL (•••)

Prerequisites: Additional Legs •• and Protected Abdomen

The Azarath develops a deadly, lashing tail between 6 and 10 feet in length. Covered in thick chitin, the tail is powerfully muscled and as thick as a man's thigh. It can be used as a bludgeoning weapon in Brawl attacks, adding two dice of bashing damage. Most fearsome of all is the lethally-tipped black barb that curves out from the tail's tip. This barb inflicts damage as a knife; by spending two Essence points, the

Azarath may inject a Toxicity 7 poison directly into a target that has been impaled by the barb.

STOLEN SKIN (••)

This Aspect allows an Azarath to temporarily hide its form within a human skin. No matter how large or deformed its body, the Azarath can shift its shape to fit inside a hollowed-out human husk so long as it has such a vessel present. The Azarath retains all its Aspects, though some of them may be unusable without tearing the skin. The Azlu may return to its original form, tearing the stolen skin apart, as a reflexive action at any time. The skin can also be damaged or rot away on its own, and is therefore only a temporary disguise.

SPINNERETS (••)

For those Azarath that lack bulbous spider abdomens, this Aspect develops a swelling of web-weaving organs on the Azlu's stomach or lower back. The swelling is approximately the size of basketball, and unless the Azlu has the Chitin-Skin Aspect, it is formed of soft, tender flesh. With this trait, the Azarath can weave webs as though it possessed the Swollen Abdomen Aspect, using the rules below.

SWARM DISCORPORATION (INNATE)

This Aspect is the fabled power of the Hosts that allows them to survive the total destruction of their bodies. If the power is used voluntarily, the process is automatic and requires no roll. If the Spider Host has been killed and reduced to zero Health, the Azlu must succeed in a Wits + Survival roll. Success means that the Azlu's body instantly breaks down and dissolves into a number of spiders. Crawlers do not break down, of course, already being the smallest they can possibly be. An Azarath hybrid is likely to break down into several hundred, or perhaps even one or more thousand if the creature is large enough. A possessing Crawler will not disincorporate if the host body is killed, unless it possesses the Hivemother Aspect. With this Aspect, the host's skin ruptures and hundreds of spiders pour out — one of them being the original *luthazlu*. The Azlu's original soul-shard is contained within one of these spiders, and flickers from one spider to the next if the arachnid is killed. If even a single one of these spiders escapes unharmed, the Azlu survives as the lowest, weakest Crawler, and must begin the whole process of evolution and possession again. The other spiders die within a day, as they are little more than potential receptacles for the original soul-shard. This Aspect is innate to all Azarath Azlu.

The Storyteller should apply his judgment to the scattered spiders and their escape, because the rules for combat can't accurately simulate the Health of

a swarm of tiny spiders and the damage they would take from being stomped while fleeing across floors, walls and ceilings. See "Killing the Azlu" below.

SWOLLEN ABDOMEN (•••)

The Azarath hybrid has developed a large spider's abdomen, and her thorax has become spider-like just below the ribcage. This fatty abdomen is composed of thick, blubbery flesh. In addition to gaining +1 Size (and accordingly, +1 Health) from the huge, bulbous abdomen, the Azarath develops spider's spinnerets at the rear of the thorax. While Azlu are capable of retaining their human legs with a swollen abdomen, the overwhelming majority develop at least one other pair of arachnid or human legs to handle the weight.

The spinnerets are identical to a true spider's web-weaving organs, and metabolize proteins in the Azarath's body to weave into a near-liquid yet incredibly durable and flexible silk. Webs woven from this silk are supernaturally resistant to damage while retaining their flexibility. Each strand has Durability 3, Size 3 and a resulting Structure 6.

APPLICABLE MERITS

There are some Merits that are acceptable for use with Azarath Azlu. Others are unrealistic (if not outright impossible) for Azlu to possess, while some are replicated more appropriately by Aspects. Obviously, most Crawler Azlu will use the host body's Merits, with Storyteller discretion. From the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, the following Merits make sense as possible Azarath Azlu traits:

- Language
- Ambidextrous
- Brawling Dodge
- Disarm
- Fast Reflexes
- Fleet of Foot
- Iron Stamina
- Iron Stomach
- Quick Healer
- Strong Back
- Strong Lungs
- Toxin Resistance
- Allies (other Azlu or human cultists)

KILLING THE AZLU

The Azlu are remarkably hard to kill. In any of their permutations or varied forms, the Spider Hosts are renowned for somehow clinging to their endless

lives. It is this immortality that makes these *shartha* some of most terrible foes the Forsaken face, for the Azlu that escapes destruction one day is likely to return in the years to come with a new body and will wreak vengeance upon its attempted killers.

KILLING CRAWLERS

The weakest Azlu are the easiest to kill, but even such a straightforward task has its complications. The tiny, fleshy creatures have no defense past a few Aspects, and are, to all intents and purposes, merely intelligent or cunning spiders. They can be killed by anything that would kill a natural spider — even a well-timed stomp will eliminate the Azlu. While these creatures appear easy to kill once and for all, it is a rare Azlu that lives its life in this “natural” form. For the most part, the *luthazlu* live within the skulls of human men and women, making them much less conspicuous. Even then, most Crawlers develop the Aspect: Hivemother as soon as they are able, and the spider’s chance of escaping becomes almost a certainty.

KILLING CRAWLER-POSSESSED HOSTS

When the human host body that a *luthazlu* is possessing is killed, the spider has no choice but to flee. However, killing a host body is not as simple as simply murdering a human. Neither truly alive or dead, these controlled hosts can withstand an incredible amount of damage, and are usable as vessels until bodily hacked apart. An Crawler-possessed human suffers no wound

penalties and can function even on the Incapacitated health level. Once the host suffers a further level of damage, it is considered rent apart and damaged beyond use. At this point, the Crawler will flee the skull. Azlu that have the Aspect: Hivemother also escape at this point, when the human’s skin splits and releases hundreds of spiders upon the body’s destruction.

Also, if a human host suffers double its Stamina score in head-injury damage in a single turn, there is a fifty percent chance the Azlu inside will be killed outright. Experienced Forsaken packs know all too well that “going for the head” is often the surest way of eliminating the Azlu before it can flee in a burst of spiders.

KILLING AZARATH HYBRIDS

When the Uratha manage to slay one of the inhuman Azarath, the body dissolves into literally hundreds, if not thousands, of spiders. The weakest Azarath, mostly newborns, will break down into a hundred or so living spiders of various sizes: from hairy tarantulas to slender, tiny house spiders. As a general rule, for each evolution point the Azarath has above its original four, an additional fifty living spiders of various shapes and sizes emerge from the slaughtered hybrid as its blood, skin and bones warp into these little arachnids. And these are only the living spiders — the rest of the Azlu’s body mass, which will likely account for thousands more, transforms into a mass of dead spiders from which the living remnants attempt to escape.



Killing an Azarath leaves no physical evidence (beyond any appropriate bloodstains from one hell of a battle), as the entire body matter breaks down and transforms. This means that the Uratha can hunt and kill these monsters with impunity and not worry about leaving any evidence that would astound mortal scientists. The negative side to this “swarm dissolution” is that the Azlu, once deprived of their Azarath bodies, are almost impossible to kill permanently.

An average Azarath will have between one and two *thousand* spiders all swarming away in a great wave, sweeping over any number of directions and surfaces. As ever, if even one of these arachnids lives to escape, it carries the (now severely reduced) Azlu soul-shard. It can then begin again as the weakest of Crawlers must — but the fact remains that it survives. The Uratha are canny fighters, and they have come to accept over the centuries that the destruction of the fearsome Azarath is a great achievement, but not a final death for the Azlu soul within the creature. Like many of the werewolves’ enemies, permanently killing the Azarath Azlu is no easy feat.

SAMPLE AZLU

The following characters are presented to serve as both examples of Azlu creation and ready-to-use antagonists in games of **Werewolf: The Forsaken**. Despite the Spider Hosts’ overriding urges and drives, the Azlu are a varied and diverse race. The characters below represent some of the behaviors of these hideous creatures, and serve to show the types of activities they perform that will draw the attention — and anger — of the Uratha.

THE SPECTRAL SENTINEL

Quote: “No! Do not touch that! Leave me to my art, *beastmen!*”

Background: The creature known as the Spectral Sentinel was always one of the less bold, less daring spawn of the Spinner-Hag. While thousands of its siblings crawled across the world, consuming each other and Joining with humans, the Sentinel simply roamed into the Shadow in the lands some leagues distant from a fledgling human settlement, and weaved its webs in isolation. In the middle of a vast desert of fine, light sand, the thumbnail-size arachnid began to weave.

Millennia passed with little in the way of change. Local spirits rarely took notice of the tiny spider, paying no attention to the thickening of the Gauntlet in such an uninhabited region, if they ever noticed the change in the spiritual barrier at all. For thousands of years, when the spider was not cowering in hiding from passing predators or the steadily-increasing pres-

ence of the Uratha, the tiny Azlu weaved its silk-thin spiritual webs over the land.

At the turn of the last century, after thousands and thousands of years of unceasing work, the Sentinel was discovered. His great art now spanned many hundreds of miles across the spirit wilds, in the remote region of the world known as the Sahara Desert. As the Sentinel traveled along its webs, seeking to retrace its steps back to its original starting point, it discovered that much of its webbing had been destroyed. While much of the spider’s existence was spent in repairing damage to its web, this was destruction on a previously unknown scale: the work of *millennia* — gone — in a heartbeat.

The Sentinel felt hot, bitter sorrow at the loss of its art, and crawled to the closest human city. It knew it must grow stronger if it was to defend its art in the future. Once in the human settlement, it soon discovered other, equally weak members of its kind, working and failing to extend their own webs in the chaos of the city’s spirit wilds. It attacked these foolish Azlu, consuming them, and growing stronger. Once it had swelled with gathered power, it poisoned a sleeping human for its home, and cocooned the paralyzed man in preparation for Joining.

The Azarath hybrid that emerged from the cocoon was very weak. The Sentinel had always been an artist, not a warrior. Wrapping itself in the dead human’s clothes, it fled the city, entering the Shadow once it was clear of the human nest. From the original hub of its now-destroyed web, the Sentinel traveled to another land across the great ocean: America. There in the vast tracts of wilderness between the human cities, the Spectral Sentinel resides in the spirit wilds once again; weaving its art into the Gauntlet, always spinning the great web.

Description: The Azarath known as the Spectral Sentinel is among the weakest — at least physically — of its kind, and can even pass for human under certain circumstances, such as near-darkness or when bundled under heavy clothing. The Sentinel possesses four eyes, each a smooth orb of dark blue. The two additional eyes are situated on the Azlu’s cheekbones. The Sentinel looks like a pathetic, homeless hunchback, as it is always covered in layers of clothing stolen from its victims. Its hunched posture hides a belly like a pregnant woman’s, which is where the creature’s spinnerets have developed. The Sentinel’s Azarath is formed from the body of a handsome Egyptian man, though little of the host’s beauty exists in the misshapen creature that exists now. Even the creature’s once dark skin is grayed and sallow, as though it were terminally ill.

Storytelling Hints: The Sentinel avoids physical confrontation whenever it can. It is weak — far too weak to go against a Forsaken pack — and it is well aware of the fact. However, delivering great harm to its web will raise the Azlu’s ire to killing fury. The Sentinel will always try to flee if it is attacked by a clearly superior foe (or foes). The creature, at its heart, is a coward like most of the Azlu. The fact it has survived since the Fall itself means little, as all of its days have been spent doing exactly the same thing: weaving. It has little life experience beyond the endless repetition of its own “art.” It can, however, speak English and Arabic, using the knowledge gleaned from the mind of its human host.

The Spectral Sentinel is a fine antagonist to use if the players’ pack is dedicated to keeping the Shadow reflection of their territory free of malicious influence. While the Azlu itself is not outwardly malevolent, the Sentinel is still seeking to separate the two worlds through unholy magic and the creature’s hatred of the Uratha burns hot after the destruction of its first great work of art.

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 2, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 2, Brawl 1, Crafts 4 (Elaborate Webs), Investigation 1, Medicine 2 (Human Biology), Occult 4 (Spirit Wilds), Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 3 (Spirit Wilds)

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Language 3 (Arabic), Language 3 (English)

Aspects: Additional Eyes 1, Azarath Joining, Boiling Spit, Breach the Barrier, Coward’s Edge, Gauntlet Webs, Spinnerets, Spirit-Sight, Swarm Discorporation, Wall Climb

Willpower: 6

Essence: 5

Virtue: Fortitude. The Sentinel presses on with its webbing, slaving to obey the unceasing urge to weave. No setback, no disruption, no interruption can truly turn the Azlu from this task, short of killing the creature once and for all.

Vice: Pride. The Spectral Sentinel lives for its “art” and despises everything and everyone that works against such creation. The Spider Host seethes with bitterness and hatred for the Uratha, blaming the entire race of werewolves for the destruction of his previous web.

Size: 5

Health: 7

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Derangement: Fixation (Weaving)

THE EYE EATER

Quote: “No, I am not your sister. This is merely her body. But she was sweet to the last, if that is any comfort to you.”

Background: The Azlu that titles itself the Eye Eater is a divinely malicious creature, even by the standards of its twisted, unethical race. This Azlu, though physically weak and un-evolved, has captured two other shards of The Spinner-Hag’s soul and is on the periphery between *luthazlu* and Azarath. It consciously chooses to remain in its natural form, however, for one key reason: it has evolved and developed just enough intelligence and personality to literally revel in malice, and it joys in the suffering it inflicts on the Uratha.

Early in its life, the Eye Eater discovered a taste for the eyeballs of its abandoned hosts. It soon turned this foul practice against the Azlu’s greatest threats: the werewolves. Specifically, the Eye Eater would enjoy killing any wolf-blooded human it could catch, or even any human that was related to a werewolf. Sometimes it would hollow out one a loved one and use the possession to sow discord and turmoil in the werewolves’ territory, and other instances would see the *luthazlu* merely paralyzing the human with venom, and eating the poor human’s eyes while he or she was still alive. When the blinded victim would return to the community, the Uratha would ready themselves for a hunt, sweeping their protectorates clean of any opposition in their zealous fury.

But the Eye Eater would be gone — the tiny spider already crawling across the great wide world to find the next gathering of werewolves. All the fury and righteous indignation in the entire world can’t help when you are seeking one tiny spider over a vast spread of territory.

It is curious that such a relatively weak Spider Host has managed to survive being consumed and absorbed by others of its kind, but this is down to a single fact: the Eye Eater is an admired and much-respected member of her race. It is known to many Azlu that the Eye Eater inflicts great harm upon the hated Uratha, and has secured its right to individuality.

Description: The Eye Eater is a particularly odd-looking money spider. Pink-fleshed with little blue veins like lightning across its skin, this thumbnail-sized arachnid also possess slightly overlarge mandibles and twelve elongated legs.

Storytelling Hints: The Eye Eater is a cunning and malevolent creature. It chooses its prey very carefully, spying on the members of the Uratha community for some time before choosing a particularly beloved or important human to possess and kill. The spider works to thicken the Gauntlet, but does so in a manner that maintains its privacy. This is achieved by creating the webs as it crawls from one city to

another, hiding the evidence of such weaving so as not to attract the werewolves and leave a trail that can be followed.

The Eye Eater, though physically frail, can be a terrifying antagonist in the right circumstances. Kin acting out of character or working to hinder the local Uratha could just be something behavioral and insignificant — or it could be a grave indication that something is very, very wrong. The Eye Eater displays the sheer, overwhelming maliciousness of the Azlu very well, and could easily serve as a good introduction of the race to a young, inexperienced pack. The statistics below detail the Eye Eater when in possession of a city-dwelling wolf-blood, using the controlled human's knowledge and memories. When the Spider Host is absent from a controlled body, simply apply the creature's Mental Attributes, Manipulation and Composure traits to the new body, subtract the "human host's" Skills, and use a natural spider's traits.

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 5, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2, Presence 3, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 2 (American History), Computer 2, Investigation 4 (Eavesdropping), Medicine 1, Occult 2, Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Stealth 3 (Hiding), Empathy 3, Persuasion 4 (Sleazy Seduction), Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Fresh Start, Language 3 (English), Toxin Resistance

Aspects: Breach the Barrier, Cosmetic Alteration, Coward's Edge, Gauntlet Webs, Hivemother, Hollow-Rider, Precognitive Awareness, Siren Whisper, Strong Memory, Wall Climb

Willpower: 7

Essence: 6

Virtue: Prudence. When level-headed and wary, the Eye Eater is clever, cunning and tactful. However...

Vice: Gluttony. When angered or lost in malicious musings, the Azlu is loath to resist the temptations of viciously ruining even more lives.

Size: 5

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

THE ORCHID MOTHER

Quote: "Welcome to my nest, dog-blood. You have come a long way to die, haven't you?"

Background: The Orchid Mother was one of the first to emerge from the Spinner-Hag's eggs. She, like so many Azlu, lived only to weave for many hundreds of years. As a Crawler in the wilderness and the dark places of human settlements she occasionally possessed humans and hid from the werewolves within the skulls of men and women. It was only after many centuries had passed that the creature that came to

be known as the Orchid Mother Joined to become one of the Azarath.

Even then, it lived an unremarkable existence by the standards of its kind. It hid in the Shadow, it hid in the physical world, and all the while it preyed upon humans for sustenance and weaved its webs in the darkness.

It was set upon by another Azarath that was hunting for soul-shards. The two hybrids were evenly matched, but the soon-to-be Orchid Mother managed to survive. Exhausted and near-death itself, it devoured the remains of the slain Azarath, as tradition demanded. However, this was the moment that the Azlu's existence became somewhat more unique.

Over the following days, the creature's abdomen swelled and the chitin skin that encased it began to crack, flake and peel away. Instinctively the Azlu knew it was going through a severe state of change, and retreated into hiding. When she returned to her territory, her abdomen was a pulsing egg sac, crammed with juices and plasm, and she was laying several tiny, fleshy eggs every week, in sticky clusters of a dozen or so. She had become a crone, and though she was far from the most powerful of her kind, she had been honored by the Spinner-Hag to be one of the few matriarchs of her race.

The Orchid Mother earned her name when she barely managed to escape from the Forsaken when they tracked her down. The curving, crisscrossing claw marks that rent her fatty abdomen resembled orchid blooms, and though the wounds healed, the pale scars remained carved into her flesh. Since that night, the Orchid Mother has remained hidden in the deserted places of human cities: close to the prey, but remote enough to hide her thriving nest from prying eyes.

Description: Six-legged and with a fatty, rounded abdomen, the Orchid Mother is a gigantic tarantula from the waist down, and a once-beautiful woman from the waist up. Her long, blonde hair is matted with grease, blood and filth, and numerous scars from the affectionate bites of her spawn and the struggles of her victims dot her human skin. The six furry arachnid legs that support her scarred abdomen are thick and capable of crushing force.

Storytelling Hints: The Orchid Mother, like most Azlu and *all* Azlu crones, thrives in isolation. Packs of the Forsaken might not even believe in the existence of such a creature as a Spider Host crone, but they will certainly realize the presence of something unusual when the numbers of Crawlers in their protectorate begins to increase.

The Orchid Mother is fond of arranging for other Azarath to guard and protect her, sacrificing themselves to allow the egg-layer time to escape. It is possible that if a pack clears out a particularly savage Azarath presence in a city, the slain hybrids might have been acting as a distraction to draw attention away from the matriarch.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 5, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6, Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Animal Ken (Spiders) 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 2, Intimidation 2, Investigation 1, Medicine 1, Occult 2, Stealth 3 (Moving Silently), Streetwise 1, Survival 4 (Hunting Humans)

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 1, Iron Stamina 1, Iron Stomach, Toxin Resistance

Aspects: Additional Legs (Spider Legs) 2, Azarath Joining, Boiling Spit, Breach the Barrier, Coward's Edge, Demonic Size, Egg Sac, Gauntlet Webs, Hydraulic Strength 3, Pre-cognitive Awareness, Strong Memory, Swarm Discorporation, Swollen Abdomen, Wall Climb

Willpower: 7

Essence: 7

Virtue: Fortitude. The Orchid Mother is a survivor, plain and simple. Despite constant hunts and attacks by the Uratha, the Azlu Queen strives to fulfill her important task and bring life to new Spider Hosts.

Vice: Gluttony. Like all Azarath, the Orchid Mother's primary diet is the flesh of humans. However, her love of the salty man-flesh goes further than many of her kind. Even at risk to herself, the Orchid Mother will occasionally venture into the dark alleyways and back roads of the city to acquire some extra sustenance.

Size: 7

Health: 13

Initiative: 9

Defense: 3

Speed: 15

BESHILU: BROOD OF THE PLAGUE KING

"... in local news now, a full fifteen children at St. Peter's Primary School were taken to hospital earlier today suffering from debilitating migraines. The health secretary is not ruling out the possibility of more meningitis cases in the area, and the rest of the school's students have been sent home for the rest of the week. Several pupils and a teacher complained of hearing scratching noises in the school's walls, but the council's health and safety inspectors found no trace of pest infestation. Parents are advised to remain alert for the symptoms of meningitis, contacting the proper medical authorities if in doubt..."

The Azlu and Beshilu are sufficiently alike that the werewolves can call them both Hosts, but the

resemblance between the two is general at best.

The Beshilu are frantic, crazed fanatics rather than cold-hearted, malicious killers. They leech the power of the Gauntlet, gnawing at the spiritual barrier in the frantic hope that the flesh and Shadow will once again come clashing together into a single world. When the two worlds collide, they believe, the millennia of separation will end, and the gathered soul-shards within each of the Rat Hosts will merge to find unity once more. For all the differences between the two breeds of *shartha* and their instincts, the Beshilu legend begins in exactly the same way as that of the Azlu: in Pangaea, with the life and end of a malicious demon-creature. The tale that tells of the Beshilu's birth is the tale that tells of the Plague King's death.

THE LEGEND

The Plague King was the lord and master of entire legions of disease-spirits. Illness, weakness, plague, poison, disease; these were the choirs in the foul demon's spirit-brood, and the creature took great glee in loosing his terrible servants on both mortal and spirit alike.

Ancient art paints a picture of something like a gigantic rat the size of a mammoth, with black fur that sprouted around poisonous, malignant cancer growths. These tumors bloomed and dangled from the demon's skin like grotesque fruit and constantly wept disease-thick pus. This fluid, in turn, blossomed into illness-spirits. The stench and corruption of these cancers was too much for even the Plague King's body, and the accumulated tumors wasted away the gigantic rat-like demon's senses of smell and taste. To compensate, the monstrosity developed a powerful sixth sense. It grew adept at interpreting omens and foreseeing the hazy paths of the many potential futures.

The Plague King, in the main, kept well away from the righteous wrath of Father Wolf. It dwelled in the depths of the Border Marches and was content to inflict its poisonous influence on the outlying human communities that the God of Wolves and the First Pack rarely visited. The Plague King delighted in the effortless slaughter that its powers created, especially relishing the deaths of so many humans who were frequently unable to fight off the illnesses visited upon them. The demon was overjoyed that these fragile mortals suffered so emotionally when they lost their loved ones to unstoppable disease.

An eternity passed in Pangaea. The Plague King was careful to avoid drawing the ire of Father Wolf, but word finally reached the noble protectors that

parts of the fringes of Creation were languishing in diseased torment. The God of Wolves declared one of his many Great Hunts and vowed to take the Plague King's head. What was unique about this hunt was that it was the only one to ever fail.

For months, Father Wolf and the First Pack scoured Creation, running the hunt for the Plague King. All the while, the Plague King kept a day and night ahead of them, sickening the very land with its passing as it fled from certain death. Cancerous sentinels of spirit and infected mortal creature alike threw themselves at the God of Wolves and his children, slowing them down at every opportunity. The hunt went on for months, perhaps even years. It only ceased when Creation itself cried out at the depredations of another demon: the Spinner-Hag.

Father Wolf — weakened since the birth of his children — had been away from the core of Creation for a long time. In his absence, the Spinner-Hag had claimed much of the world as her own. Again, the Great Hunt was declared, and Father Wolf turned his vengeance upon the spider-demon. She failed in her flight and died, and, in the deserted fringes of the Border Marches, the Plague King cackled at its victory over the God of Wolves. But all was about to change.

PANGAEA'S DECAY

The final days of Pangaea had come. Omens and signs wracked the world, as the Uratha grew dissatisfied with their alpha and prepared for his murder. The Plague King's spies watched as the Uratha returned from the bitter battle with the Spinner-Hag, and in the eyes of the werewolves was unease and disgust. The rat-demon learned of the bloated spider creature's final attempt at survival as she scattered her soul into shards, placing them in eggs. Reading the omens and seeing the potential futures that stretched out from the spider-demon's last actions, the Plague King believed it had perfected her imperfect, final act of desperation. It understood, and began to plan.

Father Wolf and his precious First Pack would soon resume the Great Hunt for the Plague King, and the rat-demon looked into the many futures to assess its greatest chance of survival. In the myriad futures, in each scene that unravelled before its eyes, the Plague King saw its own death at the hands of the God of Wolves. Bitter and crazed with the sure knowledge of its demise, the demon turned towards the core of Creation and sought out suitable vessels to house the fragments of its own soul. Time was short, and the Plague King had no time to search for an appropriate mate, let alone the thousands of mates he would need. Once he decided upon his chosen

vessels, he called them to his presence, and awaited the coming of his slayers.

Though the Uratha sing songs of the Twilight Hunt, when Father Wolf slew the Spinner-Hag in his last hour of triumph, the slaughter of the Plague King was accomplished without the accompanying howls of honor. When the First Pack caught the cowardly demon, the werewolves were taken by surprise at the thousands of rats that squirmed and ran around the waiting Plague King. When the battle was joined, the werewolves attacked with all their fury, though they watched Father Wolf's actions as the battle raged. The God of Wolves, weakened from both the years of sharing his power amongst his children and the Spinner-Hag's venom coursing through his blood, was close to losing the battle against even a creature as weak and pathetic as the Plague King. It was this final battle that firmly steeled the Uratha against their patron. Here they saw in truth how weak Father Wolf had become in both body and wisdom. When the Plague King finally fell, the First Pack realized the great error they had made.

The great cancer-ridden corpse lay still, and the werewolves watched in horror as the countless horde of rats swarmed over the massive demon's body and began eating it. The Uratha slaughtered as many of the vermin as they could, but thousands and thousands yet remained: gnawing and biting and swallowing the necrotic flesh of the fallen demon. When the body was nothing but bloody bones, the horde of rats scattered and fled across all of Pangaea. In each rodent that swallowed a tiny mouthful of the Plague King's flesh, a shard of Essence twisted the creature's soul, tying it to the physical realm and warping its desires to forever plague humanity. The Plague King was dead but his chosen children had escaped in their thousands — and they had escaped with their father's soul. And so the Beshilu were born in the last hours of Pangaea, carrying the Plague King's disease-ridden Essence and the dead demon's love of infecting humanity.

This was the werewolves' true failure. The Plague King escaped the justice it so deserved.

OTHER TALES

Again, the conflicting tales regarding the birth of the Hosts have spread in many different forms with many different endings. There are almost as many tales regarding the Plague King's death as there are Cahalith, for the Beshilu bear their share of the werewolves' merciless hate. That emotion above all others will make any

story retold over the centuries change in many ways.

Some loremasters and songkeepers insist that the Plague King was nothing but a lower spirit in the malicious pantheon ruled by the Spinner-Hag. Other Cahalith hold to the tales that the rat-demon was the child of the Spider Queen and the Famine Lord, and was the last of the demons to disincorporate his Essence into his own children. This would certainly account for the relative weakness of the Beshilu, especially when compared to the mighty Azarath Azlu hybrids. The idea of an alliance of sinister spirit-lords also gains credence when a pack meet one of the barely-understood Srizaku, or an even rarer breed of *shartha*.

THE FALL

The Uratha were convinced that their patron was no longer capable of leading them. His weakness in battle was becoming a hindrance. His lack of wisdom had allowed the Plague King to scatter his soul into shards and escape justice. Above all, demons and spirits across Pangaea no longer trembled at the promise of vengeance if they transgressed the natural law. Father Wolf was an unfit alpha for the First Pack, and the werewolves slew him with hearts filled with pity and regret.

The great curtain of spiritual force fell across the two worlds, cutting them in twain. The Beshilu, as divinely-gifted creatures of the physical world, were bound to the Realm along with the Azlu. However, both Hosts shared the Uratha's valued ability to breach the Gauntlet and move in both worlds. Such was the benefit bestowed by the soul-shards of dead demons.

CREATION MYTHS

Storyteller's Note: Strictly speaking, the Beshilu and Azlu were not born in the same manner. While they are both Spirit Hosts, one of the *shartha* "species" were formed wholly of spirit when their matriarch gave birth to them, while the other Hosts were imbued by their patron upon his death.

So why are they so similar? Why are they both Hosts?

Essentially, in the predominant Uratha legend, it comes down to both the Spinner-Hag's desperation and the second sight of the Plague King. The "patrons" of the other, hidden *shartha* are hardly mentioned at all, as the Forsaken so rarely meet (or meet and survive) an encounter

with these mysterious adversaries. Next to nothing is known of them.

The Spinner-Hag created her spawn as her last act; when her life was certain to end under the fury of Father Wolf and the werewolves she created a new breed of creature that had never existed in Creation before. Though the Plague King's death occurred soon after the Spinner-Hag's destruction, the rat-demon's powerful second sight allowed him to see the success of the evil Spider Queen's design. While no prophecy could truly predict the exact nature of the Fall or penetrate the mists of time with unerring accuracy, the Plague King knew of the Spinner-Hag's plans before, during and after she had executed them.

When his own time of desperation drew near, he copied that plan as best he was able, and it worked. He too created a race of insidious half-spirit, half-material beings that possessed great powers of survival and menace. Whether he was alone in this act depends on which of the Uratha legends a werewolf chooses to believe. Certainly, while the predominant myth emphasizes the presence of both the Azlu and Beshilu after the Fall, there are those that speak of the existence of the *shartha* long before the Sundering of Pangaea and the death of Father Wolf. If those legends are true, then the Spirit Hosts have even more history with the werewolves, for Father Wolf and the First Pack must have battled against the ancient *shartha* as readily as the Forsaken do in the modern nights.

THE CHATTERING BROOD

With the coming of the Gauntlet came the true birth of the Shadow and the Realm as utterly distinct worlds. The Border Marches disintegrated and the spiritual barrier flooded through Creation. Pangaea was devastated.

The weakest of the Rat Hosts withered and died, for the divine spark that lay within their souls burst with the storm of magic. The stronger Beshilu, thousands upon thousands of them, grew ever more aware of the great task that lay ahead.

The Beshilu, implicitly tied to the material realm by both physical body and the Plague King's "affection" for humanity, were bound to the material side of the Gauntlet. Similar in number to the Azlu, the Beshilu held different ideas on existence. The Rat Hosts were ever aware of their divine souls in a starkly different manner from the Spider Hosts.

Where one Host was bound to create, construct and weave power into the Gauntlet, the other was driven to destroy, raze and siphon power from the



great spiritual barrier. The Azlu instinctively believed that an impenetrable Gauntlet would allow the re-birth of their demonic patron and bleed the life from any resisting creatures. The Beshilu were instinctively certain that breaking the Gauntlet down would unleash a storm of magic that would return the world to a chaotic whole, kill most of the population of Creation and allow the rats to reJoin.

However, both Hosts suffered from a similar curse. The Beshilu, brothers to the Azlu in physiology if not in ideals, were bound by the primal, powerful fear that infected the Plague King's final moments. The Rat Hosts were terrified of the vengeance that the werewolves might bring, and debilitating supernatural fear prevented them from attempting to re-form until the Uratha were in their graves.

The Azlu scuttled to the darkest places of the Realm to bide their time in solitude and grow strong. Only occasionally did the Spider Hosts venture forth to spread their evil and feast on the flesh of humans. The Beshilu, tainted much further by their patron's hatred of Mankind, did not retreat quite as far. While the Beshilu remained in hiding, the instincts of the Rat Hosts played a more significant role in human history.

Plague.

THE RISE OF HUMANITY

No longer threatened by the predation of mighty spirits and demons, Man spread across the globe. Across the centuries, cultures and societies grew ripe and then fell to decay, and the endless cycle began again with the survivors. The Aztecs. The Babylonians. The Greeks. Carthage. Rome. Constantinople. Time and again, humanity rose from the rubble of destroyed empires.

With the ever-expanding humans went the animals and creatures that men and women had tamed and subdued. Dogs came to serve humans and revere Man as master. Cows, sheep, pigs, chickens — humans took the beasts of the land and turned them into livestock. One creature followed closely to Man and never choked under the mastery of humanity. This creature was a carrion-feeder, a scavenger, a survivor — and it had been chosen by the Plague King to be the earthly host of its soul. The rat, able to survive in the harshest conditions, followed in Man's footsteps and grew numerous. Many rats survived in the wild, of course. The Beshilu did not, for they sought to remain close to humanity and lived as true rats, scuttling through the growing settlements. Hamlets became villages, villages became towns and towns became cities. From the most humble col-

lection of huts to the most colossal metropolis, the Beshilu feasted alongside their rodent brethren.

History tells of the great plagues: storms of fatal diseases that leave few alive in their wake. The Bubonic Plague and the Black Death are the most famous of these epidemics, though cholera and other infections have done the rounds and taken their toll on the people of the Old World. While the Beshilu cannot claim responsibility for the horrors of such mass disease and the resulting slaughter, the Rat Hosts watched and manipulated such outbreaks with malicious glee. They played their part in these disasters, and with great relish.

During these times of plague and suffering, the Gnawing reduced sections of the Gauntlet to air-thin shreds of energy, and foul spirits of illness and disease made their homes in the Gnawed tunnels. From these dwellings so near to the physical world, the dark-hearted spirits took great joy in infecting the creatures of the Realm. No matter the outbreak of disease, the Beshilu revelled in its spread and allowed the filthy disease-spirits to follow and dwell in the Gnawed tunnels.

Though medical science has found many ways to combat infection and illness in the modern world, the Beshilu are still out there, scratching and chewing away at the barrier between this world and the next. Behind the Rat Hosts wait thousands of cancerous, sinister disease-spirits just waiting for the moment of the Gauntlet's fall.

A pack suspects when their territory is threatened by the Beshilu, for instances of disease and sickness multiply tenfold. While the horror of the Azlu lies primarily in the incredible physical force of the Azarath hybrids and the terrible thickening of the Gauntlet in Uratha territory, the Beshilu strike dread into the werewolves' hearts by the frantic and chaotic weakening of the spiritual barrier. The Gauntlet itself is the punishment for the Uratha's actions in what led to the Fall, but in the following years the spirit wilds have soured with taint and impurities. The werewolves know full well that if the barrier came tearing down, the darkness that waits on the other side would sicken the physical world beyond imagining. That is why the Beshilu must be destroyed.

THE WEAKEST BESHILU

"Hey, Adam, are you okay? You cruised off in a hurry last night. We were kinda worried." Adam's head turned slowly toward the speaker, and his voice echoed strangely.

"Yes. I am well."

"You sure, bud? I mean, damn, you ran out like you were on fire. It was a good party, too. You should've

stayed." Adam shivered slightly, looking at his friend intently.

"Please stop questioning me." There was an awkward pause. "No more questions."

"Adam, are you okay? You're freaking me out. Dude, put the phone down for a sec... are you alright?"

Adam pounded the cell phone again and again into his friend's face, eventually cutting off the screams. Standing up, Adam let the shattered plastic phone fall in pieces to the ground, right next to the battered corpse.

Like the Azlu, the smallest Rat Hosts are able to take shelter within the bodies of human beings. The *shartha's* signature possession is fundamentally different from the Spirit-Ridden's method of creating hosts. The Spirit-Hosts are not merely "variant" spirits — they are a race apart, as much flesh as immateria, created through the twisted genius of ancient demons. Accordingly, the Beshilu's possession is significantly different from the techniques employed by bonded spirits. The Rat Hosts do not fuse themselves wholly with the chosen host, nor do they lose their physical form. Just as the Azlu, the Beshilu control the human body like a puppet, using the taken host as a shell to hide within. It is a useful disguise, nothing more. Like all the *shartha's* abilities, it is not truly fleshly and not entirely spiritual — it is an obscene bio-spiritual mixing of the two.

The *luthazlu* are often skilled manipulators, and their possession is still flawed and detectable in several ways. Beshilu, each as frenetic and crazed as the long-dead Plague King, lack the skills to maintain such near-perfect control over their host disguises. In short, a human hollowed out by a Rat Host is easier to detect than one controlled by a Spider Host, but significantly more dangerous.

The weakest Rat Hosts, those *shartha* at the initial stage of evolution, are known as Gnawers, or the *nihiluth*. These are the Beshilu that remain in their rodent forms, and either exist as rats and gnaw through the Gauntlet, or take possession of human hosts and hide from the Uratha.

The Gnawers that hollow out humans for possession suffer similar drawbacks as the Azlu Crawlers, though with certain differences. Firstly, Gnawers do not enter the person's skull and eat the brain. The Beshilu are capable of biting their way into the stomach of a human and burrowing through the soft flesh to reach the heart. Once there, the blood-drenched, squirming rodent will eat the beating heart in a matter of minutes, while using its innate Essence to instigate the bond between itself and the human host.

This expenditure of Essence keeps the person alive (and in incredible pain) as his heart is eaten.

Eating the organ means that the *nihiluth* absorbs a great deal of understanding about the person's health and physical condition, but little of the host's memories or personality. When the heart is consumed, the Joining is complete. The Beshilu has complete control over the human's body, forged in the Essence-rich spiritual bond created by the Rat Host.

MEDICAL DIAGNOSIS

A note regarding medical analysis is worthwhile for any of the *shartha*, and the heart-eating Beshilu are no exception. It goes without saying that most medical scans and X-rays will reveal "something" anomalous within the patient's body. His heart rate will be erratic during the possession, as the Beshilu effectively powers the human body with its own life. Also, depending on the additional Aspects possessed by the *nihiluth*, any blood tests and breaking of the skin will reveal a squirming mass of rats living under the human's skin. In general, medical science is good at detecting something *very wrong* with a patient under *shartha* possession, but much worse at deciphering exactly what is wrong and why. That is the horror of the half-biological, half-spiritual possession, and it is the legacy of the *shartha*'s unique heritage.

THE STRONGEST BESHILU

The creature hissed quietly as it gripped the rafters of the church. Below, the werewolves milled around in their men-shapes, speaking of the thinned Gauntlet and dangers of the Shadow leaking through to the realm of flesh. The Rokhan felt its jaws clench tightly as thick strings of nervous drooling trickled its chin. It wanted to flee and escape the Uratha below. One day it would return and eat their pink flesh, crack their white bones and drink their red blood. Until then, it had to hide. The rest of the brood lay dead on the stones below.

One of the werewolves changed, growing into its half-wolf form. The towering beast snuffed the air, and slowly raised its head. A string of drool dangled and fell to the ground below, landing with a soft splat. The Beshilu's golden eyes locked with the incandescent green of the Uratha's, and the hybrid knew it had to flee — now or never.

Cowardice burns like acid in the hearts of the *shartha*. While the Azlu suffer the Spinner-Hag's final fear as acutely as the demon herself, her daughters are vicious fighters and delight in slaughtering the Uratha hunters that track them down. The Beshilu are simply not as dangerous or physically powerful as the Azlu in battle, and the fear they inherited from the Plague King is magnified with this knowledge.

The stronger Rat Hosts are known as the Rokhan. They are the Rat Hosts that have gorged on others of their kind and have evolved in both

size and intelligence to the point where they are able to flesh-meld with humans. The Beshilu hybrids that result in the fusion of Rat Host and human are frightening parodies of human and rodent-like features. They too seek to break the Gauntlet first and foremost, and are likely to flee from the Uratha rather than stand their ground and put up a fight. However, when backed into a corner, the Rokhan hybrids are sinister, malicious combatants, hissing and spitting as they lash out with tooth and nail.

Some evolve rodent features over their human appearances, while others are like gigantic rats that rival a wolf or even tiger in size. One of the only unifying attributes among the Rokhan is found in the creature's eyes. No Rokhan hybrid possesses human eyes. No matter how deformed the rest of the creature is, even the most human-seeming Rokhan Beshilu have golden, reflective eyes. This strange evolutionary staple is one of the ways that the Uratha hunters can be certain of their prey.

MODERN URATHA & BESHILU MYTHS

Just as the werewolves tell tales and howl of the Twilight Hunt of the Spinner-Hag, so too do the People speak and sing of the Plague King's death. The song is a bittersweet one, however. The tale tells of Father Wolf's final mistake, for the God of Wolves did not anticipate or predict the disease-spirit's escape and subsequent dissolution into soul-shards. Instead, after the killing blow was struck, the Plague King defeated *Urfarah*'s justice even in death.

This is a great way of bringing Uratha legends to life in game sessions. The passionate hatred the werewolves feel for the Beshilu (and the *shartha* as a whole) makes for fantastic legends retold as well as past "war stories" from individual packs and players.

The werewolves learn to hate the Azlu for any number of reasons, primarily because the Spider Hosts are so wholly and unashamedly malicious. The Beshilu, however, represent Father Wolf's last failure as alpha for the First Pack. That failure echoes through the ages since the Fall, and worse still, the Beshilu are the immortal, insane descendants of that final error.

Many Uratha that know their history has no love for the Beshilu. Cahalith and lorekeepers often acquire a store of cautionary tales over the course of their lives, telling the tales as warnings at gatherings. No informed werewolf can truly be comfortable with the frantic, deranged way in which the Rat Hosts operate. Bringing down the Gauntlet is a world-shaking act of stupidity in the eyes of reasoning creatures, and the Uratha are well aware that the frenetic Beshilu care nothing for the consequences of what



they are attempting. The Azlu's gradual thickening of the Gauntlet is a dangerous hindrance, but the Spider Hosts often break off their eternal efforts to take to the streets, feed and attack the werewolves. The Beshilu are, in the main, too scared to do that. Every breath in the Rat Hosts' bodies is spent in effort to bring the Gauntlet crashing down — unleashing havoc, chaos and death. The werewolves may not understand much of the *shartha's* mindset and true physiology, but the Uratha are all too familiar with the goals and tactics of the Beshilu. The Plague King must stay in a state of dissolution, and the Beshilu must be destroyed at every opportunity. Anything less may lead to the eventual destruction of the physical realm as a thing to itself.

In the eternal territory-by-territory battle for the two worlds, the Rat Hosts suffer some of the most venomous propaganda imaginable.

SECRETIVE SCAVENGERS

The Beshilu are the breed of *shartha* more likely to co-habit with others of their kind without feeling the burning desire to consume each other and grow stronger. For the Azlu, evolution is a powerful desire to grow in strength, competence and ability. For the Beshilu, it is usually only a way of hiding or fleeing from the Uratha more effectively. The Rat Hosts are often content to dwell together in small colonies or

broods of *nihiluth*, working as a group to gnaw at the Gauntlet.

Both the Rat and Spider *shartha* appear to hold the belief that in the Joining of soul-shards is the eventual “reconstruction” of the demonic creatures that created them. While the Azlu are merely rumored to believe this, offered as one of the many Uratha-born theories about the Spider Hosts, the werewolves know for certain that the Beshilu cling to the idea with fanatical devotion. The Rat Hosts are not shy about screaming it out at the marauding werewolves, shrieking it like a litany of spite when the hunters finally come howling.

This unifying belief should mean that the Rat Hosts are even more dedicated to consuming each other and developing into powerful hybrids, but this is not the case. While the majority of Azlu do indeed seek to rise in personal power, the Beshilu know that they cannot truly re-form into the Plague King until the Gauntlet is breached and destroyed forever. This belief, imprinted in the Rat Hosts' minds like an unalterable spirit's ban, is an advantage and a weakness in the eyes of the Uratha. It makes the weaker Beshilu easier to hunt and kill, as they lack the battle prowess of many of the werewolves' other enemies. However, it also makes the Rat Hosts exceedingly more difficult to locate and track, for a small swarm

of rats can hide just about anywhere in the sprawling cities of the Realm. Often the only warning a pack will have that its territory is under threat from the Beshilu is the dramatic increase in local illness that always follows the Rat Hosts' presence.

THE JOINING

When the Beshilu Join together, the result is a screeching, squealing clash between two or more rats. The victor consumes the loser, body and soul, and absorbs the soul-shard of the fallen *shartha*. This process mirrors that of the Azlu in most ways, though the *nihiluth* gain greatly different powers from those of the *luthazlu*, and the Rokhan hybrids are utterly different in appearance and physical prowess from the Azarath.

The natural form of all Beshilu is that of a fur-covered rat, usually black, brown, grey or white in colour. This rat is distinguishable from mundane rodents only by the eyes, which are a threatening, eerie golden colour. Most casual observation will be enough to convince an ignorant onlooker that the light caught the rat's eyes strangely, but an informed Beshilu-hunter uses the bright rodent eyes as a sure sign she is on the right trail.

NIHILUTH POSSESSION

When the weaker Beshilu possess and control human hosts, the difference between the two more common types of *shartha* is distinctly highlighted. The Rat Hosts do not seek a gentle entry into their prey, nor do they take their time to absorb the victim's memories to aid in a near-perfect imitation. When the Gnawers overtake a host, they go in with feral fury, clawing and burrowing into the person's chest and making straight for the heart. It goes almost without saying that sleeping (or otherwise prone) victims are ideal targets, to reduce the chance of flight or fending off the attack. Coated in blood and fluids, protected by the human's own ribcage, the rat eats the person's heart in a matter of minutes. From that moment on, with only the most basic and vague knowledge taken from the victim, the Beshilu's innate Essence-fuelled abilities allow full control of the host from the inside.

The frantic possession is far from perfect. Many Beshilu cannot even accurately speak the host's language, and almost all fail to absorb any details pertaining to the victim's life and circle of acquaintances. However, the tactic is a good one when a decent hiding place must be located at short notice. Though the *nihiluth* possession is often unsubtle and flawed, the speed and utility of completion is an advantage the Azlu sorely lack in their own meticulous method.

CHANGES IN THE HOST

People possessed by the Beshilu are always moving. The host suffers an aversion to loud noises and bright lighting, which is a giveaway that informed Uratha seek to exploit those expected of being controlled by the Rat Hosts.

The person has the mind of a frantic, cowardly *shartha*, and though some Beshilu are capable of masterful human imitation and subtle social games, the overwhelming majority are not. Above all, the *nihiluth* possession makes for an excellent hiding place. Anything else is secondary. In truth, the controlled host rarely betrays itself easily. While a victim's movements and reactions to outside stimuli might appear panicked and frantic at times, the Beshilu within the body is a sentient, cunning creature and will do its level best to blend in with a crowd of people if it is in such conditions. Only those paying close attention to a possessed host will notice anything outwardly unusual, other than perhaps the occasional facial tic or nervous sweat.

Medical diagnosis (though a Beshilu will fight tooth and nail to avoid such a discovery) reveals a rushed, hammering heartbeat — in addition to a golf-ball sized hole in the stomach where the Rat Host entered the body. Most Beshilu are of sound-enough mind to cover this "hollowing out" injury in clothes or bandages, and the possession itself stops the entrance wound from shedding further blood once the heart has been eaten. In fact, all blood flow is severely reduced once the body's true heart has been digested. Acting as a false heart, the possessing Beshilu nominally controls the blood pumping around the body.

PUNCTURE HOLES

This disgusting, flawed possession inflicts immediate and obvious injury on the victim — the small hole in the stomach that the Rat Host wriggles through to enter the body. Beshilu-hunting Uratha call these "puncture holes."

Though the strange half-spiritual/half-fleshy possession of the Beshilu means that the wound stops bleeding soon after infliction, if a werewolf can identify this signature injury on a person he suspects to be possessed, it is clear evidence indeed.

Though the Beshilu take pains to cover this small injury, some Rat Hosts, when nervous, lose control of the victim's finer biological functions, and the circulatory system in particular. The evidence

becomes even more compelling (and horrific) if a person trying to hide in a crowd suddenly finds himself leaking blood from a hole in his belly.

The *nihiluth* possession is not permanent, and is considerably less sustainable than that of the *luthazlu*. At best, with the reduced blood flow within the body and the infection-prone puncture hole, the victim will begin to decay within a week. The Beshilu can imbibe food and drink, though such ingested matter sits unchanged in the host's inert digestion system. Essentially, the host body is a corpse, kept on the faintest border of life and death by the still-beating heart and minimal brain activity. After a few days, even this fails to sustain the dying body, and it becomes a corpse in truth.

Most Beshilu have long since abandoned such temporary hiding places by this time.

The *nihiluth* scavenge for food and often eat leftovers in the trash, sewage and other rats. On average, a Beshilu will devour no more than an average rodent of its size would in any given day. When in control of a person, the Beshilu does not need to sustain itself with food, as the possession is always a short-lived arrangement. Should the manipulation continue for longer than two weeks, the Beshilu may begin to suffer the effects of starvation. Unlike the Azlu, the Beshilu rarely find great joy in eating the flesh of humans.

Example

Harold Garrett is on a night out with his friends, cruising through the low-end strip bars in downtown Los Angeles. He falls behind the group, stepping into an alleyway to take a piss.

He cries out in surprise as a small, cold rat runs up his pant leg, and he stumbles back, flailing at the creature. He manages to swat the rodent as it clings to his t-shirt, but staggers back into the wall and falls to the ground. Screaming now, he grasps at the wriggling rat as it disappears under his t-shirt and starts clawing its way into his belly. Half-stunned with shock and half-frenzied with panic, Harold rips his shirt off to reveal the slim, pink tail of the rat as it slides into the bloody hole in his stomach like slurping spaghetti. Within seconds the rat is eating his heart, and Harold enters minor convulsions.

His friends run back to see what all the screaming is about, standing at the mouth of the alley and looking in. There they see Harold getting up off the ground, zipping his jacket closed. They ask if he's okay, but he doesn't answer. Harold no longer remembers who these people are, or how to speak their language, and with a curt wave of his hand, he walks down the street away from them. The Beshilu inside his ribcage is hidden from the hunting

Uratha for another precious few days, and will lay low until it is safe to resume its Gnawing once more.

GNAWER BEHAVIOUR

The Rat Hosts in possession of a human body tend to behave in extremes. They are often either wildly social creatures hiding within the largest crowds possible and trying to blend in as best they can, or they are stalwartly isolationist, retreating from any possible scrutiny at all. The Gnawers are notorious for holding onto a possession just long enough to achieve their goal — be that goal merely hiding or wreaking some kind of havoc — and then discarding the human corpse without a second thought.

An important factor for even the fearful Beshilu is that the possession gifts them with a more physically powerful body, albeit temporarily. While this is far from the might of a true hybrid (and certainly nothing compared to the werewolves' vicious Gauru form) it is still an improvement on living as a scurrying, vulnerable rodent. Any local humans who threaten the Beshilu's secret actions can be easily intimidated or removed when the Rat Host stands on more even terms. Apartment-block fires or neighbourhood murders occur wherever humanity gathers en masse, but the Beshilu are avid users of such tactics to eliminate any humans who could potentially stumble upon the Rat Hosts' interests.

The Gnawer mindset essentially puts a chaotic, utterly alien consciousness into a human body and unleashes it on society at large. The victims of this possession act in a near-continuous state of anxiety or irritation — always as though *something* were about to happen. The Azlu have to contend with ill-understood memories and knowledge, but the Beshilu have to deal with barely controllable, previously unknown human emotions. This does not mean the Beshilu suddenly feel capable of love and friendship, rather that the Rat Hosts within human bodies feel on edge, uncomfortable and scared by the rush of alien feelings once the heart has been consumed. It puts their supernaturally-heightened fear on a new plateau, and they react accordingly. Fights in the street or in crowded bars and public transport are common for tense Beshilu, and the combat is not the standard punching and kicking of drunk college kids at a party. Witnesses to a Beshilu losing control are understandably unable to forget the sight of a person physically launching himself at someone and pulling off chunks of soft flesh with his teeth.

Some werewolves often wonder why it is that there are still so many Gnawers in comparison to the Rokhan. Presumably, the Plague King's essence was

finite, and could be broken into a finite number of soul-shards. Over the millennia, most of the Gnawers should have united. Many werewolves assume that *nihiluth* have a penchant for falling into hibernation, or even that some have been sleeping since the Plague King's death. The alternative would seem to be that the Beshilu have learned to breed somehow, and the Uratha prefer to believe that this is impossible.

THE HYBRID JOINING

With the Rokhan hybrids, the Beshilu truly come into their own. To commence the Joining with a human, the Beshilu must first have consumed several others of its kind: enough to have grown to the size of a small cat, or a football. At this stage of growth, the Beshilu sheds its *nihiluth* Aspects and seeks a host body to flesh-meld with.

The natural form of the Rokhan Beshilu is a standard human, altered with a literal host of rat-like and rodent features. Few Rokhan can pass for human in any but the most lightless of circumstances, though they stand a far greater chance of doing so than the Azarath Azlu. All Rokhan possess the golden eyes that reveal their *shartha* nature, but other common alterations include patchy rodent fur across parts of the body, exponentially improved reflexes, sharp claws, elongated incisor teeth and the development of skin tumours that are lethal to anyone but the Rat Host himself. A few rare Beshilu warp the human's flesh entirely into the shape of a gigantic rat, but these creatures are few and far between.

ROKHAN POSSESSION

To bond with a human, the Beshilu need no period of cocooning metamorphosis as the Azlu. The potential host is "prepared" for the process by use of the rat's infecting bite, from the Aspect: Rokhan Joining (see p. 156). This bite transmits a fatal, mutating disease into the person's bloodstream, eliminating the host's antibodies and manufacturing cysts and cancers that "bloom" at an incredible rate. After only a few hours, the bite will have rendered the host lethally ill and delirious. The cancers appear inside the body and are not outwardly detectable, though the host will feel more ill than he ever has in his life.

Once in this state, the Beshilu will track its host-to-be by catching the unique scent of the ripening cancers. Upon reaching the immobilised human, the Rat Host will pour its Essence into the victim. The Rat Host's soul and consciousness transfers to the prepared, tumor-ridden human, and the rodent body shivers and dies after a few moments.

At this point, as the human body houses the powerful Beshilu's soul, the victim is warped and

altered by the flow of alien Essence, tainted further by the supernatural tumors. The process takes only a few hours, and ends with the Rokhan waking fully-changed and aware, with the advantage of having fully absorbed the dead human's knowledge and memories.

CHANGES IN THE HOST

The Beshilu has no manipulation over the results of the Joining, nor over any subsequent mutations or evolutions it goes through as it absorbs more of the Plague King's soul. First and foremost, the Rokhan hybrid wakes with the golden eyes of all Beshilu. These orbs see as well as human eyes, and in many cases, they enhance the Beshilu's eyesight considerably, especially in regard to tracking movement. It is only the later development of many tumors that steals the Beshilu's sight and enhances the potential for precognition and prophecy.

The cancers are perhaps the most dynamic and grotesque development among the Rokhan, and they commonly spread across the hybrid's skin, appearing as lesions that cover much of the creature's body. The tumors themselves vary in the kinds of illness that they cause in others, but they most often appear as red or purple swellings that ripen and burst like buboes, leaking a watery mix of blood and pus. A Rokhan possessing these hideous cancers will never be able to hide in a crowd, as even when covered and cleaned (which most Rokhan would never do) the tumors reek of mold and corruption.

Rats have small, weak claws used primarily for grip and burrowing. The Rokhan hybrids also commonly sport thin, nail-like claws on the ends of their fingertips. Though the elongated nails break if subjected to extreme pressure, they are excellent for scratching and slashing at opponents, just as they work well for gripping onto surfaces or digging through soft ground. Many Beshilu also develop a lashing rodent's tail up to two yards in length. This aids balance and can be used to lash out at foes when the Beshilu is backed into a fight.

Rokhan grow in strength and evolve further by killing others of their kind and consuming their souls. As with the Azlu, a Beshilu killed at the hands of one of his brethren is prevented from dissolving into a swarm and fleeing by the enforcing pull of the soul-shards. This is the "spirit's ban" of the *shartha*, and one even the defeated Hosts must accept as necessary for the greater good of their cause.

CONSPICUOUS CONSUMPTION

Rokhan hybrids do not suffer the extreme measures that Azlu must endure in regard to diet. Though

any Rokhan Beshilu would feast on the body of a human if it had little other choice, the Rat Hosts can find sustenance by eating pretty much anything that either is, or was once, alive.

This includes flesh at any level of decay, sewerage, tree bark, coal and any number of random items a hybrid can scavenge for in the urban wilderness. The Rokhan rarely need to venture into werewolf territory looking for their next meal on the streets, and are all the more difficult to locate as a result.

Example

Edward Mandelson is taking out the trash one night when a rat bites his ankle. He swears, kicks at the little rodent, and returns to his house. An hour later he goes to bed, feeling incredibly unwell. He does not know that in his organs, cancers are developing at an unnatural rate, blooming and spreading poison around his body. The pain keeps him awake, and in another couple of hours, he lies in bed, covered in sweat with shallow, ragged breathing. He is only minutes from death.

The Rat Host that bit him earlier can scent the corruption growing within his body, using the aroma of the inflicted cancers as a beacon to track the victim. Once the rat is crawling over the “prepared,” diseased body, the transfer of Essence is easy and fast. The rat body curls up and dies. Within Edward’s body, he feels himself getting light-headed and nauseous. His last thought is the realisation that he can’t move his limbs, and he is worried that he’ll choke on his own vomit. The Beshilu is within him now, and Edward’s consciousness fades and dies.

Over the next hour, the body warps and changes — altered by the flow of alien Essence and the supernatural diseases that flow through the corpse. After the Joining is completed, Edward stands and regards the room. His eyes are golden orbs and he is covered in patchy, itching fur that is rife with lice and gnats. His fingers end in pinkish nails over three inches long, and he possesses a twitching, white-skinned tail that hangs to the floor. His reflexes have improved so much that when he turns around, he almost loses his balance. Once it has its bearings, the Beshilu stalks through the house and out the front door. Before it leaves, it makes a meal of Edward’s housecat, which had unwisely chosen to hiss and spit at the creature as it came down the stairs rather than flee.

ROKHAN BEHAVIOUR

The Rokhan are vicious cowards and dangerous fanatics. A rat-human hybrid that weakens the spiritual barrier between worlds is dangerous enough, but the Rokhan have a tendency to work together in groups known as “broods.” Unlike the Azlu, this cooperative mentality means that the Rokhan hybrids that hide in the dark places of the cities are savagely

efficient at what they do: ripping the Gauntlet into shreds.

The danger of the Beshilu lies in their Gauntlet-destroying powers, and it arguably makes the Rat Hosts the most threatening *shartha* of all. Individually, the Rokhan are not quite comparable to the power of a werewolf. A brood of hybrids making trips into the city to tear down the barrier, always striking at different (and random) locations makes for a terrifying threat for a Forsaken pack. Having such a variable in Uratha territory means that spirits will enter the Realm in a near-flood, threatening the stability of the domain.

Rokhan have the intelligence and cunning to set up ambushes for when the werewolves inevitably come hunting. The hybrids, when safely supported by their broods, often have the physical and magical power to repel the Uratha’s assaults. The Rokhan certainly have a great ability to flee from the werewolves and escape to safety.

Heightened reflexes and the instincts of hunted scavengers means that a Forsaken pack chasing a fleeing Rokhan are in for the hunt of their lives. Such encounters are a determined trail of effort, stamina and endurance as the Rokhan leaps from rooftop to rooftop, streetlamp to streetlamp, and car roof to car roof in an effort to flee. Above all, Rokhan Beshilu are fast. They think fast and they act faster, working from instinct and intuition, rather than established planning.

Also of note is the capacity for Rokhan seers and prophets to anticipate the coming of Uratha hunters, reading the portents in such imagery as seasonal rainfall, the spinning of a coin or written in blood with the entrails of a slaughtered taxi driver. Often when the Uratha hunters arrive in an area where the Gauntlet has been Gnawed, all that awaits the werewolves are the rogue spirits that have taken up residence there. The Rokhan are long gone, having seen the coming of the Forsaken in a vision that morning.

CREATING THE BESHILU

The Beshilu are a race of creatures that offer variety and mystery at every level of development. The Gnawers are a literal plague of nuisance and danger that can hide in the bodies of humans and avoid detection, while the Rokhan hybrids that cluster in broods are vicious, disease-ridden monsters that trigger a greater influx of other spirit refugees into the physical world.

This section allows Storytellers to construct detailed Beshilu for use as antagonists in games of *Werewolf: the Forsaken*. It explains the Rat Hosts' many abilities and features an extended list of their devastating Aspects.

ATTRIBUTES

The base form of a nascent Rat Host is that of a tiny rat, about the size of a human thumb. This rodent uses the standard traits for a natural rat; most of its Physical and Social Attributes are 1, save for a Dexterity of 4. The Beshilu possess a greater degree of memory and cunning than actual rodents, and each Gnawer has the golden eyes of all Beshilu. The Rat Host's intelligence increases as the *nihiluth* devours more of its brethren, and the Storyteller should assign high Intelligence and Wits scores to those Beshilu that have survived long enough to develop such traits.

A *nihiluth* that leaves possession of a human body keeps its Aspects and soul-shards, so a Rat Host with the Heart-Eater and Broodfather Aspects will be able to use both abilities again in the next possession. All Beshilu possess the Heart-Eater Aspect, which equates to the first evolution point that all *shartha* are created with.

The Rokhan base form awakens from the change with the same Physical Attributes that the human possessed in life, but uses the Beshilu's Mental Attributes. Part of the possession involves the complete absorption of the human's knowledge and memories, and the hybrid keeps the human Speed and Size factors of 5.

ESSENCE

The Beshilu tend to have very high Essence scores, at least compared to the Uratha. The true danger of the Rat Hosts is the damage they bring to the Gauntlet. All *shartha* can claim one or more truly terrifying, threatening abilities that hinder and harm werewolves, but the Beshilu — for all their weaknesses — are masters of the most dangerous ability of all Hosts.

They destroy the Gauntlet. A weakened Gauntlet allows any number of hostile, crazed or alien-minded spirits to wreak havoc and dwell unnaturally within the physical realm. An area of territory that has distinct, Gnawed holes in the spiritual barrier is going to be a near-constant battlefield until the Rat Hosts are killed or forced into flight, as spirits cross into the physical and slake their strange desires as they wish.

Reaping

The Beshilu are not renowned for their love of Reaping the Essence from werewolves. This horrific

practice remains more a battle tactic (and sadistic treat) of the cold-hearted Spider Hosts. However, a Beshilu brood that vastly outnumbers their Uratha opponents *might* try to Reap them, if the odds are stacked savagely against the werewolves.

A gathering of Rokhan barrier-breakers descending on a lone werewolf who has strayed from his pack is not just going to kill the straggler — they are likely to leech spiritual power as they bite his flesh and swallow mouthfuls of his blood. Unlike the Azlu, they do not eat the corpses of Uratha to steal their Essence — the Beshilu must swallow a werewolf's blood. It need not be every drop of blood in a body, but certainly most of it — approximately six pints. Several Beshilu Reaping at once will gain only a partial replenishment of their Essence.

MORALITY

The Beshilu have no real Morality trait, as distanced as they are from human moral behavior. Nor do they seem to need one in order to fall into mental degeneration. The Rat Hosts are ravaged by their derangements from the moment they develop reasonable intelligence. Any mental illness related to paranoia, anger, fear, phobias and mistrust are perfectly apt for the degenerate (and degenerating) Beshilu.

WILLPOWER

The Rat Hosts are known for their frenzied desire to bring chaos to the two worlds with the destruction of the Gauntlet. This is not a manifestation of dedicated willpower or direct fanaticism, however. It is a forced desire imprinted within their minds and souls. Suffice it to say, the cowardly Beshilu rarely possess great Willpower scores. If a Rat Host is threatened while it is attacking the Gauntlet, it will likely flee and start Gnawing somewhere else straight away, rather than stick around, defend its territory or return when the threat has passed.

If the Beshilu fail at something, they leave and try something else (or somewhere else), rather than try for success with increased effort. Combine this disinterested demeanour with their penchant for fleeing any danger and you have the average Beshilu mindset.

ASPECTS

While the power to chew holes in the wall between worlds is the strongest and most dangerous weapon in the Beshilu's arsenal, there are other spirit-sorceries that the rodent *shartha* use in their nightly struggle to bring the Two Worlds together. The pack that is unfortunate (or dedicated) enough to encounter a prepared Beshilu brood are in danger of being overwhelmed by the screaming, spitting hybrids as

the monsters telepathically summon more of their brethren and attack with enslaved animals.

As with the Azlu, each Aspect is listed with a given cost in evolution points. Those that are innate require no evolution points to purchase.

GENERAL ASPECTS

Some Aspects are intrinsic to all Rat Hosts of any age or level of evolution, and are marked as innate. Storytellers should feel free to convert appropriate Gifts and Aspects from other sources into *shartha* Aspects if they seem appropriate. These lists are far from complete; they are merely guidelines for the style of magic possessed by the Spirit Hosts.

BEASTMASTER (••)

The Beshilu spends an Essence point and rolls Intelligence + Animal Ken. For each success, the Rat Host can telepathically command one animal within line of sight to obey issued orders. The animal obeys until the Beshilu releases it, or it is killed. The Beshilu must spend a Willpower point to force an animal to obey orders that are obviously suicidal. Rat Hosts are very, very careful about using this power on wolves, but take great joy in doing so nevertheless.

BREACH THE BARRIER (INNATE)

A Beshilu with this Aspect can step sideways when in a locus' area of effect, much as werewolves do (for more information, see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 250). This Aspect is innate to all Beshilu.

GNAW GAUNTLET (INNATE)

The Beshilu's dangerous and primary power, this Aspect rends the barrier between the Two Worlds. At the cost of an Essence point and an hour's concentrated effort, the Gauntlet of a 10-square-yard area thins and is hollowed out by "spirit-tunnels." These tunnels are an expression for the ease in which spirits can breach the Gauntlet and reside within the barrier itself, rather than physical holes in the Gauntlet itself. Each hour of work reduces the penalty to reach through or peek by one die. Each additional hour (and point of Essence spent) increases the area of coverage or reduces the penalty by another die, but not both in the same hour. The penalty imposed by the Gauntlet cannot be reduced below +0; once the Gauntlet has been weakened, it will remain so until circumstances change its density once more, which may take months or years. This Aspect is innate to all Beshilu.

HIVE CALL (•)

This Aspect allows the Beshilu to telepathically speak to any other Rat Host within a radius equal to the creature's permanent Essence score in miles. The

Beshilu spends an Essence point and rolls Wits + Empathy. The Beshilu may send one single sentence per success through the Hive Call, which will unfailingly reach the other Rat Hosts instantly. Any werewolf with a Harmony rating of 7 or more hears the use of this Aspect as a painful "screeching" in their minds, as the Beshilu shrieks to its brothers.

INFLECT DREAD (••)

This Aspect allows the Beshilu to impose the supernatural terror it feels onto an unwilling target. While the Rat Host still feels its own fear of the Uratha murderers, it inflicts the same chilling sense of dread upon a human victim. Spend one Essence point and roll Presence + Intimidation; the victim may roll Resolve as a reflexive action to contest. A single success is enough to drive the target into a fear-driven panic. The dread lasts until the next sunrise, and most victims suffering this power spend the time hiding in their homes, too frightened to even answer the phone or answer the door. Mortals that possess the Wrath vice might harm anyone that tries to calm them down. This power works only on humans.

RIED RIVER (•••)

The Rat Host hisses and spits out curses, screeching like a banshee, while spending an Essence point and rolling Manipulation + Subterfuge; the target may resist with a reflexive Resolve + Primal Urge roll. A single success clouds the target's mind, inflicting a -2 penalty to all dice pools as the victim sees himself covered in hissing, spitting rats. The hallucination lasts as long as the Beshilu maintains the behavior itself. Unfortunately for the victim of this power, the Rat Host is free to attack without penalty while it creates the noises.

RESERVE THE HOLLOW SHELL

As the Azlu Aspect of the same name (see p. 129).

SCENTLESS (•)

Rat Hosts with this Aspect become significantly harder to track by smell, as their scent is reduced to an infinitesimal glimmer on the senses. All dice pools used to track the creature by scent are at a -2 penalty. For some Beshilu, this Aspect is the only way to counteract the stench of their tumors.

SECRET SIGHT (•)

As the Azlu Aspect of the same name, including the enhanced ability to project all five senses across the Gauntlet (see p. 129).

NEALLUTA RAT ASPECTS

The weakest of the Beshilu remain in their rodent form until they have digested enough of their

brethren to advance in size and intelligence. The *nihiluth*, unlike the *luthazlu*, are equally effective when working in groups of their kin and frequently do so. Gnawers do not feel the burning desire to Join and grow into a hybrid; they do so from a conscious choice

Gnawers do not develop a vast array of Aspects. Though these Rat Hosts have their niche and place in Beshilu “society,” the weakest of the *shartha* are dangerous due to their ability to hide and their intimidating magical powers, not their evolved and varied physical forms. All Beshilu have 1 evolution point at birth, which must be spent to purchase Heart-Eater, but many increase this to 2–4 as they consume the souls of their fellow Rat Hosts.

At 5 evolution points, after devouring the souls of at least four other Beshilu, the *nihiluth* is ready to Join with a human and create one of the Rokhan — if it chooses to do so. At this stage, the Rat Host is the size of a housecat, and of full human-level intelligence. All Beshilu who wish to remain in their rat forms instinctively know when they are “sated” and have gathered enough of the Plague King’s soul to remain as powerful and effective *nihiluth*.

COSMETIC ALTERATION (O)

The *nihiluth* displays one or more blatant physical mutations that betray its supernatural heritage, such as bronze-green fur in image of the Plague King, additional tails or eyes of glowing gold that illumi-

nate the surrounding darkness. These mutations are extremely commonplace, and serve no purpose other than allowing the Beshilu to recognize each other and identify the creatures as obviously unnatural. This Aspect grants no advantage, and thus costs no evolution points.

BROODFATHER (C)

The Beshilu within the ribcage of a human is a bio-spiritual Joining that warps and alters the body’s innate Essence. Squirring black rats appear from warped muscle tissue and bone, and, within minutes of the possession, the victim is merely a hollow shell of skin covering the writhing mass of rat-flesh beneath. Such an infestation ruins the host, causing –2 on all Social rolls due to the moving, crawling flesh that is difficult to cover, but confers one excellent advantage to the Beshilu. If the host body is killed or otherwise destroyed, the Beshilu will flee the ruined corpse amongst the swarm of rats, using them to conceal itself and increase the chances of escape. The Rat Host can also voluntarily “dissolve” the body and break down into a swarm of these rats, though only the Beshilu itself will display the golden eyes of all Rat Hosts.

FERAL FOCUS (O)

Prerequisite: Wits ••

The Beshilu has fine-tuned its feral instincts to use the human’s senses, and the host body reacts faster and with greater power as a result. Rat Hosts with



this Aspect add 1 die to all physical-based dice pools, as an advantage of directing their animal instincts and supernatural fear through the victim's body.

HEART-EATER (•, MANDATORY)

Effect: The Beshilu has “hollowed out” a human by entering the person's belly and burrowing into the chest to eat the heart. No roll is required, and the process takes only a couple of minutes, from the moment the Beshilu enters the host's stomach to the moment it wields control over the human's body. The Rat Host learns very little of the host's memories and knowledge, merely using the body as a puppet.

This impersonation is far from perfect. The Beshilu will take the time to cover the puncture hole in the stomach, but there is always a frenetic sense of suppressed action in a person controlled by a Beshilu. The eyes dart from side to side, and the person always seems to wish to avoid close contact with other people. Dedicated observers and the sincerely suspicious can make a Wits + Composure roll; the Beshilu contests with a reflexive Intelligence + Composure roll. If the observer wins, she may be alerted to something definitely wrong with the Beshilu, such as a squirming in the chest under the ribs, the scent of fresh blood surrounding the victim, or a slight golden shine in the pupil of the possessed human.

The host body will begin to decay after 1 to 3 days, at which time the Beshilu will usually leave the body and prepare another to suit its purposes. On average, the rotting host body will lose a dot of Appearance and one dot of each Physical Attribute every month due to decay. The body will become unusable when it is reduced to zero Physical Attributes, but Storytellers should apply discretion to Appearance penalties in regards to walking corpses if the “one a month” rule doesn't suit their purposes: at a brightly lit party, for instance.

ROKHAN HYBRID ASPECTS

The Rokhan base form is that of a normal human, and each Aspect purchased warps a part of the body further towards the eventual rat-like demonic forms of the oldest hybrids. Every part of the human body not altered by an Aspect remains human in appearance, though it can be warped later by additional devouring of other Beshilu and the consuming of their souls.

The weakest Rokhan awake from the transformation with between 5 and 10 points of Aspects. The most commonly encountered Beshilu hybrids have between 11 and 25 points, and these are the broods of Rokhan that the Uratha are likely to have some trouble “cleaning out” of their territory. The most powerful Rokhan will have over 26 points to

spend, and often lord over the less evolved members of their broods. Obviously, each Rokhan must begin with the Aspect: Rokhan Joining.

ADDITIONAL TAIL (••)

Prerequisite: Lashing Tail

The Beshilu grows a second tail alongside the original. This tail can act independently of the first, and both lash out in striking, whip-like motions. This second tail adds a further die to all Dexterity rolls involving balance, and an additional +1 to all the hybrid's Brawl and Melee rolls.

ADVANCED CANCERS (••)

Prerequisite: Poison Tumors

The Beshilu's tumors ripen and sour into the savagely infectious cancers that covered the Plague King. These cancers deaden all pain and most of the sensation in the Beshilu's body. The Host gains two additional dice to any Stamina-based dice pool. Few Beshilu develop tumors of this severity, and the illness-spirits that follow such Rokhan are often very powerful. More importantly, only those Beshilu “blessed” with these rare, enhanced cancers ever stand a chance of developing the sixth sense of the Plague King.

BROKEN CLAWS (••)

Prerequisite: Burrowing Claws

The Beshilu's claws become fragile and prone to breaking off every time they are used to grip or strike out at an enemy. The claws regenerate every time they break, taking a single turn to do so. Horrifically, the shards of cracked and broken claws remain embedded in an opponent's flesh, causing further damage to soft tissue and aggravating any inflicted injury. Each turn the claw shards remain embedded in an opponent, the victim suffers a point of lethal damage. It takes a turn of uninterrupted effort to remove the fragments from any injuries. If the Beshilu also has the Aspect: Infected Claws, the hybrid's attacks automatically infect the target, as disease-ridden bone fragments seep poison into the victim's blood.

BURROWING CLAWS (••)

Effect: The Beshilu's nails lengthen and thicken into rat-like claws between 1 and 4 inches in length. These claws are not as firm and durable as the talons of a werewolf, and are only useful for enhancing the Beshilu's grip on climbable surfaces and burrowing in soft earth. If used to attack, the claws inflict lethal damage (with no equipment bonus or penalty), and are prone to breaking if **more than** three points of damage are inflicted on an opponent in one turn. The claws add 2 dice to all dice pools involving climbing and digging with the hybrid's hands.

DEMONIC STRENGTH (•)

Effect: The Beshilu's muscles thicken and grow, greatly increasing the hybrid's physical abilities. As the divine soul of the Plague King mutates the body further, the Rokhan becomes stronger, faster and more resistant to damage. Some Rokhan become massively muscled brutes, while others remain slender and have a hidden, wiry strength. With each purchase of the Aspect, the Rokhan adds 1 to any single Physical Attribute. This Aspect can be taken multiple times, to a maximum of six dots in any Attribute.

FLEA-RIDDEN FUR (••)

Prerequisite: Rodent Fur

The Rat Host's fur is literally crawling with gnats, fleas, chiggers and other tiny vermin. These bugs form a smoky haze around the hybrid, and most Rokhan with this Aspect are a walking mess of bites and scratches. These infesting bugs cause -1 penalty on all Brawl or Melee attack rolls made against the Rokhan, as the tiny insects turn their attention on any living thing that comes close to the Beshilu. The Beshilu itself does not suffer this setback, as it is used to the constant irritation. At the Storyteller's discretion, the plaguing insects can reduce other dice pools of victims within a dozen yards of the afflicted Rat Host, if the action in question is something that would suffer from distraction.

GLOWING EYES (••)

The Beshilu's golden eyes brighten to glowing orbs that illuminate the hybrid's surroundings in a thin, eerie golden light. This brightness means the Beshilu can see perfectly in even complete darkness, though the light also allows the Rat Hosts' foes to see with limited ability at the Storyteller's discretion. This glowing light effectively blinds the Rat Hosts' opponents if the hybrid looks its enemy in the face for a second or more. If the hybrid engages in combat, the Glowing Eyes work to blind its opponent, reducing the attacker's dice pool by 2 for the duration of the combat. This Aspect only works on attackers that the hybrid can engage in close combat.

INFECTED CLAWS (••)

Prerequisite: Burrowing Claws

The Beshilu with Infected Claws becomes a sinister and dangerous opponent. Anyone that suffers at least one point of damage from the Beshilu's claw attack becomes poisoned by the infections that are carried on the creature's filthy nails. This infection acts as a Toxicity 8 poison that weakens the immune system and lowers the victim's resistance to disease. Humans and animals afflicted in this manner could potentially develop a fatal illness (at the Storytell-



er's discretion), and Uratha suffer a -1 penalty to all Stamina rolls for a relatively short duration: (10 - Hishu Form Stamina) days.

LASHING TAIL (••)

The Beshilu develops a lengthy, pink-fleshed rat's tail that grows from the hybrid's lower spine. The tail is usually between 3 and 4 feet in length. Unlike normal rodents, the Rokhan has complete control over the tail and is able to use it like a whip-like limb, lashing out at foes in combat. The tail confers a +2 bonus to all Dexterity rolls involving maintaining balance under treacherous conditions, and adds +1 on all Brawl and Melee rolls the Beshilu makes against opponents in combat, as the Lashing Tail whips out at foes and strikes at them.

MUTATED ROKHAN (•••)

Prerequisites: Burrowing Claws, Demonic Strength •••, Rodent Fur, Lashing Tail

Effect: Most hybrids are at least humanoid in appearance, though undeniably monstrous. The few Rokhan that mutate even further shift and warp into massive rats, similar in size to the werewolves' Urshul hunting form. Essentially, the Rokhan becomes a gigantic rat, close to the size of a horse. These monstrosities stand on muscular legs and keep all of their previous Aspects — even to the point of still being able to lash out with their clawed, humanlike arm-legs. It almost goes without saying that these monsters dwell deep under city streets in the sewer tunnels (and deeper still), or miles from civilization, out in the wilderness.

POISON TUMORS (•••)

The Beshilu grows skin cancers that cover the hybrid's skin in purple and black swellings. These tumors emit a reeking stench that surrounds the Rokhan for several feet in every direction, making the creature significantly easier to track (add 2 dice to all rolls to track the Rokhan by scent). The tumors are filled with demonic ichor similar to the diseased fluids that ran through the Plague King's own body. The Rokhan becomes a Typhoid Mary, spreading disease in its wake and strengthening any illness-spirits that will follow the hybrid like a beacon. Humans and animals that linger in the Rokhan's presence are almost guaranteed to develop a fatal illness of some kind, usually some kind of cancer. While the tumors are often a hindrance to the Beshilu, allowing werewolf hunters to track the creature with ease, the diseases numb the Beshilu's tactile senses and nerves. A Beshilu with Poison Tumors suffers no wound penalties, no matter how injured the hybrid is, for the creature's nerves are nearly dead to pain after the

suffering it has endured with the cancers ravaging its skin.

PROPHET'S VISION (••••)

Prerequisite: Advanced Cancers

The Beshilu's tumors have sickened the hybrid's eyes and stolen its sight. While this forces the Rokhan to operate as any blind creature, the Rat Host has developed a powerful sixth sense just as the Plague King once possessed. For all the limitations of this Aspect, it is the rarest mutation and seen as the highest blessing of any hybrid alteration. Rokhan who evolve Prophet's Vision are defended by other Beshilu with uncharacteristic savagery and suicidal courage against the Uratha, for these hybrids are seen as nothing less than the direct heirs to the Plague King's power. Any Rokhan with this Aspect can effectively use the Insight Gift: Omen Gazing at no Essence cost. The Beshilu that use Prophet's Vision must glean the dark futures through gazing into pools of liquid (such as water, urine or blood), meditating through tricks of chance (such as interpreting the fall of coins or dice) or by reading the intestines of a slain creature. Exactly *how* the blind Rokhan monster sees what it is interpreting is something no werewolf knows.

RODENT FUR (•)

The Rokhan is covered in black, brown, white or grey rat fur. This fur usually coats the hybrid's entire body, but can be limited to the creature's limbs or torso on rare occasions. This fur offers some protection against the cold (like standard animal fur) but is primarily a sign of a Beshilu's continued Aspect.

ROKHAN JOINING (•, MANDATORY)

Prerequisite: 5+ evolution points

This is the prerequisite Aspect for any Rokhan development. A Beshilu that has reached 5 or more evolution points is no longer considered a standard *nihiluth*, and will often seek out a human to flesh-bond with. This is achieved by "preparing" a human host by inflicting him with potent and supernatural tumors that corrupt the body's Essence and make the flesh acceptable for a Beshilu. The infliction of these tumors and the resulting transferal of the Rat Hosts' soul are both abilities that come with this Aspect. Only one human per evolution point may be infected in this manner at the same time, though such hosts usually only take a few hours to die.

The Beshilu spends one Essence and bites the unfortunate human (and only humans can be affected). The target must make a Stamina + Resolve roll once per hour against Toxicity 7. Failure indicates that the target loses a point from all his Attributes

as the fevers affect his mind and body. Once the victim is reduced to Stamina 0, he falls comatose and is considered “prepared.” If the victim can last for 24 hours without succumbing, he shakes off the supernatural disease.

Once the Beshilu transfers its Essence to the prepared host, the *shartha* falls into a deep sleep for up to an hour as its divine soul warps and changes the human victim into a Rokhan hybrid. When the hybrid awakens, it possesses the complete memories and knowledge of the human host, although such information is considered utterly secondary to the Beshilu’s own drives and desires. All Rokhan gain +1 dice on any Wits rolls involving sight, due to their enhanced golden eyes.

SLASHING CLAWS (•••)

Prerequisite: Burrowing Claws

The Beshilu’s claws thicken and harden into black talons, similar in size to (and considerably sharper than) the nails of the Uratha’s Gauru form. These blackened claws inflict damage as do a werewolf’s Gauru-form claws (+1 bonus) and add a further +1 dice to all Dexterity rolls involving climbing or burrowing, stacking with the bonus from Burrowing Claws. If the Beshilu spends one Essence point and a standard action, it can poison its claws so that they inflict aggravated damage for the remainder of the scene.

SWARM DISCORPORATION (INNATE)

As the Azlu Aspect (p. 135), though with the signifying difference that the escaping swarm is made up entirely of rats. The rats are of a variety of colours, but only a single member of the swarm will bear the golden eyes of the true Beshilu. Upon succeeding the Wits + Survival roll the Rokhan will dissolve into hundreds of rats — about 50 per Essence point. The Beshilu’s original soul-shard flits from rat to rat if the creatures are killed, and, if a single one escapes, the Beshilu lives on as a newborn *nihiluth* once more. The other rats die within a day, as they are nothing more than potential receptacles for the Rat Host’s divine soul. This Aspect is innate to all Rokhan Beshilu.

Note: As before, the Storyteller should apply his judgment to characters attacking the scattered, escaping swarm. See “Killing the Beshilu” below.

TOXIC BLOOD (••)

The Beshilu’s very blood becomes a toxic fluid capable of inflicting illness and disease on any mortal who comes into contact with it. The hybrids are very fond of adding a drop of their blood into humans’ food or drink, thus “gifting” them with a fatal disease that will spread through their body within a few

months. When a Beshilu with Toxic Blood is injured, the chances are the attacker will be splattered with a small (or large) amount of the creature’s blood. For every point of damage the Rat Host suffers, there is a 1 in 10 chance that the attacker(s) come into contact with enough blood to poison their systems and create a disease. For mortals and animals, exposure to this blood will create fatal cancers or blood diseases within a matter of months. For the resilient Uratha, the blood acts as a short-lived poison (Toxicity 8) that weakens the werewolf for several days (10 – Hishu form Stamina). For the duration of this period, the Uratha is at –1 dice on all Stamina rolls. Exposure to the blood is guaranteed if the attacker bites the Beshilu.

APPLICABLE MERITS

Many Merits as presented in the **World of Darkness Rulebook** are replicated more appropriately as Beshilu Aspects. However, the following Merits may apply to the Rat Hosts (and especially the Rokhan hybrids) when designing them for an antagonist role:

- Language
- Brawling Dodge
- Fast Reflexes
- Fleet of Foot
- Iron Stamina
- Strong Back
- Strong Lungs
- Toxin Resistance

KILLING THE BESHILU

The Beshilu enjoy immortality, at least as much as a fanatical death-cult of monsters can be said to enjoy anything. They cling to life with tenacious rage and have the physiology that allows them to survive even the most lethal of attacks.

KILLING GNAWERS

The *nihiluth* Beshilu usually live in a brood-swarm with their rodent and Rat Host brethren. Aside from the obvious difficulties involved in killing a nest of dozens and dozens of rats, the Gnawers are relatively simple to destroy. Of course, finding them is the first difficulty, and getting into a position where the creature is unable to flee is quite another.

KILLING NIHILUTH-POSSESSED HOSTS

Killing the human host body that a Gnawer rides within is hardly a challenge for a pack of the Forsak-

en, Beshilu Aspects notwithstanding. If a Rat Host finds its human puppet destroyed, it will abandon the corpse immediately. Though these possessed human bodies can endure pain and injury without truly feeling either, once the body has been reduced past the Incapacitated health level, the possession is finished and the body is considered destroyed. At the moment of the host's true death, the Beshilu flees. Also of note, if the possessed body suffers damage equal to double its Stamina in a blow to the torso (specifically, chest) in a single turn, there is a fifty-percent chance the Beshilu will be killed instantly. Of course, Rat Hosts with the Aspect: Broodfather are almost guaranteed an escape as a hundred rats all rip their way from the slain human and scatter in all directions.

KILLING ROKHAN HYBRIDS

One of the greatest challenges a Forsaken pack will encounter in their bid to keep their territory free of imbalance and corruption is the assault on a brood of Rokhan hybrids. While the advanced Beshilu are not the individually mighty warriors that so many Azlu become, a host of Rokhan hybrids is still a force to be reckoned with. Each one of the monsters must be killed, all the while taking into consideration the fact that upon death, every single creature will incorporate into hundreds of seething rats.

Rokhan Beshilu have a lot of potential when it comes to combat, but first and foremost in the hybrid's mind is usually to flee the Uratha, rather than stand its ground and fight back. The Rokhan use their impressive combat abilities in order to cheat death and flee to tear down the Gauntlet elsewhere. They rarely use their strength and speed to attack the werewolves wholeheartedly.

SAMPLE BESHILU

The following adversaries highlight only some of the possible variety when dealing with the Beshilu, and can act as guides and ideas for a Storyteller's own horrific Rat Host creations. Each characters' Aspects have been added to their traits.

Unlike the Azlu, the Beshilu lack the "title" names that the Spider Hosts award themselves with characteristic arrogance. The Rat Hosts rarely see the need for such affectations in their lives. The Serial Pyromaniac is a Gnawer that delights in destruction by fire, moving from host to host to hide from the vengeance and justice of the Uratha. The Park Stalker, a Rokhan beast that haunts the near-deserted expanses of city parks at night, is a curious *shartha* that holds dearly to its own territory. Lastly, the Heir to Visions is a cancer-ridden prophet, both valuable to and strongly protected by a brood of Rokhan.

THE SERIAL PYROMANIAC

Quote: "Yes, yes, any moment now. Yes, please, come on, any moment... *burn, motherfucker, BURN!*"

Background: This *nihiluth* has always been a slave to its passions. Mixed in with the chaotic storm of desires and drives, one memory has remained embedded within the Beshilu's mind: London, 1666, the year of the Great Fire. The Serial Pyromaniac saw the waves of flame and the towering walls of fire that blackened and destroyed so much of the vast city, and, in that moment some four centuries ago, a new passion was born. Since those smoke-filled days and nights, the Gnawer has travelled the span of the world, taking hosts, starting fires and temporarily joining with Beshilu broods to weaken the Gauntlet.

Description: The *nihiluth* chooses its victims carefully, taking hosts from the dregs and the forgotten, the lost and the lonely. No one misses the people who are taken by the Serial Pyromaniac, because they are homeless, friendless streetwalkers or social outcasts of one stripe or another. The current host for the Beshilu's soul is a wild-haired middle-aged man, who has taken to wearing clothes stolen from department stores. He has burn-scars along his left arm and the side of his face.

Storytelling Hints: This Rat Host prefers to target buildings that have significant human populations, such as schools, apartment buildings and small office blocks. While the Serial Pyromaniac would rarely go after something as large as a skyscraper or similarly large structure, smaller office blocks and shared housing offer perfect targets. The Beshilu has cobbled together a basic knowledge of explosives, but prefers to use its tried and tested method of setting the fires with kindling and matches. If caught in the act, the Serial Pyromaniac will usually kill whoever has come upon it, rather than abandon its hopes of seeing the flames burn once again. If heavily outnumbered and confronted, the *shartha* will flee and likely set another fire elsewhere within the hour.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2, Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 3

Skills: Animal Ken 5 (Rats), Athletics 3 (Sprinting), Brawl 1, Crafts 2 (Explosives), Firearms 2, Intimidation 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2, Survival 2

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3, Fresh Start, Language 1 (English)

Aspects: Breach the Barrier, Broodfather, Gnaw Gauntlet, Heart-Eater, Preserve the Hollow Shell

Willpower: 7

Essence: 6

Virtue: Faith. This *nihiluth* believes fully in the eventual triumph of his kind over the stinking werewolves and the resulting re-birth of the Plague King.

Vice: Gluttony. The Serial Pyromaniac constantly falls victim to its desires, carelessly and wantonly killing without guilt.

Size: 5

Health: 7

Initiative: 7

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Derangements: Irrationality, Obsessive Compulsive: Pyromania

PARK STALKER

Quote: “Your domain? This is my territory!”

Background: This Rokhan evolved fast, actively hunting its Beshilu brethren and feasting on their lives and souls. Upon swelling to the size of a basketball, the giant rat bonded with the first human it came across — a soldier in Athens, centuries before the birth of Christ. Through the thousands of years that have followed, this pathetic creature has sought to keep a small patch of territory for itself, time and time again. Each time it has been caught and challenged by the Uratha, it has fled rather than defend its “domain.” The last effort, some one hundred years ago, ended when a pack stormed its territory, slaughtered the Rokhan and reduced it to a weak *nihiluth* once more. It has, finally, decided that times have changed. After re-building itself to the state of a powerful hybrid, the creature is dangerously unhinged — even for a Beshilu. Any Uratha who enter its city park will be met with vicious assault and screamed accusations.

Description: The recent Joining was with an aged man in his late 60s. Now, the man is unrecognizable, covered in black fur, with bright gold eyes and bunched, black-veined muscles. The only understandable sounds ever to leave the hybrid’s lips are the choked wheezes of accusations and curses against the entire werewolf race.

Storytelling Hints: Driven past insanity into a new realm of mania, this Rokhan despises the Uratha with a merciless depth of hate. The creature is careful to hide from the people who enter the city park at night,; though if it is lost in anger from one of its many terrible memories, it will kill any it encounters that evening. This Beshilu makes a change of pace for packs that are used to defeating the Beshilu by simply scattering them and scaring them away. This Rat Host has finally had enough of running.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 3, Strength 4, Dexterity 5, Stamina 5, Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 3



Skills: Academics 1, Animal Ken 3, Athletics 2 (Throwing), Brawl 4 (Claws), Empathy 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 2 (Werewolves), Stealth 3, Subterfuge 2, Survival 4 (Urban Scavenging)

Merits: Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3, Fresh Start, Strong Back

Aspects: Beastmaster, Breach the Barrier, Burrowing Claws, Demonic Strength 4, Glowing Eyes, Gnaw Gauntlet, Inflict Dread, Lashing Tail, Pied Piper, Rodent Fur, Rokhan Joining, Slashing Claws, Swarm Discorporation, Toxic Blood

Willpower: 6

Essence: 7

Virtue: Justice. Though the Beshilu's sense of justice is a twisted interpretation, the Park Stalker is sincere in his drive to keep its territory free of the "evil" that the Uratha represent.

Vice: Pride. The Rokhan hybrid is not even close to being strong enough to maintain its territory against a dedicated werewolf assault, but rigidly believes it is capable of doing so.

Size: 5

Health: 12

Initiative: 8

Defense: 4

Speed: 17

HEIR TO VISIONS

Quote: "I see the dog-changers. They will come when the face of their bitch Mother is high in the night sky. We must prepare to welcome them."

Background: This Beshilu was always a brood leader. As a *nihiluth*, it commanded its brethren for centuries, always keeping them one step ahead of the Uratha, razing the Gauntlet as they went. As a Rokhan, the Beshilu remained the dominant beast in the hybrid brood, attacking the Gauntlet with vicious efficiency before cutting and running from the werewolves who inevitably came to investigate.

Then, after a protracted battle with another brood, the Rokhan leader had absorbed a vast amount of the Plague King's soul. The tumors on the hybrid's skin blackened and grew sour, and the diseases within its blood stole its sight forever. It had become the one of the rarest of Beshilu — a Plague Seer. The brood gathered around the newly exalted avatar, and listened to the hissing prophecies that came forth.

Description: Hunched over with pain, what was once a human now runs on its hands and feet like an awkward gorilla. The Heir to Visions is covered in a coat of patchy white fur and grotesque tumors that swell out from the pink flesh underneath. The hybrid's golden eyes are milked over with a white sheen, and the Rokhan is often either helped along by another member of its brood, or must find its way by scent alone.

Storytelling Hints: This Rokhan is the heart of its brood, and knows the lesser hybrids will die to give it time to flee when the Uratha finally come. It spends its time seeing into the hazy possibilities of the future, following many visions to the end to see which outcome is most likely. All the while, it gibbers and hisses of the futures to come, while its brood eat at the Gauntlet around their blind leader.

The Heir to Visions makes a good thematic encounter for a Forsaken pack that has worked diligently to clear their territory of a Rat Host infestation, to be finally confronted with the insane hybrid behind it all. Though the hybrid fears the Uratha just as all of its brethren, it would relish the chance to speak with them, telling each one of the pack how it has seen their deaths and the suffering to come.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 2, Resolve 5, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 1, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Skills: Animal Ken 5 (Rats), Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Empathy 2, Intimidation 3 (Eerie Presence), Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 3, Stealth 4 (Silent Running), Subterfuge 3, Survival 4 (Wilderness Scavenging)

Merits: Language 2 (English), Meditative Mind, Allies 5 (Beshilu Brood)

Aspects: Advanced Cancers, Beastmaster, Breach the Barrier, Burrowing Claws, Demonic Strength 3, Gnaw Gauntlet, Hive Call, Infected Claws, Lashing Tail, Poison Tumors, Prophet's Vision, Rodent Fur, Rokhan Joining, Scentless, Spirit Sight, Swarm Discorporation

Willpower: 9

Morality: 3

Essence: 8

Virtue: Fortitude. The Heir to Visions has survived years of blindness and pain merely to serve the "greater good" of all Beshilu.

Vice: Sloth. The Heir to Visions is ultimately lazy and careless, as evidenced by several encounters with the Uratha over the centuries.

Size: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 11



AN ALTERNATE THEORY

It's possible that a group of players will become increasingly curious about the legends that surround the Hosts, and try to gain some more insight into these implacable enemies. *What are the shartha? Why do they act as they do? Why are they so different from spirits and the Ridden?* It is fair to say that some werewolves would sacri-

fice much to have the answers to those questions. Many have done just that.

The Hosts are an enigma, and that is the greatest trial to overcome in ascertaining exactly what these monsters are and how they came to be. Most werewolves don't even believe in the existence of more than the Beshilu and Azlu, let alone consider them related in anything but coincidence. But some werewolves have devised another theory, a story that hints that the two (or more) Hosts are more closely related than that, a story that sickens most right-minded scholars and loremasters.

The *shartha* are creatures of flesh with the souls of animal entities, as are the Uratha. The Hosts are able to adopt the form of humans, as are the People. The *shartha* are heirs to the power of ancient, slain spirit-gods, as are the Uratha. The Hosts — at least those with obvious intentions and desires — are intimately tied to the barrier between the worlds, as are the werewolves. Even the High Tongue names seem similar: Uratha and *shartha*, slayer and slain. Men who change into monsters and beasts, and beasts that change into monsters and men.

While the origins and truths of the Spirit Hosts might never be discovered by the Forsaken, the uncomfortable idea is rising among the werewolves that the *shartha* and Uratha are cousins of a kind, perhaps even brothers. The Spirit Hosts are not shapeshifters in the same sense as their wolf-blooded "relatives," but the similarities between the two races are numerous and convincing. Certainly no other breed of creature exists that so closely resembles the abilities and powers of the Forsaken and the Pure.

If this revolting possibility is indeed true, then the warped *shartha* are nothing less than the aborted siblings of the Uratha. Unfinished, unperfected and out of control, these half-born shapechangers represent all that the werewolves could themselves so easily have been.

This is, however, just a theory...

THE HIDDEN HOSTS

When the werewolves tell tales of the *shartha*, and when packs mobilize to defend their territory against the presence of Spirit Hosts, the Uratha's first thoughts are of the Azlu and the Beshilu. Little-known tales of the enigmatic "Third Hosts" sometimes surface, arising from encounters with creatures that do not clearly resemble anything else seen before. The concept of the "Third Host" is a descriptor that has been applied to many a nebulous, uncertain threat since the dawn of time.

The Forsaken must combat many rivals, and some of these creatures have roots set so far back in ancient eras that there exists no way to discover the origins of such entities. The beginnings of these monsters are lost to the modern world, and all that remains is their sinister, dangerous presence. Many of the People's battles against unknown enemies are indeed against the mysterious "Third Host," for they exist and live today, shrouded by millennia of secrecy and ignorance. Not all of the battles are against such a hidden horror, though. Packs that come up against an unknown *shartha* are not necessarily fighting the Third Host. In fact, they could be fighting the Fourth or Fifth.

This section suggests three new potential Hosts to add to the setting if the Storyteller is so inclined; none of them are presumed to exist in the setting by default, but all should fit easily enough into a **Werewolf: The Forsaken** chronicle that the Storyteller can add one or more. The Azlu and Beshilu still remain by far the most common. Though the Srizaku share similar numbers, they hide behind the mists of secrecy and are rarely encountered. Rarer still, few in both number and lacking the burning hatred of the Uratha that drives the two prime hosts, the Halaku and Razilu remain in the shadows of the flesh and the dark places of the spirit world. They emerge only to fulfil their own desires, carefully avoiding activity that might draw down werewolf reprisal — but sometimes they cross paths nonetheless.

Azlu, Beshilu, Srizaku, Razilu and Halaku. Spider, Rat, Locust, Snake and Crow.

SRIZAKU: THE LOCUST HOSTS

The Third Host, swarming offspring of the Famine-Bringer, are carefully elusive *shartha* driven not by the instinct to build or destroy, but by hunger. They are known, to those few werewolves who know of their existence, as the Srizaku. The Hungry Children. The Locust Hosts.

THE LEGEND

Some Uratha legends paint the Spinner-Hag as Father Wolf's greatest victim, while others tell of the Plague King and any number of other ancient "most powerful" demons that died under the claws of the Wolf Lord. The werewolves who howl of the Famine-Bringer are few in number, but these fireside songs and whispered tales are ripe with near-lost truths. Whether the Pangaeian world ever saw the demonic alliance of such colossal entities is unproven, though it does explain the similarity between the children of each of the Spirit Host patrons.

What a precious few lorekeepers and modern warriors know is that the Locust Hosts are not myths.

Srizaku: The Locust Hosts



They are not a metaphorical warning of danger given through storytelling, nor are they mere whispers of an ancient and long-dead evil. They, like the Azlu and Beshilu, are real, alive — and they hate the Uratha with just as much passion as do the more commonly seen rats and spiders.

Tales of the Locust Hosts' origins tell of a powerful, ever-hungry spirit that swept across Pangaea in the time of Father Wolf's great strength and wisdom. Before *Urfarah's* soul had weakened with the birth of his many children, when the mighty werewolves were few in number, the Famine-Bringer brought fear and sorrow to the creatures of Pangaea. Its appearance was that of a yellow-skinned insect deity, with colossal wings that beat dust storms and exoskeleton armour harder than bronze. In his wake, spirits of hunger swarmed and plagued the humans of Creation.

Father Wolf was in the prime of his duty and rule, and his vengeance against the Famine-Bringer's devastation was swift, furious and lethal. Upon landing the final blow, the demon hissed and screeched as it died. In the deep wilderness, surrounded by abundant life, the great demon met its end. Unbeknownst to Father Wolf and the First Pack, as they returned to running the Border Marches, the Essence and soul of the Famine-Bringer did not merely pass into

oblivion. Ever-hungry for sensation and sustenance, the creature's guiding will could not be truly pacified, even in death. The freed soul-Essence spread and corrupted hundreds of tiny creatures in the surrounding wilderness: harmless insects. Harmless at first.

The power of the starving Famine-Bringer overwhelmed these little insects. Their skins warped to a hardened yellow crust, and their wings beat the taste of dust and decay into the air as they took flight. In a hungry swarm they flew towards the closest human settlement, where the largest amount of food existed nearby. They feasted, they bred and the first *shartha* soon grew in number. Behind their flight, they left empty settlements and dry bones.

The locusts of Pangaea, at least those warped and descended from the Famine-Bringer, did not always survive on vegetation. These insects were omnivorous, just as their patron had been. Above all things, they too delighted in the feast of human flesh.

THE FIRST SHARTHA?

If this tale is true, then the popular werewolf legend of the Spinner-Hag being the "innovator" of the Host archetype is false.

Yes, exactly. The problem with the songs the Uratha sing about the *shartha* and the stories

they tell of these ancient demons is that no werewolf truly knows what happened then. Indeed, they may have lost the chance to ever find out the truth when they became Forsaken.

This adds pathos and mystery to the *shartha* enigma. While all werewolves are aware of the Azlu and Beshilu, few werewolves ever know of the Srizaku, and fewer survive an encounter to tell their brethren. An even smaller number are actually believed, just as frequently being derided as misinterpreting an encounter with one of the Spirit-Ridden or a powerful spirit.

The Uratha do not know the truths of the Spirit Hosts. As a race, the People aren't even sure how many species of *shartha* exist in the world, though prevalent thinking stays with the certainty of two and the possibility of a third. At the Storyteller's discretion, this "educated guess" has the possibility of being very wrong indeed.

TODAY & TONIGHT

The Srizaku survive in the modern age, though they are marginally fewer in number than the Azlu and Beshilu, and maintain a savagely enforced practice of secrecy. In short, they don't just hide like the Azlu and Beshilu: they protect their existence with lethal measures.

The Srizaku suffer the cursed drives and desires of all *shartha*, though above the inner fear that scars the hearts of the Spider and Rat Hosts, the Locust Hosts must obey the unchangeable and instinctive lust to feed. The spiders must weave, the rats must destroy and the locusts must consume. The Srizaku are not mindless killers that feast upon human flesh, though humans do constitute a part of this *shartha's* diet, as with their Azlu cousins. Animals in the wilderness and crops suffer the greatest damage when the Locust Hosts take flight, though any humans in the path of the swarm are likely to be eaten alive and left as sticky bones in the sun.

Obviously, the majority of contact between the Uratha and Srizaku is away from the cities, though there are occasionally reports from the developing world that tell of locust "plagues" that enter small villages and towns in their hunt for food. These reports often fail to tell of the human fatalities, as the Locust Hosts are known to choose their prey carefully, entering houses and huts to feast rather than merely swarming the streets of a metropolis and eating people by the thousand. Horrific as it may be, the Srizaku regain Essence by feasting on the flesh of humans — just as werewolves can.

The Srizaku are known to enter human hosts — not individually as the other *shartha*, but in large groups of 30 to 50. Once inside, the locusts hollow out the body by eating all of the internal organs and fastening themselves to the muscles and bones. The Srizaku within control the victim with a "hive mind" of sorts, though they cannot communicate with their brethren outside the body in this manner. They are more akin to the Azlu in their behavior once in possession of a human, also sharing the memories and knowledge of the hollowed-out host.

The Srizaku hybrids are a horrifying blend of insect and human. While most are humanoid in body and lack the sheer killing power of the Azlu, many are protected by thick, yellow chitin and most possess thin, buzzing insect wings that reach several feet to the ground when lowered. The hybrids often have brittle or hollow bones once they have developed an exoskeleton, and the reduced weight allows short bursts of flight. The Srizaku hybrids also frequently sport jagged spines on their legs and razor-sharp edges to their wings, used for clacking together in communication or as vicious saw-blades that rend flesh with ease. As all Hosts, the Srizaku are difficult to kill permanently. They dissolve into thousands of locusts upon death, each scattering and flying to escape final death. If one of these survives, the Host lives on, free to unleash its malice upon the Uratha, slake its lust for food and grow strong once more.

THIRD-WORLD MERCENARY

Quote: "Yeah, I was up there a few weeks ago. You know that family who live on the hillside farm? Apparently they're..."

Background: The Srizaku took this body when one of the swarm's hunger-flights was interrupted by a pack of the Forsaken. The werewolves slaughtered the only Srizaku hybrid present at the time, and the swarm lost cohesion and purpose. A small group of foreign mercenary soldiers were in the wilderness nearby, and several dozen of the locusts ate their way into one, the better to follow the werewolves back to their territory and learn the location without arousing suspicion. Since then, the merc has been taking great pains to turn the locals against any possible allies and relatives of the pack who live nearby, starting a campaign of lies and vicious rumours about the families in question.

Description: The mercenary would be handsome if his harsh lifestyle didn't take its toll on his features. His muscled figure is beginning to run to fat as the years go by, and at middle-age, the merc's face is etched with worry lines and several small scars.

Despite his rugged appearance, the mercenary takes care to learn at least the basics of the local language, and tries hard not to alienate the people of the places where he is stationed.

Storytelling Hints: The mercenary is gruff but attentive in conversation with the local people of the region. The Srizaku have absorbed the man's personality and emulate his tendencies. In social situations, the merc comes across as trustworthy and respectful. When he needs to be, he is ruthless and feels no guilt about killing people who anger him.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 4, Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Skills: Academics 1, Athletics 2, Empathy 3, Intimidation 3 (Threats), Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Persuasion 3 (Trustworthy Opinions), Politics 2 (Local military leaders), Socialize 2, Stealth 2, Subterfuge 1, Survival 3

Merits: Common Sense, Language (Spanish, French, Portuguese) 3, Quick Draw, Contacts (Arms Dealers, Right Wing Journalists)

Willpower: 7

Essence: 3

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Gluttony

Size: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 6

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Aspects: Swarm Discorporation, Sense Prey, Reassurance

- **Swarm Discorporation:** As the Azlu and Beshilu Aspects (and the Aspects: Hivemother and Broodfather), though the slaughtered body splits and releases dozens of locusts instead.

- **Sense Prey:** This Aspect allows the Srizaku to sense the location of the closest source of nourishment, be it in the form of a field of oilseed rape, a grove of fruit trees or a village of humans. Of course, the power can be vague, as the Srizaku are capable of eating almost anything. The Arizaku spends an Essence point and rolls Wits + Survival. Success reveals a vague direction and a promise of "food," but an exceptional success reveals accordingly more details about the nourishment on offer.

- **Wind Lord:** As the Elemental Gift: Invoke the Wind's Wrath.

HALAKU: THE CROW HOSTS

The Crow Hosts are few in number and exceedingly rare. Whether the Halaku were devastated in Pangaeon times or have always lacked a large population is unknown, and the mystery shall likely ever remain. What becomes obvious to the few packs of Forsaken that encounter these *shartha* is that the



Crow Hosts are gleeful carrion-feeders. They pick apart the areas of battle once the werewolves have left, feasting on the bodies of the slain. They take great delight in unearthing the recently buried and consuming the decay-sweetened flesh they find. Graveyards are always a favourite haunt for this breed of *shartha*.

THE LEGEND

None of the remaining legends tell detailed tales of the Crow Hosts' origins. There are infrequent and unreliable mentions in some of the ancient songs about a creature known variously as the Corpse-Eater and the Carrion Prince. Only vague details exist about this monstrous creature's crow- or raven-like appearance, and little evidence is offered that these two entities were actually one and the same. Another near-lost tale even speaks of the demon as a vulture. Two legends survive in the modern era concerning the demon that seems to be the probable father to the Halaku. Both are ancient beyond reckoning and primarily focus on the many victories of Father Wolf. The "black-winged, black-tongued Corpse-Eater" is mentioned in one of these, and the second makes a note of the "crow-cries screeched by the Carrion Prince as he and his children feasted upon the fallen."

It seems likely that this ancient demon, slain by Father Wolf, is related to the Crow Hosts in some manner for no other Pangaeon entity bears even the remotest resemblance to the horror of the Halaku that live today.

TODAY & TONIGHT

Unlike the more "driven" *shartha*, such as the Gauntlet-obsessed Azlu and Beshilu, or the sustenance-crazed and Uratha-hating Srizaku, the Crow Hosts are cautious, careful and extremely patient. Above all, the Halaku watch the Uratha. They watch, and wait, and learn. Often, even on the rare occasions when a pack is aware of the *shartha*'s scrutiny, the Crow Host takes no direct action against the werewolves — at least initially. These creatures will just watch, sometimes from their natural crow-forms, sometimes from within a succession of hollowed-out humans and sometimes in the shape of a monstrous crow-*shartha* hybrid. It depends on the personality of the individual Host, as with all *shartha*.

The Crow Hosts are easy to detect if the Uratha know what to look for. It is the Halaku's rarity that makes them so elusive, rather than a dedicated desire to hide from scrutiny. Firstly, most tellingly, the Halaku physically *rot* in sunlight. When exposed to the light of Helios, these *shartha* decompose and die within hours. Somehow, for some reason, the spirit

of the Sun itself hates these creatures. They are only safe after nightfall, though this weakness does not apply to the possessed humans they control.

Also, the Halaku are unique among the Hosts in that they do not physically enter the bodies of the humans they possess. The bond between host and victim is essentially the same as for all *shartha*, though humans under Halaku possession are easy to spot because they are always blind. They lack both eyes, which are plucked out and swallowed at the time of possession.

Once the Crow Host has swallowed the eyeballs of the victim, it exerts complete control over the person, intrinsically possessing the human's knowledge and memory. The crow itself can only possess one human at a time, and must remain hidden and at rest for the duration of the possession. Most Crow Hosts take care for their victims to cover their facial injuries with sunglasses or bandages at the least, and, most curiously, the ever-watching Halaku still see everything through the control. The eyeless victim somehow retains full vision during the possession. A few werewolves and even wolf-blooded kin have been shocked to see a stranger's gaping, bloody eye-sockets, while the man still "watched" them with eerie accuracy, turning his head to follow them as they moved.

The Halaku hybrids are humanoid in shape, often covered in black feathers, and occasionally bearing a crunching, sharp beak instead of a mouth and chin. Arms usually end in long, three-fingered bird talons that rip and slash through skin without difficulty. Rarer hybrids sport impressive wings that emerge along the underside of the creature's arms, and are capable of gliding from rooftop to rooftop with ease. They lack the battle-prowess of the Azlu and Srizaku, resembling the Beshilu in combat as they fight in screeching desperation and panicked frenzy.

GARGOYLE OF THE ROOFTOPS

Quote: "I have watched you for some time, wolf-changers. It is a pleasure to finally meet you, no matter how short this meeting is destined to be."

Background: The "gargoyle" was once a homeless wretch on the streets of Los Angeles. One of the Halaku, a talented, stealthy creature that had been watching generation after generation of the city's Iron Masters for centuries, took control of the homeless man's eyes as he slept. The miscreant was so comatose on cheap liquor that he didn't even wake when a crow plucked out his eyeballs and swallowed them. The tramp is just one in a long line of vessels that the Halaku manipulates, and it keeps its crow body hidden in the rafters of a small church in the city

center. The blind man, with stolen sunglasses to cover his wounded eye sockets, ascends to the rooftops of the city's buildings and watches the werewolves live their brief, violent lives. When this body has served its use, the crow will return to watching as a bird for a while, or perhaps take another vessel and enjoy the sensations of understanding human language once more. Despite the host body's blindness, somehow, the *shartha* sees as normal.

Description: The "gargoyle" is a filthy homeless man in his late fifties, wearing a ragged assortment of stolen and cast-off clothing. When he removes his oversized sunglasses, two bloody eye sockets are revealed, though the wounds have dried to a crusting of scabs and scar tissue. Despite all this, somehow the man appears to seem sedate and calm at all times.

Storytelling Hints: This Halaku works well for a moody encounter with lone urban werewolves separated from their packs, or a pack that enters a city for any reason. While the Gargoyle of the Rooftops would quickly lose any physical encounters with the werewolves it watches, it can be used to create a great sense of unease by revealing the creature as it just *watches* unceasingly. If the Halaku is determined to keep track of one particular group of Uratha, it will let its body fall dead on discovery and track the werewolves as a crow. Until then, it enjoys listening to the human languages that reach its ears, and using the possessed body to go places a crow couldn't. And, if offended, it can always find someone who might be interested in hearing of the pack's movements — maybe an Azlu, maybe a potent spirit, maybe even the Pure...

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3, Presence 1, Manipulation 2, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 1, Athletics 2, Empathy 4 (Sensing Emotional Changes), Intimidation 1, Investigation 3, Medicine 1, Occult 3 (Local Supernatural Creatures), Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Stealth 4 (Silent Footsteps), Subterfuge 4, Survival 2

Merits: Language 3 (Spanish), Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3

Willpower: 8

Essence: 6

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Pride

Size: 5

Health: 8

Initiative: 10

Defense: 2

Speed: 14

Aspects: Doomcry, Fickle Fate, Tongues of the Slain

- **Doomcry:** As the Death Gift: Word of Quiet, though the power has no effect on vampires (though

it functions as normal against ghosts). When using this Aspect, the Halaku caws as a crow, even if the Host is controlling a vessel at the time. Upon hearing the crow's call, a deathly chill stills the hearts and souls of those nearby.

- **Fickle Fate:** This power allows the Halaku to alter the luck of a target. Spend an Essence point and roll Wits + Occult – the target's Composure; the victim's next dice roll suffers a penalty of –2 for every success gained on the roll.

- **Tongues of the Slain:** With this power, the Halaku are able to speak with the spirits of the dead as though they were simple spirits. It costs one Essence point to converse for up to an hour, though the ghost is under no compulsion to obey the Halaku's orders. Still, a few Bone Shadows have discovered that the Crow Hosts occasionally use the dead to spy upon the Uratha.

RAZILU: THE SNAKE HOSTS

The insidious Snake Hosts are as rare as the Halaku, numbering so few that most Uratha never even learn of their existence. For the Forsaken, this is a great blessing, as the Razilu are some of the most powerful and sinister *shartha* ever born.

THE LEGEND

The origins of the Snake Hosts are as shrouded in myth and mystery as the Halaku. Scraps and fragments of teasing hints leak down through rare songs and tales, but nothing more concrete. The Uratha who do know of the Razilu's existence are mostly aware that the Snake Hosts do not seem to despise the werewolves to the degree that other Hosts do. While no *shartha* would ever ally itself with the children of Urarah, the Razilu are potentially the most civil in their dealings with the werewolves of the modern world.

Truth be told, even these rare encounters with the seemingly disinterested Snake Hosts do not end in a mutual understanding or a cessation of hostilities. The presence of one of the Razilu (let alone a nest of the creatures) in Uratha territory usually goes utterly unnoticed, but attentive packs have been known to track down odd happenings and strange disappearances that require some kind of answer. Slaughtered spirits, razed areas of the spirit wilds...

In these cases, no matter how little interest the Razilu shows in the wolf-blooded, the Uratha will be forced to act.

Strangely, the most reliable method of locating the Snake Hosts is for a pack of the Forsaken to maintain an ever-aware guard against the more common *shartha*: the Azlu and Beshilu. Stories occasion-



ally pass from pack to pack and hunting ground to hunting ground regarding a standard hunt that went awry. The hunters set out in search of a Spider or Rat Host, but the hunt ended with a terrible surprise when the prey turned out to be something else entirely — a corpse filled with snakes, equally as deadly as the Azlu in battle.

Pangaea had one tale that the Cahalith link to the Razilu. When the fires of the Moots are burning and the time comes for stories and songs, the lore-keepers speak of the ancient creature known as the Sea Serpent. A colossal scaled snake that attacked ships and ate whales; there were rumors and sailors' tales of sea serpents within even the last few centuries. If such tales are to be believed, then the Razilu are the only *shartha* that had (or have) a patron living past the Fall, for the ancient songs tell of a fearsome "dragon of the oceans" that haunted the seas of Pangaea. This "salt-water worm" apparently feasted on whales, giant squid and even the wooden vessels of Pangaeans humans.

TODAY & TONIGHT

Down the many centuries, the only comprehension the Uratha have of the Snake Hosts is a half-forgotten fragment of an ancient song. There is no way of knowing whether or not the tale even relates to

the father of the Razilu, or if it was an entirely unrelated demon that perished millennia ago in the Fall.

The Azlu weave, the Beshilu destroy, the Sri-zaku devour and the Halaku often merely watch. What then do the Razilu do when they deal with the Uratha? The answer is regrettably lacking. Nobody knows for certain. When discovered, the weaker Razilu react with flight or terrified anger. When the stronger and more capable Razilu are tracked down and confronted, the snake-human hybrids lash out with merciless efficiency, spitting venom and coiling snake-limbs around the throats of their attackers.

Razilu-possessed humans are sometimes known for a threatening (rather than sexy) serpentine grace. The Snake Hosts are also known to betray themselves when a controlled body remains utterly still, unblinking, for minutes on end. Beyond this preternatural grace and eerie stillness, the Razilu impersonate humans with incredible conviction and ease.

A HIDDEN PURPOSE

No, we're not being utterly lazy when we state that the Razilu seem to have no discernable purpose or instinct that drives them. The Snake Hosts are presented for the sole purpose of customization — whatever purpose they serve,

whatever instinct drives them, whatever split them apart in the first place, all is left wide open for the Storyteller. By all means, if you use the Razilu in a chronicle, they *should* have a purpose — but it should be one that fits your game and that provides interesting and creepy stories. The following ideas are three starting points for directions to take the Razilu:

- The Snake Hosts are “healers,” in accordance with the legends associating snakes with medicine and renewal. Of course, their concept of “healing” is not entirely concurrent with human ideas of compassion and mercy; after all, they do infest human bodies much as the other Hosts do. Rather, the Razilu wish to heal others in hopes of raising their skills such that they can “heal themselves,” reuniting into a common form one day. Their concept of healing may be strange, however — trying to “cure” Uratha of Death Rage by taking away their emotions, attempting to “heal” vampires by replacing all their withered organs with freshly harvested viscera or other bizarre variations on the theme.

- The Razilu’s instinct is to sleep. They spend most of their time in torpor, but cannot help waking from time to time, spending roughly a year out of every century in a state of insomnia. During this time, they explore the world around them as a means of keeping themselves occupied until they can experience blessed sleep once again, and their curiosity can lead them down strange and dark paths.

- The Razilu are predators among the Hosts — they don’t just want to merge their own soul-shards, they are compelled to devour and digest the soul-shards of the other Hosts. A Razilu might serve as a potential ally for a werewolf pack hunting Azlu or Beshilu, but on the condition that it is allowed to devour their mutual prey. While this may seem like a good thing, can the Snake Hosts be trusted with the power they accumulate in this fashion?



INQUISITIVE POLICE OFFICER

Quote: “Are you sure you haven’t seen anything? Nothing at all? Right, well, if you’re sure, here’s a number you can reach me at if you need to. Say, before I go...”

Background: From thrall-body to thrall-body, the Razilu takes some enigmatic, cool-headed pleasure in drawing human attention to werewolf activities. As a social worker, the Snake Host filed documents with the local law authorities regarding the “disappearance” of several children (victims of a Ridden that the local pack had slain). As a journalist, it reported on a surge of “gang crime” in an inner

city area, a conflict that was actually a cover for a street war between two packs of werewolves. In the report, the Razilu was keen to point the police in the direction of both of the packs’ hideouts and supplied the home address for each of the Uratha and their families. As the mayor of a town, it ordered the abandoned industrial complex that “blighted to the landscape” to be restored and made into cheap housing — thereby destroying the locus and hunting ground of another pack. Now, as a police officer, it takes great pleasure in falsifying evidence, having human loved ones charged on invented crimes, and watching them beaten when in police custody. Once, in full view of a packed street of witnesses and security cameras, the Snake Host unloaded a revolver into a werewolf who managed to escape only at the cost of entering the Gauru form.

When this Razilu turns its attention to a new locale, the local Uratha never know what hit them. However, when they see the local news showing a blurry camcorder recording of one of their rites, they’ll know they have to do something *fast*.

Description: The Razilu possessing this cop has a lot of experience holding humans in thrall. Its speech is practised and measured, betraying none of its supernatural nature, and its body language, while undeniably smooth and suave, is only threatening when the Razilu is angry or irritated. The Snake Host is also gifted at choosing attractive vessels, making human interaction all the easier. It dresses smartly and fashionably when not on duty, and carries a pistol at all times. Inside the man’s body, a long, thin black snake is coiled tightly around his spinal column.

Storytelling Hints: This Razilu lives to expose the Uratha to human scrutiny. Any tactic, any method, any trick that it can use to get Joe and John Citizen to pay attention to the werewolves is fair game. While maybe only one person in ten thousand might believe what they see, that’s one more person aware of the wolf-changers, and one more problem the Uratha have to deal with. If confronted and caught, the Razilu will do its best to flee, leaving the mouth of its host and slithering away to safety.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 4, Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3, Presence 4, Manipulation 3, Composure 4

Skills: Academics 2, Computer 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 1, Politics 2, Athletics 1, Brawl 2, Drive 3, Firearms 3 (Pistols), Larceny 2, Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2 (Reading Body Language), Intimidation 3 (Subtle Threats), Persuasion 4 (Charming), Socialize 2, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Contacts 3 (Law Enforcement), Contacts 2 (Small-time Criminals), Eidetic Memory, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 8

Essence: 9

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Greed

Size: 5

Health: 11

Initiative: 7

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Aspects: Hypnosis, Silent Tread, Unyielding Strength

- **Unyielding Strength:** The Razilu spends an Essence point and doubles its Strength for a single turn, commencing at the beginning of the following turn; activating the Aspect is a reflexive action. This

Aspect represents the coiled power of constrictor snakes, and is usually employed when the Snake Host applies its grip to something (or someone).

- **Silent Tread:** With the expenditure of an Essence point, the Razilu's footsteps become utterly silent. It is no longer possible to detect the Snake Host by any rolls involving hearing the creature's approach.

- **Hypnosis:** As the Domination Gift: Tug the Soul's Strings. The Razilu must make eye contact for a single turn, and spends an Essence point to hypnotize its prey.





CHAPTER III

HORRORS OF AN ANCIENT AGE

Choking, the werewolves stood on weak legs by the broken stone. A fever-dream had brought them here, a nightmare so terrible that they knew it must be true. The dream vision had been true, but also incomplete.

The dream did not have the scent.

Not animal. Not plant. Not living, not unliving. Not rotten and not fresh, but horribly, horribly wrong — the smell of something that was never prey and not even predator. Something that came before clean flesh and warm blood. It was a scent that would claw its way into a scent-blind human's skull and trigger a primal fear. To a wolf nose — madness.

The scent was at its strongest at the small pools — some form of liquid, fallen from the bulk of the thing that had writhed free into the clean night air, under the insane gaze of Mother Moon. The reek was unspeakable, impossible to tell whether it had dripped like sweat, fallen from a wound or simply pooled from some monstrous deformed mouth.

With all their hearts, the werewolves hoped it was blood. They hoped that the thing could bleed.

MAN RULES NOW WHERE THEY RULED ONCE; THEY SHALL SOON RULE WHERE MAN RULES NOW.
AFTER SUMMER IS WINTER, AND AFTER WINTER SUMMER.
THEY WAIT, PATIENT AND POTENT, FOR HERE THEY SHALL RULE AGAIN.
— H.P. LOVECRAFT, "THE DUNWICH HORROR"

THINGS THAT SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN

The werewolf legends of Pangaea have a dark undertone. They say that in his prime, Father Wolf was the greatest hunter of all, and that he destroyed or banished many horrific creatures that would otherwise have blackened and ruined the very earth itself. It was only through his surpassing might that he triumphed; a lesser hunter would have failed. Though the howls praise Father Wolf and glorify his might, they also leave one question unanswered — what things were so horrible that only Father Wolf could kill or imprison them?

And have any of these things survived?

This chapter suggests that the answer is “yes.” Whether the old legends of Father Wolf are true or not, sometimes Uratha find evidence of things that may predate even Pangaea itself. These ancient horrors are hints at a world that once had neither man nor wolf, and that needed neither. They are blasphemous spawn of a time that perhaps should not have been — and yet, that might come again. Most of these surviving horrors have survived throughout the ages by slumbering in dark, forgotten places. But sometimes they wake.

The monsters presented here are not spirits, nor are they Ridden — yet, clearly, they aren’t creatures of any real “natural” origin. They aren’t even related as such; each one is not a particular species of an overall greater classification like the Ridden or the Hosts, save in the most general sense. Each one is an individual, a horror with no clear parentage and (hopefully) no young of its own. The pack that finds itself stalked by the Flesh has the dubious privilege of facing a one-of-a-kind opponent, the sort of monstrosity that will mark them as unique in the world should they manage to overcome it.

If they don’t — well, best not to dwell on such things.

STORYTELLING THE ANCIENTS

Unlike spirits, Hosts or the Ridden, the following monsters are considered to be optional. They are not assumed to exist in the “canon” World of Darkness, although certainly they fit nicely into an otherwise “canon” chronicle. You won’t see them referred to in future supplements, and they don’t play a vital role in the history of the world. Rather than being part of the World of Darkness by default, they’re meant to be added to chronicles where there’s use for them. Not every chronicle has a niche where they fit. But on the other hand, if an implacable force of destruction from a time before the rise of human-

ity seems to be just the sort of thing you want to build a story around, here you are.

Even for chronicles where these ancients are presumed to exist, the monsters presented in this chapter are meant to be rare. They should not be commonly spoken of in Uratha legend, nor should even a wise and experienced Ithaeur recognize one for what it is on sight. A pack is unlikely to run into more than one ancient of this nature during the course of a chronicle (if they run into one at all) based on odds alone. However, a pack of exceptional skill and strength might decide to take up hunting these ancients as their particular task, devoting the entire chronicle to hunting down these terrible abominations. Such a pack would likely see many losses over the course of the chronicle, and might even be wiped out to the last in a battle that they simply cannot win — but it would be good work they did.

By default, you can assume that each horror is unique — that is, there need be only one Tha’hon, not a whole school of them. Not everything in the World of Darkness falls into a neat category, and some monstrosities are the only ones of their kind. However, this can easily be the first guideline to be discarded. If the Deep alone is not quite enough to send shivers down the spines of your players, feel free to imply that there are more, or use them in future stories.

Each horror comes with two options for use — essentially, further explanations for what exactly the entity might be, and what its very existence might imply for the world. Neither option is official, and neither one need be used. They are there only to suggest potential plot hooks and to provide potential answers to the question “Why do these things exist?” Of course, that last is a question that doesn’t have to be answered either in-character or out-of-character for horrors of this nature — sometimes it’s more effective simply to hint that nobody knows why they exist, and that perhaps they *shouldn’t*. If you prefer to think of the story of Father Wolf as an allegory, a reference to Father Wolf in the myth of one of these things shouldn’t be taken literally. But the options may provide ideas not just for how and where these entities might be integrated into a chronicle, but for surprise twists to the way the world works.

Of course, not all of these ancients are designed to be overcome in simple pack-on-monster combat. Some could likely dismember an entire pack before going down, and

some are unlikely to go down at all. That's fine, actually — **Werewolf: The Forsaken** is a game built around brutal conflict, but it's also a horror game. Some antagonists in a horror game can't be overcome by brute strength alone. A story that revolves around an ancient horror might be better served by a climax in which the characters are able to overcome the horror with quick thinking and dramatic deeds. It would be interesting to see a pack figure out a way to overcome the Unseen's defenses and rip it apart, of course. But it would be even more interesting to have a fight that takes place in a foundry, where the pack manages to dump molten steel on the Unseen, outlining its form for the first and final time. When using one of these ancients, consider interesting ways in which the players might be able to destroy it in dramatic fashion, and be open to ideas that the players might put forward. They shouldn't be guaranteed a victory by coming up with a clever plan, but, if the plan is indeed clever, they should be in much better shape than they would be if they'd trusted to claws and Death Rage alone.

The actual game mechanics for each horror can, of course, be changed to suit the chronicle. Like many of the other creatures in this book, no Morality or Harmony rating is given — these things simply do not interact with other beings in a way that would make such a measurement necessary. They are not moral, and they are not harmonious — they simply are. They are given Virtues and Vices, though, for the same roleplaying reasons that spirits possess them. It's a quick way to get a handle on the basic drives that power these otherwise wholly inhuman entities. Generally speaking, the singular nature of these entities means you have ample room to make allowances for their behavior while still keeping it plausible for your players to suspend their disbelief. A monstrosity as clearly supernatural as the Unseen doesn't necessarily follow the same logic as ordinary beings, so you can adjust periods of hibernation or feeding patterns to suit the story as well as speculative biology.

ZHO'AK — THE BREATH

The backhoe's shovel scraped harshly against another slab of rock, and hard. The machine lurched a bit before Everett reversed the controls. "Oh, for God's sake," he growled under his breath. Not another chunk of rock. It positively baffled him how people had ever managed to plant enough crops to feed a town here, much less how they managed to keep burying their dead in a graveyard that seemed more stone than soil with each shovelful.

Everett's nose wrinkled. What was that smell? Not a stiff, surely... the church was damn meticulous about keeping records of where all the old graves were. But it stank, whatever it was... so bad, he could almost see it. Wait... he could see it. What in...?

Everett toppled from his seat, fingers clawing at his throat, leaving bloody marks. His mouth continued to open

and close for some time, as the greenish haze slowly slid down his throat and then slowly withdrew.

By the time the backhoe stopped idling, the mist had long since rolled downhill.

The Breath is a creature without solid form, life (or perhaps unlife) that exists solely in a vaporous state. It has no eyes, but it can see. It has no brain, but it can think. It has no teeth, but it can kill.

The Breath appears as a mass of faintly greenish vapor. It may be all but transparent, only visible as a faint discoloration in the air, or opaque as heavy smoke. The actual opacity of the Breath seems to vary with the strength of its emotion. When the Breath has been thwarted or even injured, its form grows thicker and more solid-seeming — when it has lost interest in a place or when it decides to retreat, it fades to a thinner form. It may drift on the wind like any other vapor, or it may roil with unnatural violence, extruding half-formed shapes almost like faces or limbs from its mass. Of all the horrors of the primordial world, it may be the most subtle — when it chooses to be. When its mood shifts to violence, it is volcanic in its energy and hate.

STORYTELLING HINTS

The Breath is an entity with a purpose — a purpose that it does not explain, but that fuels its every appearance. It seems driven by some form of vindictive urge, one that sets it against local humans or werewolves. It is a single-minded but patient adversary; despite its near-invulnerability, it avoids drawing attention to itself as best it can. In particular, it avoids killing its prey directly under an open sky. It will pour itself into a car, or strangle a family while they're eating dinner at home or even rise from a steam vent to choke a person walking alone in a building's shadow — but it will not attack in an open field even if there are no other witnesses. Actually discerning the Breath's motives — why it pursues the targets it does, why it does not strike openly — should be part of any story involving conflict with the entity. Sample motivations are implied by the provided options, and others may suggest themselves to the Storyteller.

The Breath understands the First Tongue, and can actually shape words by pushing air through its being. When it does speak, it's in a faint whisper that seems murmured by several people at once. For the most part, though, it remains silent apart from the occasional long, soft sigh of malice.

Fighting the Zho'ak is almost not an option at all. A thing of mist and poison isn't the sort of enemy that can be overcome with claws and fangs alone. Nor can it be overcome by something as simple as a vacuum cleaner. Actually stopping the Breath might require an obscure set of rituals, laying a cunning physical trap or even simply standing aside and letting it achieve its objective in hopes that it will then return to sated slumber. It's best for the Storyteller to have some sort of idea in mind how the



players can overcome the Breath, but also to be open to other ideas — if the players come up with a plan that sounds sufficiently plausible, challenging and dramatic, there's no reason not to let it work.

OPTION A: THE BREATH OF GAEA

The planet is alive. She has flesh and blood, a heart and a living spirits. But she is not the merciful and kind mother figure of legend — her wrath is the earthquake and the volcano, the hurricane and the wildfire. And *Zho'ak* is her very breath, an exhalation like a whispered curse.

The *Uratha* have legends of ancient times when the planet turned against its own children, scouring them with ice and floods. According to their lore, the manifestation of *Zho'ak* is a symptom of the planet's anger. When the Breath rises from a newly torn gash in the earth, it is imbued with the killing anger of its spirit-mother. But it is woefully difficult to tell just what stirs the wrath of the planet itself. Pollution? Mass deaths? Cutting into the living rock? *Gaea*, as the *Forsaken* tell the story, is almost as fickle as *Mother Luna*. Most of the time, she slumbers — but when she shifts in her sleep, her anger gives rise to things like *Zho'ak*. The *Uratha* fear a day when she comes fully awake.

This option clearly stresses the hostile nature of the werewolves' world. The planet's spirit is no loving and sheltering *Mother Earth* so popular in human religion — she is a spirit as unreachable and inhuman as any other, visiting natural disasters on the creatures that live on her skin when it suits her to do so. The Breath is a terrible killing force in its own right, but it is also a herald of disaster, a hint that worse may yet come if things don't change in some unexplained way.

OPTION B: THE BREATH OF THE DAMNED

The soul is not independent of the body — not all of it. When a person dies, part of her soul departs to whatever unknown fate awaits it, but another part lingers, tied to her cold flesh and bones. A vampire is a creature with only part of its original soul, the part that is still married to its physical body. A ghost may be a reflection of the earthbound soul fragment, or even the fragment itself given different expression.

The living soul is gone, but what is left may, under the right circumstances, transcend Death.

But what happens to the soul fragments that do not live on in such a way? Do they break down like the body itself, rotting away into their component soul-motes? And if so, where do they go?

The Breath of the Damned is an entity made up of these fragmented remnants of the dead self — specifically, the soul-remnants of those corpses that were interred in the earth rather than buried at sea

or cremated. Over the centuries, they coalesce in the flows of Essence that shift below the earth's skin, finally taking form within subterranean pockets. The resulting entity is something undead, yet without a sense of individual identity — a thing that has no purpose, no place in the natural world, yet that feels a thousand inchoate pangs of desire. It kills because it “remembers” needing to kill for sustenance. Its hallucinogenic visions are not warnings of prophecy, but the last vestiges of sentience trying to express themselves in dreamlike form.

Under this option, *Zho'ak* is more tied to humanity. It is drawn to human lives, out of an instinct too vague to be called memory but too strong to be ignored. However, it is still not a ghost, and lacks even the monomaniacal “logic” that a ghost possesses. It may arise from sinkholes or chasms that develop in cemeteries, old battlefields or the sites of forgotten plague pits, or it may have drifted on the winds for years, passing from town to town.

With this option, the Storyteller may even wish to add an “Animation” power to the Breath's arsenal, allowing it to animate the corpses of its victims into mindless undead under its control. Such reanimated corpses' traits can be easily ad-libbed by the Storyteller, or built using the guidelines from Chapter One of *World of Darkness: Antagonists*.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 7, Strength 1, Dexterity 6, Stamina 7, Presence 4, Manipulation 1, Composure 6

Skills: Occult 1, Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 6, Survival 6, Intimidation 2

Merits: Direction Sense, Eidetic Memory, Quick Healer

Willpower: 13

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 12

Defense: 3

Speed: 11 (species factor 4)

Size: 7

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Caress*	Per Toxicity	4

*Armor does not protect against the caress attack, although full skin protection (such as from a biohazard suit) does.

Health: 14

- **Vaporous Form:** The Breath is not solid, making it exceptionally difficult to injure through conventional means. It is utterly immune to mundane physical attacks — bullets, fists, claws, even fire pass harmlessly through its form. It can be injured only by supernatural attacks that are tailored to strike at immaterial foes or objects. Even then, if the ability is not specifically tailored to target a vaporous entity, the Breath receives a +3 bonus to Defense against the attack. For instance, it would receive this bonus to Defense against claws empowered by the Blessing of the Spirit Hunt — it is not itself in Twilight, being gas-

eous rather than ephemeral. The Death Gift: Ghost Knife may work against the Breath normally if the Storyteller has decided that the horror is undead in nature (such as in the Breath of the Damned option).

- **Poisonous Vapors:** The Breath is supernaturally toxic in nature. Though its poison is not enough to kill a healthy werewolf by initial contact, it is quite toxic enough to be a real danger. If the Breath so much as makes skin contact with a given person, it inflicts damage of Toxicity 3 (see *World of Darkness Rulebook*, p. 180). The victim may make a reflexive Stamina + Resolve + Primal Urge roll to resist; if the victim gains more than four successes, the poison has no effect. Otherwise, the victim takes three points of lethal damage. Actually inhaling the Breath is much more deadly. The same system applies, but the Toxicity level rises to 7; the victim must gain 8 successes or take 7 points of lethal damage. Any character who ends her action sharing the same space as the Breath is considered to be inhaling its vapors (unless holding their breath); if the *Zho'ak* moves over to enshroud a victim on its action, the victim may take damage from skin contact, but is not immediately considered to be inhaling the vapors.

Vampires are not immune to the supernatural poison of the Breath, but they are less vulnerable. Skin contact with the Breath is resolved at Toxicity 2, and inhaling the Breath (which is unlikely, unless the vampire tries to speak while within its vapors) is resolved at Toxicity 5.

- **Unfailing:** The *Zho'ak* does not have to eat, sleep or breathe. Environmental hazards or attacks that target such biological processes have no effect on the Breath, including toxins and fatigue, with the exception of extreme cold. The *Zho'ak* is vulnerable to the effects of cold; folklore does not speak of this particular Achilles' Heel, but it can be discovered through experimentation.

- **Supernatural Tolerance:** The Breath adds three dice to the relevant Resistance Attribute when resisting the supernatural powers of other creatures. These dice are used in any dice pool where Primal Urge would be added to resist (see “Supernatural Conflict,” *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, pp. 103–104).

THA'HON — THE DEEP

Water fell away from it as it lifted its head into the unfamiliar air. Eyes that were used to the blackness swiveled, re-focused to take in the cold light. Pallid, slick skin swelled outward, and plates of organic not-bone ground against one another. Rows of teeth parted from one another, and a rush of the unfamiliar air flooded into long-disused lungs.

Yes. This felt — different, but somehow, dimly remembered. It had done this before, and it still bore the scars from the strongest things it had hunted and killed. It was time to do it again.

The Deep has not felt the touch of sunlight or moonlight for millennia, but it has not rested. It has slipped through pitch-black waters at the coldest and furthest

reaches of the oceans, feeding its bulk on the lesser creatures that also survive there.

The Deep is neither vertebrate nor invertebrate; it seems to be a blasphemous hybrid of both. Where it is not protected by plates of armor that seem to be part chitin and part coral, it has the pale and unwholesome flesh of an invertebrate or a drowned man. Fat, writhing arms like swollen eels end in rasps reminiscent of a lamprey's mouth, and chitinous limbs sprout oddly fanned fins. Its "face" is mercifully hidden in shadow, below a prow-like extrusion of armor — but what can be seen is a hateful mishmash of unusual mouthparts and stunted sensory organs.

No werewolves have penetrated to the lightless reaches of the ocean where the Deep swims, and no Uratha can attest to what its form is like when it passes through its icy grottoes. Whatever its form may be in the depths, it alters horribly as the Deep enters shallower water and even open air. Its body, no longer constrained by the high pressure to which it is accustomed, bloats outward — it is as if its body knows that by rights it should explode, but cannot. It is not graceful on land, but neither is it helpless there. The Tha'hon can move its bulk with surprising speed, smashing into its surface prey before tearing them apart and devouring them.

STORYTELLING HINTS

The Deep was likely wakened by the touch of humanity; all it would take is one diving vessel in the wrong place to draw its attention and send it questing upward. The ocean is its home, and it will not remain on the surface for long, but it can wreak considerable damage during the time it remains ashore. In a fight, it attempts to tear apart enemies with its rasp-tipped forelimbs, and uses the razor-sharp armor plates on its powerful tail to good effect.

The Deep is reasonably intelligent, though it knows nothing of language — if it once knew the First Tongue, it has forgotten all but a few snippets, such as its own name. It can judge whether a foe is too strong for it or not, and it knows enough to take the fight to its own element when it can. A running battle with the Deep should be a set piece on the coast or even at sea, because the Deep will not willingly venture so far onto land that it cannot return to the water if attacked. If its enemies are on something sufficiently destructible such as a smaller boat or a pier, it will ram the offending means of support in an attempt to bring its foes into the water where it can shred them at will.

OPTION A: THE ATAVISM

The Deep is a mistake. When the world was new and experimenting with the many forms life could take, deep in the seas in the time before land-walking life, it crafted organisms of infinite diversity. These new creatures survived, and had descendants of their own, and gradually all animal life sprang from these first beasts — but not from the Tha'hon. It had no offspring — it was the only one of its kind. When Nature created it, she drew back in revulsion and refused to make another. The Deep

was abandoned as something that would not bear wholesome fruit, and Nature left it on its own to die or survive, whichever it chose.

The Tha'hon chose to survive. It fed on the animals that were more blessed than it, that had been selected to propagate new life. It could not mate and create offspring, being outside the cycle of life — but neither did it age or die. For aeon upon aeon, it swam through the darkest trenches of the ocean, devouring whatever it could catch and searching for the mate it could never have.

Now the Deep has been loosed on the modern world, driven to walk on land for the first time in its eternal life. There are so many new lifeforms for it to hate, for it to devour — and perhaps even to mate with. Maybe Nature has finally given it what it needs before it can die — and if not, then it will devour as much as it can before it slinks back into the darkness again.

OPTION B: THE DROWNED GOD

Tha'hon was once beautiful. It drew on the power and majesty of both land and sea, of human and beast. It was king over a civilization of humans that worshipped it willingly, and it devoured their offerings with all the grace of a god made flesh.

But then its city was broken, its worshippers slaughtered and Tha'hon itself was cast down into the Deep. Perhaps it was the jaws of Father Wolf himself that ended Tha'hon's beautiful city; perhaps it was the talons of the Uratha, or even the random chance of a natural disaster. It doesn't matter. The only thing that matters to the Deep now is that it has survived, and that it was once beautiful. It wants to be worshipped, or it wants to take vengeance on all those that it feels may have wronged it. The Drowned God is a jealous and petty one.

The Drowned God plays on the classic horror element of "the ancient and corrupt civilization that worshipped a monster." A chronicle involving this incarnation of the Deep might have a stronger focus on investigation, as the pack begins to uncover hints about the lost city-state and its most unorthodox religion. They might hear snippets of prayer in the First Tongue that idolize the beautiful god, or uncover a peculiar idol depicting a beautiful yet slightly alien god, both man and fish. A human cult may have made the same discoveries, and, dreaming of Atlantis, do their best to raise their beautiful god out of the depths. Such a scenario might also work well in a crossover game involving mages, who have their own interest in things ancient and Atlantean.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 6, Strength 9, Dexterity 2 (4 in water), Stamina 12, Presence 6, Manipulation 1, Composure 4

Skills: Investigation 1, Athletics (Swimming) 4, Brawl (Ram, Tail Lash, Underwater Combat) 4, Stealth (Swimming) 2, Survival (Underwater) 6, Intimidation 4

Merits: Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Fast Reflexes 1, Iron Stamina 3, Iron Stomach, Natural Immunity, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 10

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Lust

Initiative: 7 (9 in water)

Defense: 2 (3 in water)

Speed: 16 (22 in water) (species factor 5/9)

Size: 10

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Forelimb	1 (L)	14
Tail Lash	3 (B)	16
Ram	3 (L)	14*

*A ram attack can only be performed as part of a charge (see **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 164).

ARMOR:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Hide and shell	4/4	0

*The Deep's layers of armor are considered bulletproof.

Health: 22

- **Unnatural Senses:** The Tha'hon has keen senses that allow it to thrive even in the lightless depths of the ocean. Any penalties to actions based on poor visual conditions are reduced by three, to a maximum of 0. Thus, the Deep would receive no penalty to Perception rolls made in darkness, but might still receive a penalty based on distracting circumstances.

- **Swift Swimmer:** The Deep is far more graceful and swift in the water than it is on land. When swimming, its effective Dexterity is raised to 4, raising its Initiative, Speed and Defense accordingly. In addition, its species factor for Speed is considered 9 rather than 5 while in the water, to represent its aquatic adaptation.

- **Amphibious:** The Deep can breathe air as well as water. However, it receives a -1 penalty to



Strength and Stamina rolls if it remains out of water for more than half an hour. The penalty increases by an additional -1 every hour after that, as the Deep slowly dehydrates, to a maximum penalty of -5.

- **Regeneration:** The Deep regains either one level of lethal damage or two levels of bashing damage each turn as a reflexive action. It will regenerate lethal damage first, regenerating bashing only when no more lethal damage is left on its health track. Aggravated damage is healed at the rate of one level per day. This regeneration is possible only while the creature is at least 50 percent immersed in water.

- **Ocean Communion:** As the three-dot Nature Gift: Forest Communion (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 130), save that it functions only in the ocean.

- **Calling the Waves:** As the five-dot Elemental Gift: Lament of the River (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 112), save that it has no Essence cost, and can be used only once during each moon phase (roughly once per week). The Deep invokes this power by swimming in a circle repeatedly, building an increasingly greater whirlpool around itself, until finally the ocean rises up against the coast.

- **Supernatural Tolerance:** The Deep adds four dice to the relevant Resistance Attribute when resisting the supernatural powers of other creatures. These dice are used in any dice pool where Primal Urge would be added to resist (see “Supernatural Conflict,” **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 103–104).

SUHAH DU — THE FLESH

Colin knelt in front of the child, praying that her senses were as dull as he remembered his own senses being — What was it like, again, being human? Was I human? he asked himself, before shaking off the unpleasant thought. Doesn't matter. What matters is that she can't smell the blood. I hope she can't smell the blood.

“Sweetie, I know you don't know me,” he said. “I know I'm a stranger. But you have to trust me. You can't go through that door right now. You understand?”

The child reached out her tiny hand. Something odd glittered in her eyes. Colin reflexively reached out for it, a scrap of paternal instinct telling him “She needs to be comforted,” even as his wolf-soul stirred and growled within him. He kept his hand still as she closed her fingers around it. “Do you understand, honey? I want to help you.”

As he watched her try to form a smile, he felt the teeth stab into his hand.

It may have been the first of the true shapeshifters, or it may simply be the strongest that has managed to survive. It does not have a true form of its own, and can only mimic the shapes of other creatures — or create monstrous roiling shapes of meat and horn and sinew out of its own imagination. It is the Flesh, or Suhahdu; it is the horror of no form and of every form. Something was taken from it a long time ago, and it forgot what it was. Now it

has gained a portion of its memories back, and it wants nothing more than to reclaim what it believes should be by its right.

Unlike the other horrors presented here, the Flesh has not been physically sealed in some remote and inaccessible location since ancient times. It has lain in dormancy throughout the ages in full view — wearing the shape of an animal, forgetting its true nature and behaving much as that animal would until it is somehow awakened. It may have been wearing the form of an African lion that wandered without pride, never breeding but also never dying. It may have been a domestic dog that outlived each of its masters, only to wander as a stray until being adopted again. It may even have worn the form of a human, most likely one seen as idiotic or insane, a wandering drifter with no real power of language and no real awareness of what it is to be human. But then *it* happened — some trigger event that startled the innermost mind of the Flesh into wakefulness, and it began to hunt again.

The Flesh has no one form. If it is patient, it can emulate the form of any one person or animal as need be; it cannot control its shapeshifting entirely, but while in the form of a human or animal it seems to be almost perfectly normal. The only hint to its true nature might be the ripple of muscles under the skin as they detach and re-attach in slightly different locations, a flickering change of eye color, or a flush to the skin that comes and goes as the Suhahdu's internal organs shift and dislocate its blood. Even its size is malleable, as it can compress itself down to the size of a cat or swell to the size of an elephant.

When in combat, though, the Flesh uses its shapeshifting ability reflexively, with monstrous results. The limbs and heads and mouths of beasts emerge from its body mass seemingly at random, and are re-absorbed just as quickly. In one instant, the Flesh bites into a foe with an elongated snout full of mismatched fangs; in the next, it disembowels another with a thorny pseudopod. There is no plan, no reason to its attacks — it shifts as quickly as it reacts to its opponents. The only semblance of technique is its tendency to use its digestive acids against foes of particular “savor” — and even a werewolf can be dissolved by the acid exuded by the Suhahdu, and then absorbed into its form.

STORYTELLING HINTS

The Flesh is a tabula rasa, in need of a form and identity to call its own. However, no one form ever satisfies it — no matter how well-off its new identity may be, no matter how easy it is to gain food and other desirable things, the Suhahdu simply must move on to another experience. It is insatiable, which is what makes it most dangerous; it cannot be given a “perfect life” and then expected to live peacefully.

It also seems to have an instinctive hostility toward werewolves, and will attempt to murder any Uratha it can catch at an opportune time. Perhaps it feels threatened

by the very existence of other shapeshifters, even those of greatly reduced versatility. Perhaps it remembers some past offense that it cannot or will not speak of. Whatever the truth, the Flesh is not capable of peaceful coexistence with the Uratha. If given the chance, it will gladly kill every werewolf in a given territory, one by one, then claim the territory for its own until its gnawing envy drives it to move again.

As the Flesh continues to emulate humans and learn about how they live, it has the potential to gain knowledge at an exponential rate. The set of Skills provided here represents the Flesh after a few months of “awake” activity, after it has learned some of the basics of human culture and become moderately adept at playing a human part. The longer it is awake, the more Skills it should rightly gain. At the stated point of development, the Suhahdu’s impersonation of a human being is imperfect — good enough to fool humans who are content to explain away someone’s eccentricities as “just another weirdo.” It may have peculiar quirks in its language skills (such as never using pronouns, or using the plurals of words incorrectly), and perform strange emulations of human behavior (such as blurring the rituals of keeping a pet and raising a child). It does understand the First Tongue, and can even speak it, but makes the occasional mistake even in this language. Ironically, werewolves witnessing such imperfections in behavior might mistake the Flesh for a Ridden with similarly incomplete understanding of the human life it emulates. The truth is sure to be dangerously surprising.

OPTION A: THE CHIMERA

The Suhahdu is the rarest breed of animal — the physical equivalent of a magath. It was once a terrestrial predator, one that was so successful in its hunts that it incorporated aspects of each animal it devoured into itself. Its unnatural origin was directly tied to the state of affairs before the rise of the Gauntlet — now that the spirit-world is more clearly separated from the physical, the circumstances that birthed the Flesh cannot be duplicated. To the best of its knowledge, it is the only one of its kind, and its solitude fills it with hate. Though it is composed of the aspects of many creatures, it cannot find an equal anywhere in the animal kingdom.

The Flesh no longer gains any advantage from devouring other creatures — it can take any form it chooses. But it does so anyway. The instinct to hunt and survive has given it effective immortality, and to slow its predation might (as it sees things) be a sure invitation to Death. It resents its continual dependence on this hunt that created it and forever set it apart from other beasts. And yet, it must survive. At all costs.

It’s possible that the Suhahdu may enter a partnership with one or more magath, the closest thing it has to kindred spirits (so to speak). Magath might take the existence of the Flesh as justification of their own existence, proof that they are not as unnatural as the rest of the spirit world seems to regard them. If the Suhahdu came

into being the same way they did, is it then their physical reflection? Does it not indicate that the process that created them has a place in the world? The Flesh would become even more dangerous with one or more spirit wing-men (perhaps using it as a living fetter) working with it, even attempting to advance its welfare. They might even attempt to bring about a localized circumstance that could lead to the creation of another Suhahdu. Even if the plan could not possibly work, the efforts of single-minded spirits to drastically lower the Gauntlet and encourage animals to devour one another in the proximity could lead to gruesome results of another stripe. When a pack comes to investigate the strange occurrence, they find an ancient horror and a small coven of spirits waiting for them...

OPTION B: FIRSTBORN OF LUNA

The Uratha claim that Luna had many suitors, but that she bore offspring only to Father Wolf. However, legends have a tendency to omit details, or to use symbolic language to disguise a dirtier reality. The legend of the Suhahdu was deliberately forgotten a long time ago, for the People could not bear to think that the first shapeshifter to be born was not one of their own, but a monstrosity with no parallel.

Whatever the relationship that werewolves have to the ever-changing moon, it is a relationship that is shared by the Flesh. However, the Suhahdu is far less limited in the forms it can take. The Flesh inherited the full scope of Luna’s shapechanging blessings — and the full extent of her madness. The spirits of the moon do nothing to acknowledge this prodigal spawn; they react to it with a revulsion that seems born of shame. But though the Suhahdu does not carry Luna’s favor, neither has she moved to destroy what she created.

In this option, the Flesh is clearly tied in some way to the Forsaken. Even if they are not, as their myths say, directly descended from Luna, they cannot ignore the depredations of a creature that is empowered by their spiritual patron. Certainly any Pure who become aware of such a creature’s existence will see it as further proof that Luna’s madness taints any that would consider themselves her “children.” By its very existence, the Suhahdu would amplify the Pure’s religious hatred of the Forsaken — but that, of course, is only part of the threat it poses.

Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 6, Resolve 3, Strength 6, Dexterity 7, Stamina 6, Presence 5, Manipulation 4, Composure 4

Skills: Crafts 1, Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 1, Politics 1, Science 1, Athletics 7, Brawl (Grapple) 5, Larceny 1, Stealth (Small forms) 4, Survival 5, Weaponry 1, Animal Ken 1, Empathy 2, Expression 2, Intimidation 4, Persuasion 1, Socialize 1, Subterfuge (Disguise) 4

Merits: Ambidextrous, Danger Sense, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 2, Fresh Start, Iron Stomach, Language (any two appropriate to the area) 2, Natural Immunity, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 7

Virtue: Hope

Vice: Envy

Initiative: 13

Defense: 6

Speed: 23 (species factor 8)

Size: 1-10 (variable)

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Stab/claw/bite	3 (L)	14
Strike/kick/tail lash	3 (B)	14
Engulf	Special	15

ARMOR:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Shifting form	2/4	0

* The Flesh's armor is considered bulletproof; although the bone armor it can form is not particularly reinforced, its internal organs shift form and location so rapidly that bullets rarely do enough tissue damage to be a serious threat.

Health: 13

• **Shapeshifting:** The Flesh is a shapechanger without equal. It may transform its shape as a reflexive action, taking the form of an existing animal, an amalgamation of multiple creatures, or even abstract conglomerations

of flesh and bone. In combat, it actually shifts as quickly as it takes any other action, forming limbs for the sole purpose of striking at its foes.

• **Extra Limbs:** The Flesh can form and control up to 20 limbs at any given time. Although this does not grant the Suhahdu any extra actions in a turn, it does mean that it can have multiple opponents grappled while it strikes another, or otherwise make passive use of multiple limbs at once.

• **Biological Mimicry:** The Flesh can duplicate non-supernatural biological adaptations present in an animal of at least Size 1. Thus, it could sprout gills in order to breathe underwater, but could not replicate a pheromone particular to a given species of ant. In order to use a particular adaptation, it must succeed at an Intelligence + Survival roll. Mimicking an adaptation is a standard action; if successful, the adaptation lasts for the duration of the scene or until the Flesh attempts to mimic a different adaptation.

• **Engulf:** When making a grapple action, the Flesh may flow over its target to hold them in place. Once it has engulfed its foe, it assaults its captive



with newly shaped teeth and digestive acids. The Flesh receives a +3 tool modifier to grapple checks when grappling with the intent to engulf. If it achieves a hold, the foe is considered engulfed, and the Flesh inflicts lethal damage to the opponent instead of bashing when choosing the “damage opponent” option (for more information, see **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 157). In addition, the opponent is considered to be suffocating. (See “Holding Breath,” **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 49.)

- **Size-changing:** The Flesh can alter its form from the size of a cat to the size of an elephant, with its body mass changing to match. The Flesh is always somewhat abnormally heavy for its size (at least when wearing forms with size less than 8), due to its penchant for packing its tissue densely when contracting into a smaller form. Although its Size may change, its Health remains a constant (barring injury, of course); its Health is calculated as if the Flesh were always at Size 7.

- **Supernatural Tolerance:** The Flesh adds four dice to the relevant Resistance Attribute when resisting the supernatural powers of other creatures. These dice are used in any dice pool where Primal Urge would be added to resist (see “Supernatural Conflict,” **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 103–104).

AHARNUZ — THE MOTHER

It came awake in the warmth, flooded with a rush of love for the mother that surrounded it. Then there was a rush of movement, and cold — cold stone against its wet flesh, and air, such cool air, chilling it. It lifted what it now knew to be its head, and staggered up on what it now knew to be its limbs. It wanted to croon its love to its mother, but knew that was not why it had been born; already it shared in the rest of the brood’s anger and hate for the horrible furred things that had come to kill their beloved mother.

It wailed a long chittering sound, and lunged for the nearest intruder. The hate felt good. It felt like love.

The word “Mother” is a tremendous euphemism used to describe the Aharnuz. Not really female at all, the Mother is the only one of its kind. It is defined by its ability to give birth, yet it cannot give birth to another of its species — each of its spawn is different. The Mother is, thankfully, the only one of its kind — or so the Uratha hope.

The Aharnuz is essentially parthenogenetic; it does not require fertilization to give birth to a new spawn. However, it may profit from incorporating new genetic information into its being, whether that comes from devouring a creature to absorb its genetic data as it digests or from a wholly obscene coupling. The unending variety of its spawn, which seem to take a different form with every birth, may easily be attributed to the Mother’s penchant for absorbing as many other creatures as it can.

The Mother is a massive bulk, bloated but not to the point of immobility. It is supported by four long limbs that act partly as legs and partly as arms; it walks on all fours,

but can manipulate objects with its “fingers” while squatting. Its mouth is on the top of its bulk, surrounded by dim pinpricks that serve as sensory organs, and below is its birthing tube. Its skin is naturally dry, but is often flecked with saliva or birth secretions.

The real danger of the Aharnuz is not in its own physical or supernatural capability, but in its ability to create spawn. It is never found alone, and a pack seeking to kill the Mother must fight through a small army of spawn in order to reach the horror. The Mother breeds irresponsibly as well, so its less favored offspring might trickle out into the world to cause a host of other problems. Like many of the other horrors in this chapter, it has likely woken recently, when the Uratha still have a chance to hunt down its spawn and confront it before it has brought forth a legion. It is very fortunate for the world that its spawn are all sterile — for if the Mother ever perfects its ability so that it can create fertile spawn, the world is in dire trouble.

STORYTELLING HINTS

The Mother is the embodiment of fecundity gone wrong — the desire to propagate swollen to monstrous proportions. It does not need its children, and it does not love its children. It simply needs to spawn more and more.

The Aharnuz’ procreative drive is tied inextricably to its sense of purpose, but that doesn’t mean the Mother is mindless. The idea of the monster-birthing monstrosity that lies immobile, taking no action but to deliver more offspring, is certainly revolting. However, that image isn’t as frightening as it could be — ultimately, it’s a monster that cannot defend itself, and is, therefore, more easily killed. Not so with the Aharnuz. The Mother is not an immobile target, and it can defend itself without relying explicitly on its “children.” If its brood-chamber is invaded, it will attempt to destroy and devour the intruders if they seem weak, or flee if they seem too strong. The Mother can fight, and even set traps to defend itself, but it will not fight to the death if it has any other option. It cannot afford to die, and let all its future generations die with it.

The Mother communicates through its empathic ability. It does not speak or understand any language in particular, even the First Tongue, but is capable of analyzing emotional states so efficiently that it can glean a surprising amount of understanding. Even if it doesn’t know what the words “You had better leave, or we’ll tear you apart,” it can glean the general context from the rush of “*accusation demand fear protective angry violent defensive volatile worried*” that it perceives. It may attempt to communicate with its enemies in turn, but the flood of “*confident defensive need arrogant lust resentment irritation*” that it broadcasts in return is hard for anyone to process.

The Mother’s spawn can be represented with the statistics of almost any beast or supernatural entity you can devise, so long as it’s made of flesh rather than ephemera.

Even a vampire's traits can be modified into a terrible blood-drinking spawn of the Mother with a few adjustments, particularly of the cosmetic sort. A sample spawn is provided, but the Storyteller is heartily encouraged to devise others of terrible diversity. Some of the Ridden from Chapter Two (such as the Protective Animal) can work quite well with a few cosmetic twists, as might antagonists from a **Vampire** book.

OPTION A: LUNA'S HANDMAIDEN

Uratha legend holds that when Luna took on flesh and walked the earth as a woman, she had many suitors, but accepted only Father Wolf. But did she walk alone?

According to one all-but-forgotten tale, when Luna descended to the earth, her handmaidens walked with her. They were the ones to draw away the rejected suitors so that Luna could be alone with Father Wolf, and when her time there was done, they ascended back to the sky with her. All but one. One of her handmaidens decided to tarry, taking her leisure with Luna's rejected suitors and enjoying the delights of the flesh. She was still there when the Gauntlet rose, and became flesh forevermore.

That, at least, is the legend. The truth is lost — is the story of Mother Luna walking the earth even true at all? — but the Mother seems in some way to be connected to Luna. It may gain extra strength under moonlight, or gain minor advantages similar to auspice powers as the moon changes. Perhaps auspice Gifts don't work against it, or Lunes are filled with anger when they cross its path. Whether the original legend is true or not makes little difference. The real concern is that the Aharnuz, though its connection to Luna, is also tied to the People. The main uses of this option are twofold. One is to imply unpleasant things about the Uratha's origin myth, to provide another of the twists that hint at werewolves being creatures tied to horrors from the very beginning. The other is to, through a shared connection with Luna, give the Aharnuz additional reasons to interfere with a werewolf pack. If it recognizes werewolves as tied to the moon like itself, it may see them as wayward children, dire rivals or (worst of all) potential "suitors." There are many ways to take an encounter with the Mother, and all of them are sure to be unsettling at the very least.

OPTION B: THE ELDEST HOST

Neither Azlu nor Beshilu, the Mother is something else entirely — it is a Host that has, for the greater part, achieved its goal of unity. It has gathered so many of its fragments together that it is greater than the oldest Azlu and larger than the most swollen Beshilu. It is still not complete — many of its shards are still lost — but it believes itself to be. And, now that it is complete, it is ready to resume its old role in the world. However, millennia spent as a broken, splintered consciousness have only ensured one thing — the Mother is mad, and cannot even remember what its old role was. But it thinks it remem-

bers. And it thinks that its role is to birth a new species to populate the world.

Under this option, the Mother might have come into its current incarnation only recently. The two greatest of its shard-bodies may have fused through cannibalism within the last few years (or even months). Furthermore, werewolves will have a particularly difficult time trying to understand the Aharnuz under this option, as their legends may not speak of something that matches the Mother's description. The Mother might even come into existence over the course of a chronicle, if the People prove to be unable to stop a mass grouping of Azlu from Joining into this freakish parody of the Spinner-Hag.

Some cosmetic tweaks to represent a Host's physical aesthetic may be in order. For instance, if the Mother proves to be the ultimate form of a Fly or Roach Host, anatomical features suggesting the appropriate insect would be expected. The Aharnuz' lair might also be infested with vermin of the appropriate sort, perhaps drawn to the perverted pheromones that it gives off. This option, of course, makes the Mother more understandable and less abjectly alien, but that shouldn't detract from its horrific aspect — after all, most players are at least a little revolted by the immense fertility of vermin such as flies or cockroaches, and might be appropriately horrified by such fertility on a much greater scale.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 5, Strength 7, Dexterity 3, Stamina 9, Presence 6, Manipulation 3, Composure 5

Skills: Medicine 2, Occult 3, Athletics 2, Brawl 4, Stealth 1, Survival 3, Animal Ken 1, Empathy 6, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Ambidextrous, Danger Sense, Direction Sense, Iron Stamina 3, Iron Stomach, Natural Immunity, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 10

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Lust

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 17 (species factor 7)

Size: 11

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Strike	4 (B)	15
Bite	3 (L)	14

ARMOR:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Thick hide	2/3	0

Health: 20

• **Spawn:** The Mother can create a new spawn as a standard action with the expenditure of a Willpower point. The newborn spawn takes one turn to get its bearings, and then can begin attacking its Mother's assailants or otherwise carrying out its progenitor's will. Newborn

spawn are of course the weakest of the brood, and should be given appropriate statistics.

- **Empathic:** The Mother communicates by receiving and broadcasting emotions. It can effectively sense the emotions of anyone within 100 yards, and can “read” a specific person’s emotions in more detail as easily as a person observes another person’s clothing. It may attempt to broadcast its own emotions as a means of communication. Actively sifting through these emotions to understand the gist of what the Mother is attempting to “say” requires a Composure + Empathy roll. Success establishes some measure of context (“It wants us to leave”), and exceptional success provides greater context (“It recognizes us as old enemies but doesn’t want to fight us yet”).

- **Brood Empathy:** The Mother is in constant empathic communication with all of its spawn that remain within 200 yards. Unlike communication with outsiders, the Mother and its spawn instinctively understand one another, and can communicate as effectively as if they were using language. The empathic presence of their Mother also gives the brood extra confidence. Any spawn that can still feel the Aharnuz’ empathic presence nearby has its Resolve and Composure traits increased by 2.

- **Regeneration:** The Mother regains either two wounds of lethal damage or three wounds of bashing damage each turn as a reflexive action. It will regenerate lethal damage first, regenerating bashing only when no more lethal damage is left on its health track. Aggravated damage is healed at the rate of one level per day.

- **Supernatural Tolerance:** The Mother adds five dice to the relevant Resistance Attribute when resisting the supernatural powers of other creatures. These dice are used in any dice pool where Primal Urge would be added to resist (see “Supernatural Conflict,” **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 103–104).

SAMPLE SPAWN

This spawn represents a newborn that might emerge from the Mother’s womb during a pitched confrontation. It is long and spindly, somewhere between biped and quadruped, like an emaciated and deformed gorilla. It fights with surprisingly powerful blows from its bone-crusted knuckles if the Mother wants it to subdue, and with jabs from the jutting spurs at its joints if the Mother wants it to kill. Though it understands little, it still draws remarkable skill from its empathic link with the brood and pure instinct.

Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 3, Resolve 2 (4) Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 2 (4)

Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 3, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Empathy 1

Merits: Ambidextrous, Fast Reflexes 1, Natural Immunity, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 4 (8)

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 7 (9)

Defense: 3

Speed: 15 (species factor 6)

Size: 5

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Strike	1 (B)	9
Bone spur	2 (L)	10

ARMOR:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Naturally tough hide	1/1	0

Health: 9

- **Brood Empathy:** The spawn is in constant empathic communication with the Mother and the rest of its brood as long as it and they remain within 200 yards of the Mother. Its Resolve and Composure traits are increased by 2 while it shares in this communication.

NUIGIM — THE UNSEEN

The pavement buckled and cracked, a quintet of grooves cut into its surface, spreading out from the indentation. It did it again, two yards away. Amelia shook her head in disbelief, her eyes telling her what her nose couldn’t. Each crater was a footstep, and they were coming quicker towards her. She wanted to run, but the murderous scent tangled her limbs, her ability to think.

And then wounds opened up across her flesh.

The Unseen is not distinctive for its invisibility; it is defined by it. It cannot make itself visible, and it’s uncertain whether it would even understand the concept of visibility at all. It is a blind aberration, completely cut off from light and vision. Yet its blindness does not keep it from hunting. In fact, it is a hunter with few equals, capable of moving its bulk with great stealth.

From the pattern of its steps, the Unseen seems to be a quadruped, or a mostly bipedal creature that walks on its knuckles as well. It clearly has great claws on all its limbs that scar the earth and even asphalt where it strides; the terrible wounds it leaves on its prey also serve as grim evidence of its talons. It must also have powerful jaws or mandibles of some sort, though this is harder to determine; it does not bite its prey in combat. When it pauses to devour its prey, huge chunks simply vanish from the corpses with a terrible grinding noise and the occasional splatter of falling blood. It is presumably blind, for it is apparently unimpeded by mist, darkness or smoke.

The Unseen is not simply invisible — it *can not* be seen, even when circumstances might indicate otherwise. Blood or ink splattered across its form fades to translucence and then invisibility in less than a second. Mist or falling rain displaces, but only in the roughest outline. Whatever facet of its nature (or unnature) hides it from sight seems to work on an almost metaphysical level — the world refuses to regard the Nuigim, and will not make it visible.

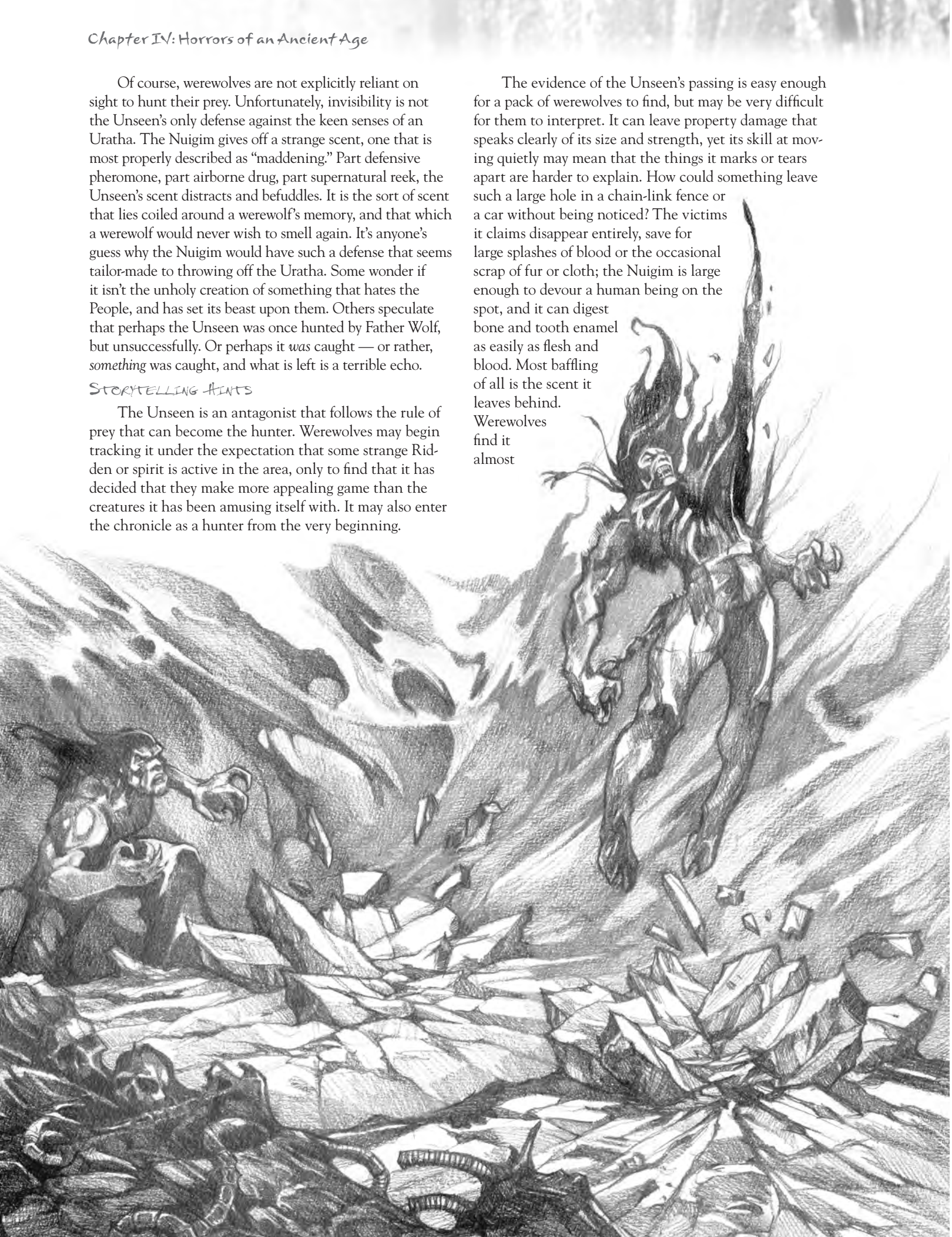
Of course, werewolves are not explicitly reliant on sight to hunt their prey. Unfortunately, invisibility is not the Unseen's only defense against the keen senses of an Uratha. The Nuigim gives off a strange scent, one that is most properly described as "maddening." Part defensive pheromone, part airborne drug, part supernatural reek, the Unseen's scent distracts and befuddles. It is the sort of scent that lies coiled around a werewolf's memory, and that which a werewolf would never wish to smell again. It's anyone's guess why the Nuigim would have such a defense that seems tailor-made to throwing off the Uratha. Some wonder if it isn't the unholy creation of something that hates the People, and has set its beast upon them. Others speculate that perhaps the Unseen was once hunted by Father Wolf, but unsuccessfully. Or perhaps it *was* caught — or rather, *something* was caught, and what is left is a terrible echo.

STORYTELLING HINTS

The Unseen is an antagonist that follows the rule of prey that can become the hunter. Werewolves may begin tracking it under the expectation that some strange Rid-den or spirit is active in the area, only to find that it has decided that they make more appealing game than the creatures it has been amusing itself with. It may also enter the chronicle as a hunter from the very beginning.

The evidence of the Unseen's passing is easy enough for a pack of werewolves to find, but may be very difficult for them to interpret. It can leave property damage that speaks clearly of its size and strength, yet its skill at moving quietly may mean that the things it marks or tears apart are harder to explain. How could something leave such a large hole in a chain-link fence or a car without being noticed? The victims it claims disappear entirely, save for large splashes of blood or the occasional scrap of fur or cloth; the Nuigim is large enough to devour a human being on the spot, and it can digest bone and tooth enamel as easily as flesh and blood. Most baffling of all is the scent it leaves behind.

Werewolves find it almost



impossible to focus on the Unseen's scent enough to analyze it properly.

The Nuigim, like most horrors, is largely nocturnal. Though it is not impaired by darkness, it prefers to hunt when humans are less active — or perhaps when werewolves are more active. It has the instinct of a hunter, and will avoid heavily populated areas during their busiest. It prefers to catch its prey alone.

The Unseen never speaks, or growls or roars — it's a mystery whether or not it even has any sort of vocal apparatus. Only its footfalls and its disturbing scent give away its presence — and it is capable of stepping quietly when it so chooses. It understands the First Tongue, however, and is a good listener.

OPTION A: THE BEAST OUT OF DARKNESS

The Unseen was born in a place where there was no light. It grew to its full strength feasting on horrible things that it never saw, things that will mercifully never be known to the younger races. The greatest and the strongest survivor of its subterranean lair, it eventually fell into slumber for want of prey. Then something — perhaps a geothermal or oil probe, perhaps an earthquake — opened the vault where the Unseen slept. When the Unseen followed the intrusion to the surface world, it never knew that it was entering a world where light existed.

Although this option is a fairly basic “subterranean horror” assumption at its heart, it implies some interesting things about what other monstrosities might have gestated in a world utterly without light. Further, it also implies a certain symbolic logic that could produce a number of other secret quirks to the world. If something born in the utter absence of light is supernaturally blind and invisible, what other places in the world — or the Shadow — might engender similar “subtracted” entities? What might the planets utterly devoid of life create? What if a place of utter absence wasn't lacking in a physical quality such as light, but rather an abstract concept such as love or intelligence?

OPTION B: THE HUNTING HOUND

The Unseen was not born, but was made. Something — some spirit with the power of an Incarna, perhaps — crafted it to be the ultimate hound, a tracker that could follow any scent and that would not be hunted in turn. The exact nature of its prey could be anything, depending on what the Storyteller finds most interesting. However, it is entirely likely that the Unseen was created by an angry spirit-lord to hunt down the half-flesh bastards who unfairly attempt to bring the entities of Shadow to heel. It is a perfect creation for stalking werewolves, after all — it seems only reasonable that this was intentional. Its invisibility ultimately stems partly from the desire to hide the Nuigim from the werewolves it hunts, but mostly from the intention of hiding the monster from the gaze of Luna itself. If the Unseen cannot be touched by her light, she

may never know of its existence until her favored curs are gone.

One of the more alarming potential wrinkles that come from this option is that the Nuigim may have been not a singular creation, but a prototype. While much was surely invested in its creation, it's possible that the terrifyingly potent Incarna (or Incarnae) that brought it to life could create another. The dramatic impact of the Unseen would be greatly reduced if there were a whole pack of them, of course. The mere threat of having just one additional Nuigim created can be a sufficient driving point for a very dangerous story. Gaining sufficient leverage over an Incarna-level threat to halt its ambitions is likely to be a task that would require much risk and sacrifice.

Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 4, Resolve 6, Strength 9, Dexterity 4, Stamina 9, Presence 2, Manipulation 1, Composure 6

Skills: Occult (Spirits) 1, Brawl (Claw) 4, Stealth (Moving Silently, Remaining Still) 5, Survival 5, Animal Ken 1

Merits: Ambidextrous, Direction Sense, Eidetic Memory, Iron Stamina 3, Natural Immunity, Strong Back, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 9

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 10

Defense: 4

Speed: 20 (species factor 7)

Size: 9

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Claw	2 (L)	16
Bite	3 (L)	16

ARMOR:

Type	Rating	Defense Penalty
Armored hide	3/3	0

Health: 18

- **Invisible:** The Unseen does not register to sight, even under infrared or ultraviolet light. It can be detected by techniques such as echolocation, and will trigger motion detectors, but it will not show up on film. All attempts to attack it in Brawl or Weaponry combat are at a –1 penalty (which is over and above any dice pool subtractions made for Defense), and all ranged attacks against it are at a –3 penalty. If the circumstances are right (for instance, if the Unseen wins at a Stealth roll), attackers may be considered to be fighting blind. (See the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 166.)

- **Stalks Without Seeing:** The Unseen is blind, but is able to perceive its surroundings through supernatural means. It is immune to any supernatural powers that require eye contact, as well as any penalties for darkness or visual impairment. The Unseen can accurately discern objects or creatures from one another to a distance of about 60 yards.

- **Maddening Scent:** The Nuigim constantly gives off a peculiar scent that interferes with other creatures' abilities to focus properly. The scent affects everyone within roughly 10 yards of the Nuigim, and potentially farther downwind. Creatures that have roughly a human level of scent acuity are at a -1 penalty to all Dexterity, Social or Mental dice pools while within scent range of the Unseen. Werewolves, dogs, vampires with a supernaturally heightened sense of smell and other creatures with a similar level of scent acuity are more powerfully affected, and suffer a -2 penalty to such rolls. This penalty is cumulative with the penalties to attack rolls imposed by the Unseen's invisibility. The Nuigim is, of course, immune to this effect despite its own scent acuity. Any attempts to track the Unseen by scent suffer a -1 penalty. Its scent's distracting qualities mean that a tracker can easily lose the trail without realizing that the odor she smells is haunting her memory instead of physically present.

- **Tracker:** The Unseen can track by scent, with an equipment bonus of +2 as if it were a bloodhound (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, p. 179).

- **Untouched by Light:** The Nuigim has never had light fall clearly upon it, and as such is a cipher to spirits that represent light or vision. Lunes, Helions and other such spirits have no knowledge of the Unseen's existence; it occupies a blind spot in their collective understanding of things. Such spirits cannot target the Unseen with Numina (or likely even believe its existence), and Gifts taught by such spirits are at a -1 penalty to affect the Nuigim.

- **Regeneration:** The Unseen regains either one level of lethal damage or two levels of bashing damage each turn as a reflexive action. It will regenerate lethal damage first, regenerating bashing only when no more lethal damage is left on its health track. Aggravated damage is healed at the rate of one level per day.

- **Supernatural Tolerance:** The Unseen adds five dice to the relevant Resistance Attribute when resisting the supernatural powers of other creatures. These dice are used in any dice pool where Primal Urge would be added to resist (see "Supernatural Conflict," **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 103-104).

ZMAI — THE WORM

<<COME>>

The word thundered in his head, and he loved the feeling. <<I AM PLEASED,>> came the words, and he nearly shrieked with joy at the thought of his master's pleasure. <<I GIVE TO YOU,>> thrummed another pulse of mind-thunder, and it was all he could do walk respectfully to his master's side instead of running, laughing the whole way.

The pale flesh buckled, shivered and opened. A long trail of dark liquid oozed forth from the new wound. <<DRINK>>

He placed one hand reverently on the pallid, leathery skin to either side of the wound, lowered his lips, and gave himself up to ecstasy.

Werewolf legend speaks of great monstrosities from the spirit world that set themselves up as gods in the days of Pangaea. It is at the core of Forsaken belief that in part it was necessary to slay their progenitor in order that these false gods could no longer prosper from his failings. If this tale is true, then the Worm may be one of these darker messiahs returned to the world.

The Zmai is a dangerously intelligent abomination, a thing of spirit-made-flesh that has great power over the weak and mortal. It may have appeared to humans before, perhaps many times. Legends of harmless serpent cults or earth-worshippers may mask periods when the Worm was awake. It hides its pale flesh from the sun, presiding over disgusting rituals enacted in its name.

The Worm is immense, nearly as thick as a school bus and almost 120 feet long. Its pallid flesh is marked with rough-textured black patches along its length, like burn wounds or crusted scabs. Its head extends into a long, almost crocodilian snout that splits vertically into an unnatural pair of jaws. Its skull is marked by four smooth hollows of flesh, two above its jaws and two below — eyes that never opened. It communicates through its potent telepathy, but when angered or injured, it shrieks and hisses at deafening volume.

STORYTELLING HINTS

The Worm is potentially one of the most dangerous of the ancients, for the Worm is recognizably intelligent — and very much so. It is capable of understanding human beings to some extent, discerning what they desire and why they do what they do. It does not *think* like them, any more than a scientist thinks in the manner of the ape he studies or a dog thinks like the master it tries to emulate — it simply can extrapolate some understanding of their behavior through observation.

The Worm may well have awakened several times already over the course of history, only to be buried again by the acts of werewolves or simply falling back into torpor. Storytellers who enjoy the time-honored tradition of placing ugly horrors behind human myths can easily attach the Zmai to any number of legends, from the Egyptian myth of Apep to the Greek tales of Typhon and the Japanese legend of Orochi. This provides ample literary precedent to foreshadow an appearance by the Worm, or a cult that has preserved its tradition only to potentially be confronted with their god in the noisome flesh.

Like many of the other horrors presented here, the Worm is best not fought in a face-to-face brawl. It's simply too large to be significantly wounded by a werewolf's claws unless the werewolf does something suicidal like leap down the Worm's throat in the hopes of tearing apart its heart before he dies. The number of thralls it has to draw on will also color the nature of the conflict between the Worm and a pack. If it has only managed to gather a few select thralls since its re-awakening, it will be harder to find but easier to overcome. If it has established a small

army of loyal slaves, then the pack will find it easier to hunt it down (the more thralls, the more likely one will do something that a werewolf might notice), but far harder to outright fight.

Of course, the question must be asked: “What does the Worm want?” Why does it choose to set itself at the center of a human cult; what could it have to gain? The answer can be as simple or as complicated as you choose. The simple version involves food, shelter and protection; the thralls bound to the Zmai can help it hide from the Uratha, guide it to a comfortable home, and ultimately feed it when they cease to be otherwise useful. More complicated reasons imply more complicated needs. The Worm might feed not just on its worshippers’ flesh, but on the emotion they generate as well; their worship may fuel its reserves of Essence. In such a case, the Worm would suggest increasingly ecstatic and depraved rituals of worship to generate even more Essence for it to feed on. Perhaps the Worm seeks to somehow ascend its current bloated form and take on a more perfect shape, and humans may play some part in its ascension. The answer is probably best left to your tastes and general plans for the Worm. If you plan to use the Zmai as the antagonist for a single story, it need not be as complicated an entity; if it becomes one of the major players in the chronicle, it should likely have sufficiently complicated needs that the players continue to have an interest in its plots.

OPTION A: A FALLEN GOD

During the time of Pangaea, the Worm was an entity comparable to the Spinner-Hag or the Plague King. However, for some reason, it was not torn apart like its siblings before the Gauntlet rose. Perhaps it managed to hide more effectively because of its persuasive abilities — its human thralls did their utmost to protect it. Perhaps it was spared for some other reason that throws the legend of Father Wolf into question.

This option doesn’t change the Worm too much, apart from giving it a closer tie to other mythological figures out of werewolf legend. Its intellect is unchanged, and presumably it spent about the same amount of time in torpor before being awoken again in the modern age. There is a potential issue in that if the Worm remembers Pangaea, it could theoretically confirm or deny some of the Uratha’s many legends about their origins. Storytellers who want to maintain some element of mystery may choose to have the Worm’s memories faded and unclear, or simply to have the Zmai lie whenever it chooses — it owes the Uratha nothing, certainly not the truth. Although it might tell the truth if it felt that such would do the werewolves far more harm than good...

There is one very interesting potential final twist to this option: If the Worm is finally caught and torn apart in some way, perhaps it too could do what its brethren did so long ago. Perhaps it could survive by dispersing its vital essence into thousands of tiny earthly vessels. What would

the Uratha do when confronted with the Worm Hosts — a *shartha* breed entirely of their own making?

OPTION B: BLOOD OF THE VAMPIRES

Those few werewolves who have made a study of vampiric lore might realize that the Zmai seems to have much in common with the blood-drinking undead. In particular, the ichor it produces seems suspiciously similar to the supernaturally charged blood of a vampire. People who drink either substance run the risk of addiction, and ordinary humans are in fact changed to some degree by ingesting enough. Is the ichor of the Worm somehow related to vampiric Vitae? Was it once the same thing? Some vampires say they are descended from “the son of the dragon.” What if it wasn’t a dragon at all — but a worm?

This option presumes that the Zmai is somehow interwoven with the vampiric state. It may be an ancient horror that has improbably proven susceptible to vampirism, and the condition manifests itself quite differently in the inhuman form. It may be the monster that created the first vampire in the times of Pangaea. It may once have been a more traditional vampire who has succumbed to horrific mutation due to some unexplained quirk of the curse — is the Worm the ultimate form of vampiric “immortality”?

The obvious benefit of this option is that it immediately gives a real and compelling reason to bring in vampire guest stars. There is no natural state of hostility between werewolves and vampires in the World of Darkness, and most frequently the two groups keep a tenuous truce that lasts as long as the borders remain between their territories. (“Good fences make for good neighbors,” after all.) But the Worm might be the sort of presence that shakes up the relations between the two, with vampires throwing their lot in with the new “relative” that has emerged, temporarily joining forces with the Forsaken to put down the thread, or both.

Be quite careful when using this option. It may be tempting to cast the Zmai as the father of all vampires, or otherwise tied into an all-but-provable origin story for the Kindred. Although this can have some horrific effect, it also runs the risk of being anticlimactic for **Vampire** players. The mystery surrounding the vampires’ origin is one of the key elements of **Vampire: The Requiem**, and characters may produce theory after theory that become far more intriguing to them than any solid revelation of “the truth” might. By default, the ties between the Worm and vampires are left oblique, enough to suggest terrible theories in the minds of imaginative players but not enough to discard those theories and present a solid answer. Consider providing answers only if you have no **Vampire: The Requiem** characters in your chronicle, and no signs of gaining any before the chronicle ends — you want to be respectful to all your players and the genres they’re enjoying.

Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 5, Resolve 7, Strength 12, Dexterity 2, Stamina 12, Presence 7, Manipulation 5, Composure 7

Skills: Investigation 2, Medicine 1, Occult 5, Politics 2, Athletics 1, Brawl (Bite, Crush) 3, Survival 4, Animal Ken 1, Empathy (Desires) 5, Expression 1, Intimidation (Awe, Fear) 5, Persuasion 3, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies 5, Eidetic Memory, Inspiring, Iron Stamina 3, Iron Stomach, Meditative Mind, Natural Immunity, Quick Healer, Strong Lungs, Toxin Resistance

Willpower: 10

Virtue: Temperance

Vice: Greed

Initiative: 9

Defense: 2

Speed: 16 (species factor 2)

Size: 30

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Bite	3 (L)	19
Crush	4 (B)	20

Health: 50

Essence: 20 (25 max)

- **Telepathic:** The Worm can communicate mind-to-mind with any sentient being within its line of sight. It is not a subtle communication; the force of the Worm's telepathy strikes like a blow, although it is not a painful experience. The force of the Zmai's will is sufficiently strong that ordinary humans must make a Resolve + Composure roll to resist any telepathic suggestion the Worm makes directly to them. The Zmai's telepathy can be broadcast to multiple individuals at once, but it loses its persuasive force in this instance.

- **Immense:** The Worm is simply huge, and its vital organs are well-protected within foot after foot of skin, fat and muscle. It has eight additional Health points above what it would ordinarily gain from Stamina and Size alone.

- **Addictive Ichor:** The Worm is capable of secreting a gruesome ichor that has a narcotic, addictive and ultimately mutative effect on human beings who consume it. The narcotic quality affects a drinker's judgment; unless the character makes a Stamina + Resolve roll at a -2 penalty, all Social, Mental and Dexterity dice pools and Resistance traits such as Defense are reduced by two for (8 minus Stamina) hours. (See the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 176).

The addictive quality is immediate. A person who has imbibed a portion of the Worm's ichor finds it difficult to refuse another drink, and will begin feeling powerful cravings for another taste within 24 hours. Each day after the first taste, the character must make a Stamina + Resolve roll at -3. Failure means that the character suffers painful withdrawal symptoms, and is at a -2 penalty to all dice pools for the next 24 hours, at which time she must make another Stamina + Resolve roll. If the character makes

three successful rolls on consecutive days, she has shaken the addiction.

Repeated draughts of the ichor will, in time, transform a human drinker into one of the Worm's thralls, granting her the traits listed below. The transformation is complete after the drinker has taken a number of doses equal to Stamina +2.

The ichor's addictive and narcotic qualities can affect supernatural beings, as long as they are part flesh (materialized spirits would not qualify, but Ridden would) and are capable of ingesting food or liquid (a vampire can assimilate blood, and would be vulnerable, but a zombie cannot). Supernatural beings may add the appropriate trait to their dice pool to resist (Primal Urge, Blood Potency or the like).

At any time, the Worm likely has a number of thralls in attendance, usually one to five when it is resting or dozens during the culmination of a major ritual. The traits for these thralls are given below.

Alternately, the rules for the Worm's addictive ichor can be modeled after the rules for blood addiction and ghouls in **Vampire: The Requiem** (pp. 158, 166-168).

- **Gifts:** The Worm has access to the following Gifts, found in **Werewolf: The Forsaken**: Two-World Eyes (p. 104), Death Sight (p. 107), Break the Defiant (p. 110; unlike the actual Gift, the Worm may use this effect against non-werewolves), Manipulate Earth (p. 111), Sense Malice (p. 122), Soul Read (p. 124).

- **Supernatural Tolerance:** The Worm adds six dice to the relevant Resistance Attribute when resisting the supernatural powers of other creatures. These dice are used in any dice pool where Primal Urge would be added to resist (see "Supernatural Conflict," **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pg. 104).

- **Sunlight Allergy:** The Worm's corrupt flesh burns at the touch of sunlight. It automatically takes one health point of lethal damage per turn of exposure to weak or filtered sunlight (such as light through thin drapes, being outside on a cloudy day, or the reflection of sunlight in a mirror). It takes two points of damage per turn of exposure to direct sunlight. The Zmai is well aware of this weakness, and phobic about the sun. It prefers to remain underground if it can help it, and will voluntarily emerge only on a dark night.

THRALLS OF THE WORM

The narcotic ichor that the Worm bleeds is not simply addictive — it's transformational. As its puppets continue to imbibe the stuff of its impure body, they gradually become something more — inhuman.

The thralls of the Worm gradually grow paler as they fall deeper under the spell of the Zmai. A thrall might even pass for a vampire, but for the carcinoma-like black growths that gradually appear on her skin. These rough patches tend to arise on the body first, later spreading to the limbs or face. A thrall of the Zmai can usually keep

these unusual lesions hidden and continue to interact with society for a time. Eventually, though, the growths become too numerous and obvious to hide, and the compulsion to return to the Worm is too strong. Such thralls can no longer leave the Worm's den. Some are kept on as favored thralls, bodyguards or pets for a time. All are eventually devoured.

The transformation into thralldom has no known cure. That doesn't mean the cure is impossible, only that werewolves know so little about the Worm itself that they are scarcely prepared to reverse the effects of its powers.

The statistics below represent an average "blue-collar" thrall, likely one with a minimum wage job that involves some physical labor. Other thralls are sure to vary depending on their background.

Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2, Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5, Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Skills: Academics 1, Crafts (Auto Shop) 3, Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive (Trucks) 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 1, Survival 1, Weaponry (Clubs) 2, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 1

Merits: Allies 1, Brawling Dodge, Contacts (Work Buddies) 1, Iron Stamina 2

Willpower: 4

Morality: 4

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 14 (species factor 5)

Size: 5

WEAPONS/ATTACKS:

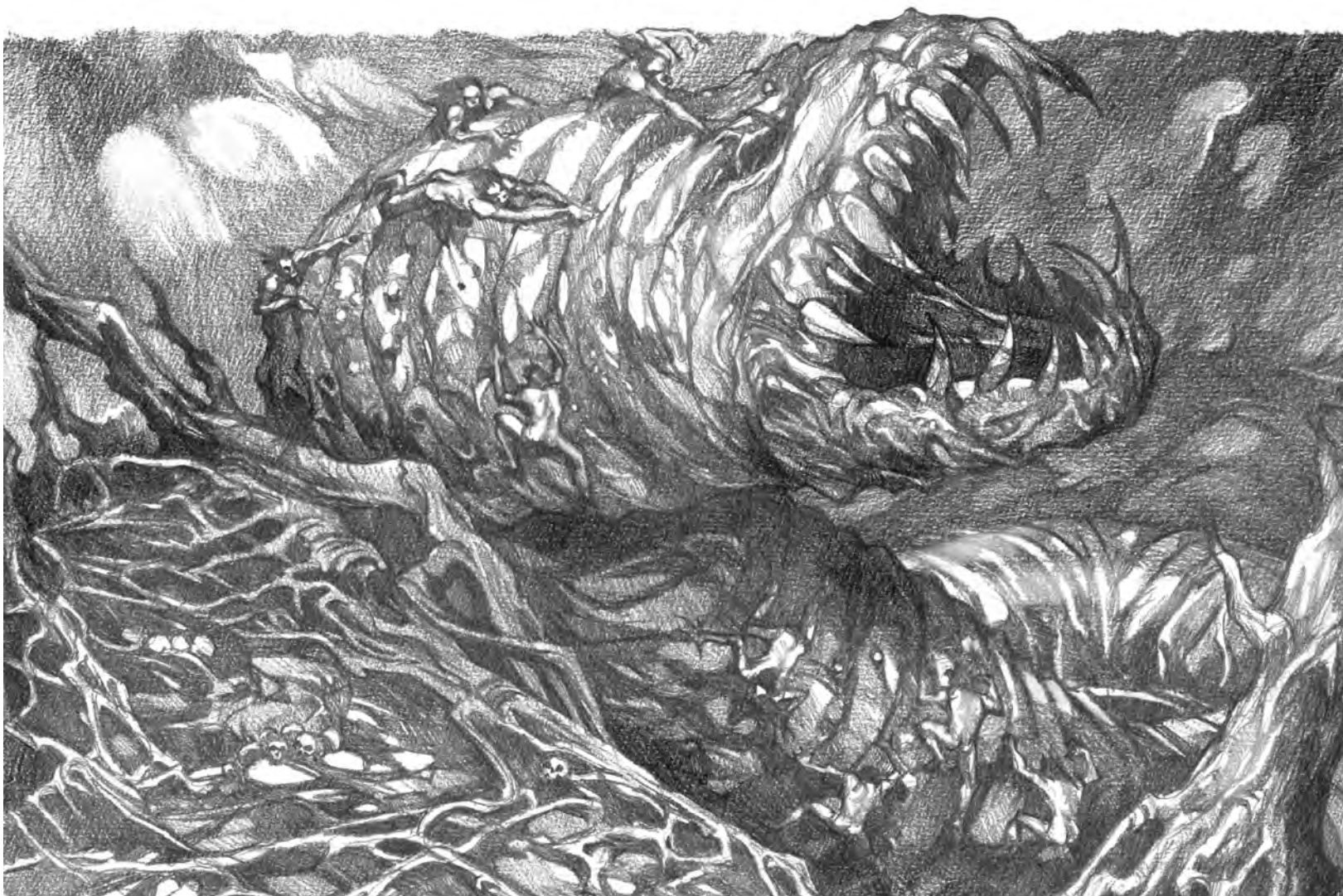
Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Crowbar	3 (B)	11
Fire Axe	3 (L)	10

Health: 10

- **Fortified:** As the body finishes its transformation, the thrall finds that he draws greater strength from the blood of his false god. Thralls receive two bonus dots to Strength, Dexterity and Stamina.

- **Fearless:** The supernatural state of thralldom acts as a protective blanket against Luna's curse of fear. The Zmai's thralls are immune to the effects of Lunacy. They also receive a +3 bonus to any rolls made to resist intimidation or fear effects (such as the Gift: Primal Howl) that come from a source other than the Worm itself.

- **No Will of Their Own:** A thrall of the Worm is all but incapable of disobeying its master. A Resolve + Composure roll at a -5 penalty is necessary to so much as contradict the Zmai.







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Wield it...

...before someone else does.

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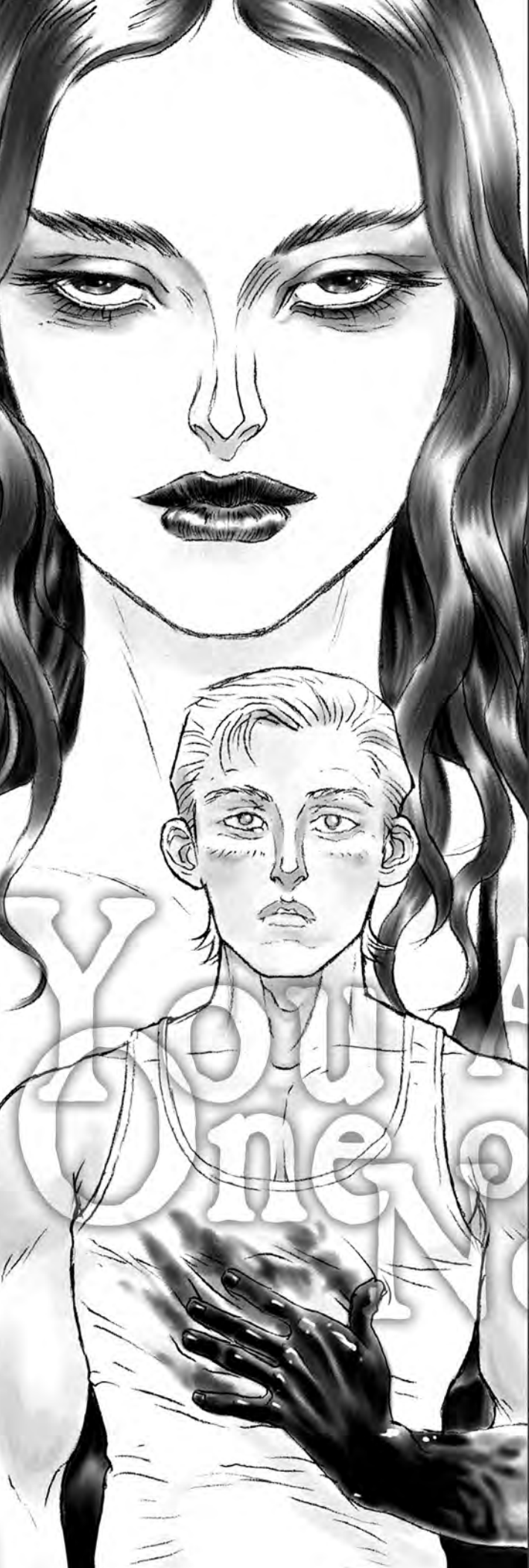
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"You? Hunt us? Arrogant mongrels! You are too few; we are legions. You must be born to the flesh; we take the flesh at our whim. O you wolves, howl your fear to the uncaring moon, for she has given you up to us."

*—The spirit Beshazmaktu
through the mouth of Catherine Mollett*

THIS BOOK INCLUDES:

- Extensive details on the spirit denizens of the Shadow and monstrous horrors from the ancient days
- Detailed treatment of the Beshilu Rat Hosts and the Azlu Spider Hosts, and notes on the three Host races yet unseen
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