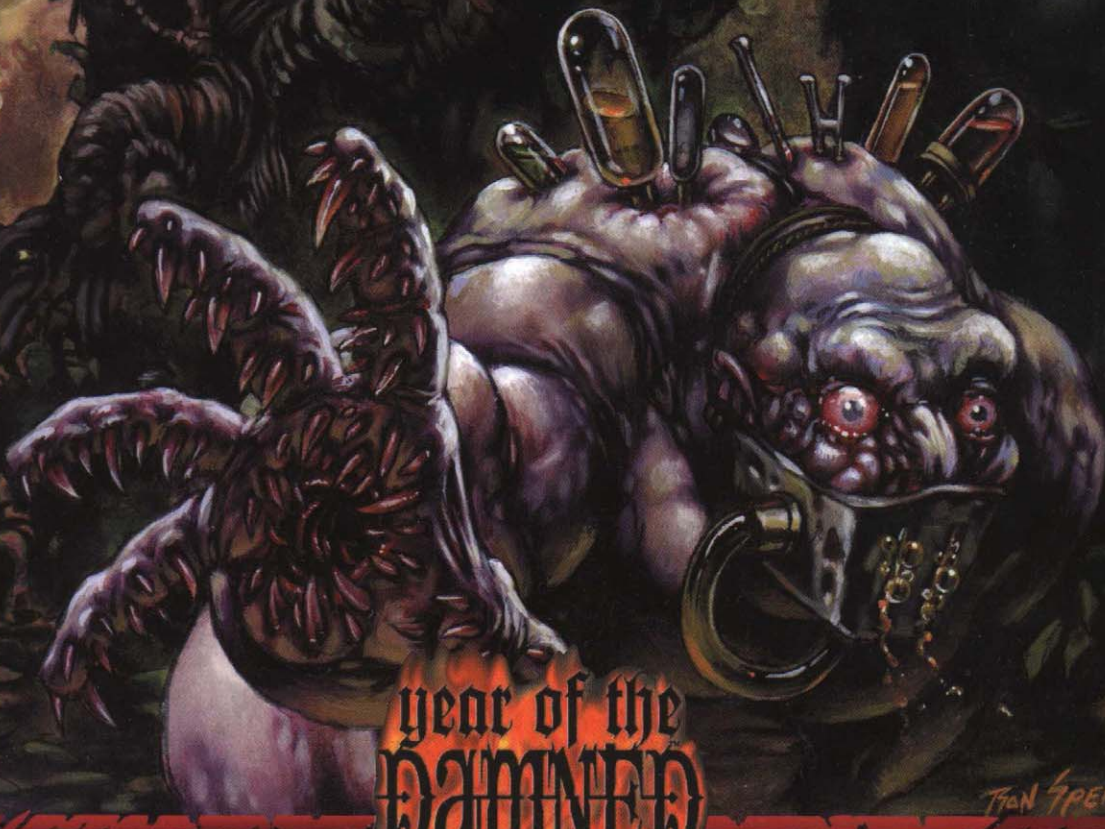


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A Player's Guide for Werewolf: The Apocalypse™

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A Player's Guide

BY CHRIS CAMPBELL, MATTHEW MCFARLAND & COLIN SULEIMAN
WEREWOLF CREATED BY MARK REIN • HAGEN





LEGENDS OF THE GAROU

Cry for Help

Sometimes folks scream. Sometimes they do it out loud, and sometimes it's in their eyes. I see it all the damn time. That's one of the perks of being Garou, you make people want to scream. You scare them. It's natural — we're predators. The Curse follows us, and that means people walk across the street to avoid us, rent-a-cops finger their flashlights nervously when we walk into a market, moms hold their babies tight when we smile. And they all want to scream, but they don't know why.

So when the guy started chatting me up at the bar in Cairo, I was the one getting nervous.

He wasn't used to drinking, that much was obvious. His eyes were bloodshot — from crying, maybe? His fingernails were ragged and dirty, and he had big yellow sweat stains under his arms. I don't know why he picked me, but he sat down next to me and started talking.

I make it a point to get a story out of every bar I go to. I find someone too drunk to get scared of me, buy 'em a round, and ask them for a story. It sounds less ridiculous if you're trashed. I've used drunk stories at

moots, occasionally. Just dress 'em up a bit, throw in a werewolf or something, and bang, instant legend.

Hey, don't knock it. I didn't earn the "Speaks Until Sunrise" thing by reciting the phone book at moots, right?

Anyway, this guy. He's obviously a native, but he's not from this neighborhood. My Arabic isn't fluent, but it's close, so I mostly just listen and throw in comments when I need to. Finally, he tells me his name is Ahmed. I look over at him, still a little wary of the whole situation, and ask him if he's got a story.

It was the saddest thing I ever saw. Two tears roll down his cheeks, and then he coughs and says, "Yes, I have a story." I nod to him, and he motions me back to a table. I'm figuring he beat his wife, cheated on her, robbed a bank, killed somebody, something like that. He's clearly scared, maybe guilty. We sit down, and he looks me square in the eyes, and tells me I'm not going to believe him.

Now I'm intrigued, and I say, "Well, Ahmed, why don't you tell me your story and I'll worry about believing it then?" And he nods, slumps back in his chair, and says, "Let me tell you my story."

...

I was fine until the dreams started coming. I don't know why — suddenly, over the course of a few weeks, I started having them. To call them “nightmares” would make them seem trite and childish. Perhaps that's how this sounds to you?

I would dream of myself and my wife. In my dreams I saw the shame of not being able to have children. I would see myself, naked and abashed, in front of a crowd, while a horrible man — an American — with a stick beat me and shouted to the crowd that I was not a man. I was a freak, he said. Incomplete and unable to sow my seed. If I could not, he would, he said, and the crowd roared with approval. And as I knelt there, bloodied from his beatings and crying from his words, I looked and saw my wife in our bed, cheering like the rest of them, waiting for someone who could give her children.

I think that was the first dream. That was the first time I woke and saw my wife there, sleeping peacefully. I woke up her and told her I'd had a nightmare, but that I couldn't remember it. She held me and I shook, still frightened.

She knew never to mention the incident to me by the light of day. What a man says and does at night in a half-dream does not reflect who he is. I am a strong man by day. I did my job, sat in my office and answered my calls, and only felt a bit tired. I was still a strong man then.

The next dream came later that week. I had forgotten about the first and was standing in the shower when the door opened. My wife came in to surprise me. Sometimes she does that, if she knows I am unhappy or tense. I washed her hair and touched her gently, but something was wrong. I felt a strange tension in her kiss that was never there. I asked her later what was wrong, and she responded that it was nothing. I knew this wasn't true, but she insisted, and finally I let the issue drop so that we could go to sleep.

It wasn't until after she'd fallen asleep that I remembered she had spent the afternoon with her sister — and her sister's young daughter. My wife was feeling jealous and sad. She couldn't tell me how she felt; I admit I would not have heard the pain in her voice. I would have heard only accusation. How blind. How stupid.

I dreamed that night of wandering in a vast building, through empty, gray hallways with locked doors. From behind each door came shrieks of passion and I recognized them as my wife's: but I couldn't open even one of the doors. Whoever was pleasuring my wife so, it was not I. I knew, in my dream, that I never could, because every time we lay down together she hated me

more and more for being sterile. I woke up, not with a start but with a quiet whimper. I woke her, and asked her if she loved me despite my inability to give her a family. She said she did, and held me again. And again, come the dawn, neither of us mentioned it.

The next day I could do little work. I sat at my desk and tried to do my job, but everyone who passed me by seemed to be staring and laughing. Every time I picked up a pen to write, every time my fingers touched my keyboard, my hands shook. I spent time in prayer, but I could not focus.

I think that is when the feeling began. I tried to explain it to my wife once, before... before yesterday. I tried to explain it, but words fail. The feeling is simply *wrong*. As though the entire world is a few seconds off, a few inches to the left of you. You miss jokes and laugh at the wrong things. You see food and it doesn't make you hungry, but the strangest things arouse your base emotions.

I saw trash on the street on my way home that day, and immediately wondered what was for dinner. The thoughts were connected, but I had not connected them. The feeling is much like dreaming, that slow, artificial stage of the dream where you wonder, “Am I about to wake up?” But you know you are not. As horribly out-of-touch and unreal as you feel, you know that there is no escape, none but... sleep.

That night was terrifying. I remember the wind outside my home, my wife locking the windows and then checking them again. She was worried. She knew I was uneasy. I sat in my chair and tried to read, and then tried to pray, but again all I could feel was that something was wrong, something was off, something was alien. I felt like a stranger in my home, even in my body. I never took a drink of alcohol in my life before yesterday, so I could not liken the feeling to intoxication, but it was similar. I have never understood the fascination some cultures have with drink. I don't know why a man would want to poison himself to the point of sickness or unconsciousness. I only know that the night after my second dream, as the wind howled like a demon in the streets, I felt that something was changing.

Vague, I know. I am sorry. I said my story was strange.

That night, I dreamed again, but it was different. My nightmares never repeated themselves, but simply got worse and more gruesome. There were elements that remained the same however; many of them featured my wife, most featured a bed. The one I had that night had both, and was so insidious that I didn't know I was dreaming until the creature's fangs were....

I'm sorry. The dream. I dreamed I was standing in front of my bed, as though I had gotten up and returned. I climbed into bed quietly, so as not to wake her, but her eyes fluttered open and she smiled.

My friend, you should see my wife's smile. A more compassionate woman was never born, and when she smiles, you can feel Allah's blessings and love stir you. The greatest crime is that this beautiful, giving woman married me, for surely any children of hers....

I'm sorry. She smiled, and reached for me. We kissed, and then an instant later, as is the way of dreams, we were making love. Her mouth close to my ear, I heard her whispering something, but could not quite understand. Her hands clutched at my back and I heard her say "Why," but the voice was not hers. It was a terrible, thick whisper, as a person might produce if forced to speak while being strangled. I raised my head to look at her, but she forced my face down to her bosom with such power that I could not even lift my head. The voice was coming clearer now, and she was repeated that same word — "why" — over and over. I tried to pull away, but she kept me close, her hips still rocking, and I helpless to escape her. I never, during this whole disgusting scene, knew that I was dreaming. I believed what I saw, Allah forgive me. I cried out against her, calling her... calling her words that no man should use with his wife. She laughed, and simply held me fast.

And then she released me, and I lifted my head up and saw her smile.

Imagine the face of an angel. Imagine a face that gives you hope, that reminds you of the presence of the divine. Imagine eyes that you've looked on every day for ten years, a gentle mouth that cannot help but laugh and urges you to do so. Imagine, if I may be so bold, the face of your wife, if you have one.

Now imagine that mouth filled with the fangs of a thousand serpents, leering at you, her legs still wrapped about your waist.

I woke with a scream. My wife awoke as well, and tried to comfort me, but I would not let her. I turned from her, shaking, and she turned and lay with her back to me, curled into a tight ball.

She was still lying that way in the morning, when I rose to go to work.

The "wrong" feeling was never as strong as the first time I felt it, but it was constant thereafter. It didn't seem to matter what I did or where I went, what I ate or drank, what I said to my wife or whomever else I spoke to. I always felt a few seconds behind the world — or perhaps ahead? I said earlier that I had trouble finding words to describe it. Mostly, I just felt tired.

Although I slept on the nights that I had the nightmares — obviously — I never woke feeling rested. Instead, after a dream, I slept fitfully, a few moments at a time. I got up and paced, but could never quite put a finger on what was wrong (beyond the dreams, of course). But mercifully, after the third dream, I was not visited by the horror again for more than a week. During that time, I apologized to my wife for pulling away from her. She also apologized for feeling jealous of her sister — she repeated that she did love me.

Are you married, my friend? Ah, well, may you be so lucky one day. Married couples spend a great deal of time apologizing. When Shamara and I were first married, I thought this was a sign that our marriage would not last, that we would either split apart or grow old despising each other. But when I told my father of my fears, he laughed at me. He said that if you see someone every day, of course you will cross each other sometimes. The same would occur, he said, with our children.

Father died before I found I was unable to sire children. I'd like to think he wouldn't have thought less of me, but I don't know. I have six brothers, you see.

The dreams did not return until my review. Misfortunes come in packs, do you not find that true? The management of the company was changing, and they decided to review all of the employees to see who would be more in line with the new regime. It was a very stressful time for me — I had a roughly equal chance of losing my job or receiving a promotion, depending on how much the management changed. Every day a manager or assistant — or worse, a consultant — would walk through the office and take notes, ask insipid questions, and then move on. The feeling of "wrongness" returned in force, and three days after the reviews began, I found I had caught a cold.

Getting sick in Cairo isn't the same as getting sick elsewhere, especially not after Jackal Fever. Even a simple illness brings images of suffering and lingering death in the streets or in some foul-smelling hospital. It was only the flu, as it turned out, but I stepped gingerly around the house and the office, kept awake and functioning only by swallowing far too much medication. (I couldn't, of course, afford to miss a day of work — it might have reflected badly.) Soon after I fell ill, I had another dream.

In the dream, I felt fine. I was running down the street, but not being chased — I was running simply to feel alive. I ran past my house, and away from the city, feeling the hot morning air in my lungs. That part of the dream was the best I've felt in months.

It ended too quickly, however. The ground turned to sand beneath my feet and I found I could not stop running. The sun burned overhead and I felt my flesh begin to blister and peel away, but yet my legs would not let me stop. I clenched my fists so hard my palms bled, tried to force myself to stop, to change direction, anything, but I could not. I was running into the setting sun, and I could not shut my eyes even to blink. Before long I couldn't see at all.

Finally, I collapsed. I could feel sand underneath me — cool, night sand — had I really run all day, I thought? I reached down to rub my aching feet...and found they were no longer there. I had run until my feet had been worn away, ground down to nothing by the sand.

I woke up, quietly. I nearly panicked because I couldn't see — but that was only because the room was dark, of course. I felt for my feet, as absurd as that must seem, but they were still there. I did not wake my wife on purpose, but she awoke as I was sitting in bed pawing at the covers for my own feet. She asked me what was wrong, and I told her about the dream. At least this one did not feature her. She suggested that I see a doctor, and at the time, I think I agreed. But the damned light of day convinced me otherwise.

I left that morning for thinking to call my doctor from work. When I got to the office, however, I found that the company's decisions had been made. I was going to receive a promotion and a small raise. The elation I felt almost washed away the "wrong" feeling and I sat at my desk that day beaming. The mood was dampened only by the employees that were not so fortunate passing by with the boxes from their offices. Many of them were glaring, not only at me but at anyone who had remained employed. But what were we supposed to do? Quit in protest? It wasn't that I didn't feel for those people, but it wasn't in my power to help them. I took a long lunch that day, just to avoid those glares. They made the feeling worse, and sometimes I felt as though I could hear their thoughts, their accusations, through the glares. I know how strange that must sound, but I told you this story was going to be hard to believe.

And yet thus far, it isn't so far-fetched, is it? Just nightmares and vague feelings. Well, my friend, let me assure you that after that day, the story becomes more unbelievable.

That night, I went home and shared the good news with Shamara. Like me, she forgot all about the nightmares as we discussed what we could do with the extra money, what responsibilities I would have now, and so on. Just before we fell asleep, I heard a voice in my

head, Shamara's voice. It softly, but quite clearly said, "Now if only we could have children."

It took me quite a long time to fall asleep. When I finally did, I had another nightmare. This one, while not as violent or insidious as some of the others, was in a way the most important.

I dreamed I was sitting on my bed with Shamara asleep beside me. I pulled the covers back and saw that my feet looked...rotten. They were both swollen and purplish, and when I moved them, they felt numb or dead. I sat up and pulled my right foot close and moved my toes, and my big toenail felt loose. I pulled on it, and it came off in my hand.

Beneath the nail was a hollow. My toe — perhaps my foot — was hollow, a gored hole, and clinging to the nail was some greenish-white stringy flesh. I am sorry, I do not mean to disgust you, but that was the dream. I dreamed that I was rotting from the inside. After I saw that, I woke up, and found that my wife was sleeping peacefully. I could not bring myself to wake her. What did she need to hear, that I was having another nightmare brought on by my insecurity? Why disturb her sleep?

And besides, she already knew there was something rotten within me. She'd thought it — I'd heard her.

I got out of bed to pray, but gave up after a few moments. As I walked away, the feeling of "wrongness" changed. Instead of a sick, paranoid feeling that something was wrong, I instead felt that something was making these dreams happen. I looked around my darkened living room, and thought I saw something scurry under a table. I considered — just for a moment — turning on the lights and looking.

Why did I not? I asked myself that question the next day, when sunlight made me feel whole again. I think the reason is that I knew that I was not dreaming. Suppose I had found it, the little devil that robbed me of the sanity. It's one thing to fear nightmares, but what can you do when they come to life, but scream and go mad? I was not ready then to go mad. I did not go looking for the thing in the dark.

I went back to bed, but I did not sleep. The morning found me lying on my back, staring at the wall, breathing lightly, afraid. I went to work that morning still feeling as though something was sitting on my shoulder, waiting for me to sleep again.

I busied myself with my new job, dealing with employees and clients, very grateful that my desk sat near a window and that the sun streamed in for most of the day. I stayed late that evening, however, and when I left, the sun had set.

As I walked to my car, I realized that I hadn't been outside after dark since the nightmares began. The parking lot was almost empty, and as I neared my car, I saw something move in the shadows to my right.

I don't know why I followed it. I think perhaps I was feeling bold because I was at work, away from home, and not shaking in terror of a nightmare's passage. Perhaps it was because I was dressed and not vulnerable in my nightclothes. I don't know. Perhaps I was simply going mad, and accepting it.

I walked towards the shadows where I'd seen the movement, and called out for the thing to show itself. I don't know what I expected to happen. A stray dog, perhaps. Something mundane and comforting that would let me laugh off the nightmares and the fear. But the comforts of the mundane were gone by then.

A hand reached out from the brush at the edge of the parking lot. It was no bigger than a child's, but it was blood-red and the nails were sharp and pointed. Its palm was upturned as though asking for alms, and as I stood there dumbly, trying to make sense of what I saw, it spoke.

How to explain such a voice? I'd always imagined the voice of the *djinn* as being deep and resonant. This creature's voice was more like a blistering wind. It was sibilant and quiet, but I heard it inside my head just as I had heard my wife's voice the night before. "Ahmed," it said, "why did you look for me?" I had no answer for that. As I said, I'm not sure why I went looking.

It continued: "I know that you are afraid, Ahmed, but why do you seek out what you fear? Why do you not shun it? By walking towards your tormentor, you have cost us both our freedom." I didn't know what it meant by that. Had I known, I would have run away as fast as my legs could carry me. I should have been afraid, but instead, I was angry. I knew that this monster was responsible for tormenting me and robbing me of my will and sleep, of driving me to madness every night. So I reached out and grabbed its wrist and jerked it into view. I will regret that action for the rest of my days. What, after all, could possibly be gained by forcing evil into the light? Won't evil defend itself? It certainly did in my case.

The creature was human-shaped, but only three feet high. It was blood-red from head to toe, and had wicked-looking fangs. It had no hair that I recall, but I do remember its eyes. Like a damned serpent, slit and yellow and evil, and they burned with hatred for me. It looked down at my hand, still clutching its wrist, and its lips curled back into a horrible scowl. And then it said one word, and disappeared. Simply vanished away like... a dream.

The word? "Done."

I got into my car and drove home. I felt like a man being led to execution. I walked in the door and found my wife asleep on our sofa, waiting for me. I did not wake her. I walked to my bedroom, undressed, and lied down.

The dream was not long in coming.

In it, I was the creature. I was my normal size, but my skin was red and my fingers ended in those black claws. I walked through a terrifying dream world where the sands rose up in the cities and the buildings were covered in webs. I saw people, but I looked at them as though through frosted glass — I saw them as blurry and incomplete, and I hated them. Allah forgive me, but I knew them to be real people and I hated them for that reason. I was like a dream brought to a cruel state of awareness, a reflection in a mirror. I knew that when the real people walk away, when the dreamer awakens, I would vanish.

And then the dream changed and I became myself and I was home, away from that fearful place of the other side of nightmares. But now I was only a few feet tall, and I was hiding in my living room, under tables and behind furniture, like a rodent. I was afraid of... not people. People were harmless. They wouldn't believe me if they saw me. But there was something howling outside, and it wasn't the wind. I was afraid of that wild howl, that chaos in the desert. I was afraid of that, and of what might happen when the sun rose.

I awoke then, and I knew it was over. The feeling of wrongness was gone, as was the feeling of being controlled. In its place was the knowledge that the creature — the *jann* — was inside my head. I would suffer no more nightmares myself — but someone would have to, because nightmares were my food. Its food. Our food.

It's part of me now. It isn't so hard to accept. I had to accept that I was sterile. I'm used to coming to grips with myself. Most men are, I think.

I left the bedroom that night and found my wife still asleep on the sofa. Some new part of me cried out in hunger, while the old parts of me cried out in horror. I raised my hand up and pointed to her. I saw her face crumple as the dreams began.

Hunger had won, it seems.

She endured a week of dreams before she left me. She went to her sister. I followed. Not in my car or on foot, but through the world of nightmares, I followed. And I found that her sister's dreams were better. But best of all, I found the nightmares of a child.



I know, my friend, that I sound insane and that, even if this were possible, it would make me a monster. But I'm not the monster, you see. I wasn't, at least. The *jann* is the monster, and if I don't feed that *jann*, it will feed on my dreams. And haven't I dreamed enough?

I have no need of food or drink, although drink comforts me somewhat. I know that to drink this stuff is forbidden by the Prophet, peace be upon him, but I think I am beyond hope now. I can walk through dreams invisible. I have power now. I think I made out better than the *jann* in the end.

But the *jann* brought its fears with it, you know. The creature has nightmares too. They are formless and indistinct, but they all involve that howl in the desert. Even monsters know fear, even the creatures of Hell are afraid to go looking in the dark. I am braver than the monster. I won the battle — I have not lost my freedom.

• • •

Ahmed finished his story and then quaffed his drink almost triumphantly. I shook my head. I could have verified his story, if I'd wanted, but I already knew what had happened.

I thanked him for his story and left. I waited for him outside; he left about a half hour later. I followed him, wearing the wolf form, just to make sure. I should have just ambushed him in the parking lot — creeping around Cairo at night is nuts — but I wanted to see it for myself.

I got to watch a few blocks later. He stopped at an apartment building, looked up, and nodded. I could see the conversation in his head — he was making agreements with the Bane. He looked around to make sure he was alone (completely missed me, but then I'm not easy to spot) and then stepped into the Umbra.

I followed him. He looked about the same, only his skin was a little redder. He was clawing his way up the side of the building. I changed to Hispo form and jumped at him. He landed underneath me. I felt bones give.

I'd never seen a fomor in the Umbra before. I could see the Bane that had him squirming around under his skin. He looked horrified and for one crazy second I was thinking, "How come he doesn't recognize me?" He managed to gasp out "What are you?"

I couldn't exactly answer him normally, so I spoke to his mind. And I answered him so he and the Bane would both know their numbers were up.

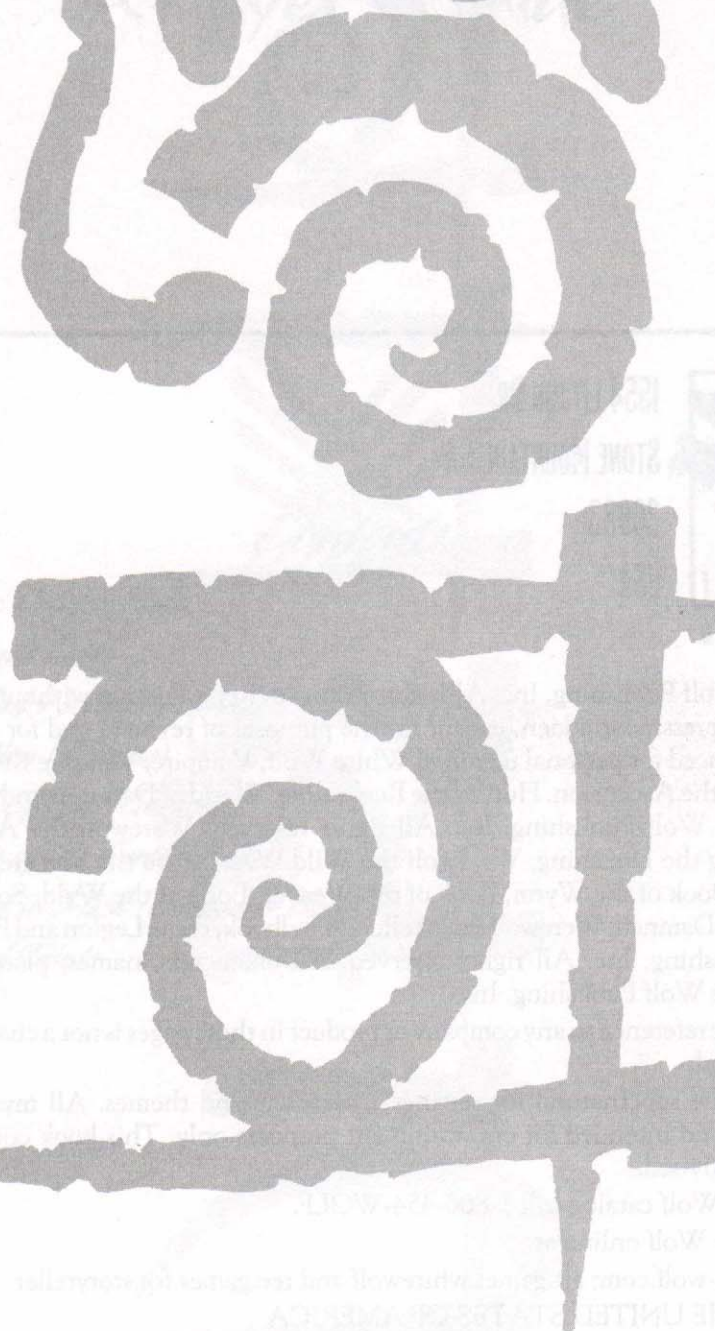
"I am the howl in the desert," I said. Then I took his throat out.

The Bane tried to flee, but we Striders aren't known to be slow. I don't know if it's gone for good, but I do know it was good and scared when I caught up with it.

So that's the story. No world-shaking elders or giant dragons. No ancient vampires or anything like

that. Just a guy named Ahmed who let his fear get the better of him. I think maybe he could have saved himself. Taken a vacation with his wife. Gone to a doctor. Prayed really hard, hell, I don't know. Maybe once it starts, there is no way to stop it, short of killing the Bane. But that's a damned depressing thought.

You know, I can't blame Ahmed. Everybody's got buttons. Most of us are lucky enough that some Wyrmspirit doesn't decide to push them. Most of us don't ever have to go looking for the thing in the dark.



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Matthew McFarland wishes to thank Chris Horvath, Kimmaree Horvath, Tiffany Jendruch, Ally Chilson, and Michael Goodwin for their input and assistance.



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PRINTED IN THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

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A Player's Guide

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Introduction: Two Made One

So what you're telling me is the Weaver and Wyld are making their own fomori, too? Jesus. That's all we need.

— King Jonas Albrecht

Ever since the Sundering, the worlds of spirit and flesh have been held apart by the Gauntlet. Each world grew accustomed to the separation, and where once the two were all but identical, now each has become its own entity, populated by its own residents. Those who dwell in the physical world live out their lives without any true contact with the spirit plane; some feel a longing for a half-remembered unity, or even seek out contact with a greater universe, but most simply live in ignorance. And the creatures of the spirit world watch them in turn, feeding on their emotions and actions, remolding the spirit world to match its inaccessible twin. For the most part, these spirits are as powerless to affect the physical world as mortals are able to interact with the Umbra; the two worlds reflect each other and still mirror one another, but the Gauntlet holds firm.

But sometimes something leaks through. Sometimes something wriggles through the Gauntlet from the other side of reality and finds itself a home in the land of the flesh. A spirit manages to seep into a physical host that has somehow become more “open” — most often a human, but not always — and begins a new relationship. Spirit and flesh become one

again, a strange new gestalt of material intellect and spiritual drive.

They are servants of the Wyrn, and the carefully “assembled” operatives of the Weaver. They are the surreal manifestations of the Wyld, and the rarest of supernatural allies for the Gaian cause.

They are the possessed.

More than Just Fomori

When a spirit using the Charm: Possession inhabits a material body, it's not a temporary joyride. Possession is a lengthy process that winds up infusing a measure of the spirit's power into its host body, power that can change the host in unusual ways. The host may be outwardly unchanged, but empowered with strange and potent psychic abilities. Conversely, the host's body may mutate into a parody of its former shape, with freakish powers and debilitating weaknesses that exaggerate the changes it's gone through. The host usually retains most of its free will — and in most cases, may not really understand what has happened to it. But sometimes the spirit is able to exert



total control, and uses its host body as a tool for interacting with the formerly off-limits physical world.

The Garou are already intimately familiar with the most common sort of possessed entity — fomori, the results of Banes possessing mortal hosts. Throughout history, the Wyrms' spirit servants have found it most economical to possess human (and rarely animal) hosts in order to carry out their superiors' agendas in the physical world. Hosts are plentiful and expendable — perfect shock troops. Many can also operate among human society more easily than werewolves can — a point of versatility that has served the Wyrms' spirit hierarchy well. When a werewolf thinks of a spirit possessing a human host, the first image that pops into his head is inevitably that of the fomor.

But although the fomori are far and away the most common instance of spirits possessing mortal flesh, they aren't alone. Wyld-spirits sometimes take on animal, plant or even mineral hosts — never humans — for their own incomprehensible purposes. These entities, the *gorgons*, appear so haphazardly and rarely that most Garou are unaware that they even exist. The Weaver's spirit servants have recently decided to get in on the act, as well. When a Weaver-spirit is bound into a human form, the result is a perfect servant of merciless order, a *Drone*. The Drones are a recent wrinkle — the first were reported at the end of the 20th century — but they are proving quite effective, almost as useful as shapeshifter servants and without any of the messy individualism.

Thankfully, a fourth type of spirit/flesh entity also walks the physical world — the *Kami*, hybrids of Gaian spirit and mortal form. The “fomori of Gaia,” as a few bemused Garou put it, are far rarer than the Changing Breeds would like. Only a handful actively work to better the welfare of the Earth Mother, often without the help of the various shapeshifter races. They are probably too few to have a lasting effect on the final war — but the mere fact that they exist at all is a much-needed sign of hope.

Dominance and Submission

While the possessed seem to enjoy great power, they are in many ways much worse off than ordinary people. The spirit in a possessed character doesn't rule his every action, but neither can he be free of it. Sometimes the spirit's presence brings horrible supernatural side effects with it; mortal flesh can't always bear the burden of spirit, and the result is Taint.

A possessed character is a study in duality. The spirit has its own agenda or programming, and even if the host is wholly sympathetic to the spirit's goals, he can't devote himself to the spirit's mentality with the

same focus. Not all fomori want to be the soldiers of the Wyrn. Not all gorgons are content with the changes that have come over them. Not all Drones wanted to submerge their individuality so completely. Only the Kami seem to have a true measure of peace between their two natures, and even then one must wonder if their mortal hosts suffer any doubts. The spirit may grow frustrated with the host's fleshly imperfections, while the host may rebel against the dominant urges of the spirit. In many cases, the host never really understands *why* he's different, where his new urges come from.

If werewolves are a study in savage horror, in animalistic anger that cannot ever be fully escaped, the possessed can be a study in personal horror. In particular, fomori and Drones brought the attention of the spirits on themselves with their behavior and urges. When the devil's deal of possession was offered, they likely never knew what it was they were being handed, or what would happen if they accepted. In their own way, they're as much victim as willing pawn, often more so. When a fomor embraces violence and atrocity as all that's left for him, the circle comes complete — he's fallen to a damnation he never knew he was looking for.

Possession

What opens up a mortal host to possession? The answer varies greatly from host to host, but it usually comes down to a prolonged moment of weakness. Banes are attracted to human (and more rarely, animal) suffering, and a person with a low sense of self-esteem or a lack of strong morals is all the more enticing. The finest target for a Bane is abjectly miserable, and prone to take out his frustrations on other people — thus spreading even more of the delicious anguish that is a Bane's meat and drink. Such targets are also more susceptible to possession because they often grasp around for anything that would make their situation better — in a way, they invite the Bane in. Of course, some strong-willed Banes enjoy possessing people who live otherwise happy, successful lives, so that they can savor the pollution of innocence. But for the most part, it's the morally and spiritually weak who draw the Banes in.

Drones are rather different. Where a Bane has the autonomy to choose its own potential host, Weaver-spirits are much more limited; the process of possession is more akin to surgery, with more powerful Weaver-spirits carefully placing the spiritstuff of lesser spirits into the host. Generally, the person who becomes a Drone opens himself to the OneSong, the constant spiritual transmission between Weaver-spir-

its that can be subliminally heard in certain places in the mortal world. When a mortal has made sufficient contact, the Weaver-spirits draw him in and reweave his very being, implanting spirit matter into him and making him a Drone in a process roughly translated as "Clarification."

Kami and gorgons are even stranger entities, given that they aren't really created by the same process of possession — at least, not with human hosts. Gorgons are never created from human host bodies; Wyld-spirits find humans far too Weaver-touched for their purposes. Kami, on the other hand, aren't really the result of an individual spirit possessing a host. They are the most mysterious of all the earthbound spirits, created by an enigmatic process that most Garou cannot define further than "Gaia's Will." If the examples of the other possessed are anything to go on, a Kami from human stock might be created when a human attains a rare and wondrous rapport with the spiritual nature of Gaia's grace. If such is the case, then perhaps there's yet more hope for humanity than many Garou assume.

A Quick Note on Terminology

The term "possessed" is used throughout this book in a more specific sense than the word actually implies. Here we use it as a general term for people, animals or even things possessed by spirits using the Possession Charm (*Werewolf*, pg. 239), that manifest supernatural powers or even physical changes as a result of the symbiotic relationship. There are other ways to be "possessed," but for the purposes of this book, assume that our use of the term refers specifically to fomori, Drones, gorgons and Kami unless otherwise stated.

Common Traits

Each possessed character is, to some extent, unique: a blend of mortal peculiarities and a mix of supernatural powers that can seem almost random. In some cases, a war-fomor can seem to have more in common with a furious gorgon than with an Enticer. However, a few ground rules can be established:

- **Soaking Damage:** The possessing spirit's power sometimes fortifies the mortal host, giving it supernatural resilience — but not always. The ability to soak damage should be directly relevant to the type of spirit bound into the host, and the general purpose the hybrid form serves. As a general rule, possessed characters with any physical mutations can soak bashing and lethal damage as normal, and aggravated damage at difficulty 8. Those designed for war (generally those

with at least two or three physical powers designed for combat) usually soak aggravated damage at difficulty 6.. Those with purely mental or psychic alterations probably soak as mortals.

- **Delirium:** Possession does not necessarily convey immunity to the Delirium, at least for fomori or Kami. All Drones are considered immune to the Delirium (the terror-inducing racial memory is a flaw that is written out during the Clarification process), and gorgons invariably take host bodies other than humans, and are therefore not subject to a human failing. Fomori and Kami with human hosts who do not possess the Immunity to the Delirium power react to Delirium-inducing stimuli (such as Crinos Garou) as appropriate for their Willpower rating.

- **Healing:** Most possessed heal as do mortals, unless they possess the power: Regeneration. Drones are the exception, healing with the speed of a shapeshifter in a regenerating form.

Undoing the Possession

Far more often than not, possession is irrevocable short of the host's death. In the process of inhabiting the host, the spirit makes itself part of the host; it extends its being throughout the host body in order to empower the gestalt with its particular powers. If the body is slain, the spirit is freed — small consolation to the host.

It's exceedingly difficult to separate spirit from flesh without destroying the host. The Gift: Exorcism (*Werewolf*, pg. 139) can split a gorgon or fomori's possessing spirit apart from the host, but this causes great injury to the host body (a good estimate would be the equivalent of ten health levels of unsoakable damage). Immediate and effective medical attention is necessary within the turn to save the host's life. The Gurahl, the masters of healing, were said to know rituals or Gifts that might more easily undo possession, but this is really little more than conjecture.

Drones and Kami are even more tightly integrated mixes of spirit and flesh. The spirit portion of such entities isn't even technically a single autonomous entity, and so Exorcism is ineffective. The supernatural equivalent of full-body neurosurgery would be necessary to remove all the spiritstuff without injuring the host body, and such a healing technique is little more than the stuff of legends.

Even so, it's said that nothing is truly impossible. The Garou that discovered a reliable way to cure fomori, or to undo the effects of Clarification, would be a great hero to all her kin.

Temporary Possession

The state of being temporarily possessed, until the spirit is either exorcised or chooses to leave, is a staple of movies and books. However, the Possession Charm doesn't really allow for that sort of thing; it's a one-way street. Once a mortal is possessed, they largely stay that way until dead, at which point the spirit is ejected. Although that's the only way for a spirit to manifest powers through a mortal host, Storytellers may want to run a more classic possession story. To that effect, the following spirit Charm offers a way to create less permanent bonds between spirit and host.

- **Domination:** The spirit may possess a living being without forging the permanent bond that creates a fomori or similar entity. Domination requires a successful Gnosis roll (difficulty of the victim's Willpower). The number of successes equals the speed with which domination occurs as per the following chart:

Successes	Time Taken
1	six hours
2	three hours
3	one hour
4	15 minutes
5	five minutes
6+	instantaneous

During the time it takes to possess its victim, the spirit must find a dark, isolated part of the Umbra (usually a Blight) and remain there, concentrating on the Charm. During this time, the spirit can take no other action; if it engages in combat, the link is broken.

A dominating spirit can influence the host to take any action appropriate to the spirit — a Lust-Bane might encourage a host to attack an attractive woman, and so on. The host may resist these suggestions by winning a contested Willpower roll with the spirit. The spirit may also make a contested Willpower roll to speak through the host's mouth (if the host is capable of speech). The spirit may abandon the host at any time, although the process of disengaging takes a full turn during which the spirit cannot defend itself.

How to Use This Book

Although *Possessed* is not a stand-alone book (the *Werewolf* rulebook is required for play), it is meant to compile almost everything needed to understand and use the spirit-flesh gestalt entities that roam the World of Darkness. The various Triatic books (*Book of the Wurm*, *Book of the Weaver*, *Book of the Wyld*) naturally provide additional insight into the cosmological patrons of fomori, Drones and gorgons,

as well as potential allies for each. The older Black Dog supplement **Freak Legion: A Players Guide to Fomori** may also offer ideas for a fomori-focused game. None of these supplements are necessary, but each may prove useful at painting the larger picture of the cosmology behind the possessed.

Although this book is largely aimed at Storytellers, players will also find rules for creating characters that are, if not *quite* balanced with Garou characters, roughly balanced with one another. Like playing Kinfolk or Fera, playing a possessed character can prove an interesting change of pace. Ask your Storyteller's permission first, though; not all chronicles will be ideal for a player-run fomor or gorgon.

Storytellers, of course, can use this book to create antagonists (and allies) for a chronicle, and in whatever other creative fashion they find appropriate. If a particular power or Taint seems like just the thing to make a Black Spiral Dancer enemy truly memorable, why not go ahead and add it, even if the Dancer isn't really a fomor? It might be a Gift, a mutation spawned by Balefire, a debilitating supernatural birth defect — whatever would make sense for the character. If the mechanics would be useful to represent something else, go right ahead and use them.

Possessed is broken down as follows:

Legends of the Garou: Cry for Help offers a glimpse at the process of possession, and how not all fomori are born from bloodlust or given to war.

Chapter One: Wretched Worms takes a long look at the shocktroopers of the Wyrms, the fomori. However, there's much more variety to these blasphemous

hybrids of Bane and flesh than one might think; fomori are all the more dangerous when they're subtle, and some might yet seek redemption. Whether they find it or not, however, isn't solely up to them.

Chapter Two: Perfection details the Drones, the result of the Weaver's infusing human hosts with spirit matter in order to create ever more suitable servitors. Guidelines for supernatural Drones (which don't play by the rules of ordinary "possessed") are also included.

Chapter Three: Wild Effigies covers the gorgons, the result of the fusion of a Wyld-spirit with an animal, plant or even mineral host. Neither ally nor enemy to the Garou Nation, the gorgons are a wild card that can help or hinder any pack.

Chapter Four: Spirits of the Earth provides a treatment of the Kami, who are more often than not allies to the Changing Breeds. Even so, they keep their own counsel, so much so that the Garou don't even know for certain how the Kami come to be — they see the hand of Gaia's involvement, but little else.

Chapter Five: Clothed in Flesh deals with character creation, should the players and Storyteller be interested in playing a game with one or more possessed characters under player control. The rules presented here should allow players to create characters roughly balanced with each other (if not necessarily with shapeshifters).

Finally, the **Appendix** lists all the various powers and Taints that a player or Storyteller might need to create whatever possessed character suits the chronicle's needs. Some of these powers are highly potent, but be warned — none of them are free.



PRESCOTT

Chapter One: Wretched Worms

"There were eyes peering up at me through splits in the flesh of my fingers. And even as I watched the flesh was dilating, retreating, as they pushed their mindless way up to the surface. But that was not what made me scream. I had looked into my own face and seen a monster."

— Stephen King, "I Am The Doorway"

The Lowest of the Wyrn

Introduction: The Wyrn burrows into everything. Humans, spirits, animals — nothing escapes the grasp of destruction and decay in the end. In the old days, before the Wyrn changed from Balancer to Corrupter, this was a natural and expected part of the cycle.

Since that change, however, the Wyrn's timing has been off. Sometimes the decay starts... early. Sometimes a Bane wriggles into a living being and reshapes that being's flesh to serve its own needs. The host is sometimes willing, often not, but in either case he can do little but watch as he becomes something else. It is this "something else" — the deformed and tortured foot soldiers of the Wyrn — that concerns this work.

The bulk of this work was written by Julia Waterford, Kin to the Glass Walkers and a coordinator at the Valkenberg Foundation. She is probably one of the most knowledgeable people in the world regarding fomori and the processes by which they breed. Also, her continued contact with the Questing Packs that have served Valkenberg over the last 20

years affords her the opportunity to keep abreast of developments across the world in the fight against the Wyrn.

For those who don't know, the Questing Pack changes regularly. Its chief function is to track down and incarcerate Lunatic Garou for transport to the Foundation (where they are held until such time as they can accept their lot in life). The Pack is comprised of young Garou, usually cliath, who either do not have a home sept or have chosen, for whatever reason, to leave in search of glory elsewhere. Since these packs are always multi-tribal, they bring unique views and insights to the Foundation, and therefore to Ms. Waterford's work. The reader will find testimonials from members of the most recent Questing Pack throughout this work, as well as notes from Garou that the pack encountered in their travels. As the reader may know, I was once part of the Valkenberg Foundation, and I found the Questing Pack, in any incarnation, to be capable and intelligent.

I hope this work is edifying and useful for any Garou — I certainly found it so.

Yours, Victor Helms

While the focus here at the Valkenberg Foundation is ostensibly on Lunatics — those unfortunate Garou whose minds are shattered by the First Change — over the years the various Questing Packs have come into contact with a host of Wyrms-creatures in their travels. As the only member of the Foundation staff that remains from before the “Puppeteer” incident, I have had the opportunity to speak with and learn from every Questing Pack from the late 1980s onward. Although I am not Garou, I do feel that I have the knowledge and the data to present this work — a compilation, if you will, on fomori. Interspersed throughout are comments and reports from various members of the recently-disbanded Questing Pack, as well as other Garou, on the subject. As the newest Questing Pack has yet to undertake a mission, I have not included them in this report.

The Basics

And what is a fomori? How exactly to define this ancestral foe, the villain of so many tales through the millennia, in clear and analytical language? All available evidence points towards this definition: A fomori (plural fomori) is a symbiotic merger of a human being (or, rarely, an animal) and a Bane. From there, it is sometimes possible to break down fomori into “breeds” based on what kind of Bane does the possessing and what kinds of alterations they tend to make. However, the vast majority of fomori are unique — a Bane possesses a human and remakes the flesh as it sees fit (often with some help from the host’s subconscious mind, it seems).

Fomori exhibit all manner of bizarre and often gruesome mutations. Reports from the Questing Pack and other Garou with whom they’ve shared stories include fomori who spit poison, grow claws, stretch and distend their limbs, and even possess prehensile, barbed tongues. However, reports also filter in of fomori who look completely human, but can cause insanity and nightmares in their targets. Some fomori can apparently even “step sideways,” entering the Umbra in the same manner as Garou. Of course, since fomori aren’t always easily identifiable as such, it is possible that some of these reports are of creatures of a different stripe entirely.

Detecting fomori, in fact, is one of the greatest challenges of facing them. While reports from isolated locales — the Amazon War in particular — paint fomori as slaving, hideous monsters, in urban centers they are somewhat better hidden. While many Garou can, of course, detect the presence of the Wyrms nearby, if a fomori is hiding in a crowd of people, it is much more likely that he will see you before you detect him.

From this rather clinical preamble, the reader might see the danger that fomori present, but not the horror.

Any Garou or Kin who reads this needs to understand that I am neither writer nor poet. I am a doctor, and I try to present this information without bias.

But that is impossible. Allow me a personal moment here, so that I may relate why I undertook this task to begin with. Just under a year ago, a Questing Pack returned from an assignment to retrieve what seemed to be a Lunatic in Amarillo, Texas. They came back with a young man who broke into cold sweats every time the moon rose, writhed in pain when anyone approached him with silver, and would only eat raw meat. He also, according to the Theurge of the pack, bore a faint trace of Wyrms taint. Believing him to be a lost cub struggling with his Garou nature, we allowed him to stay. He remained at the facility only one night.

After the alarm rang in the dead of night, I found his room empty. He had torn the door from the hinges, but had not escaped immediately. He had smashed in the nearest door and attacked a young Garou we had brought to the Foundation only a month before. She had been making some progress, I think. She has been catatonic ever since. When I entered the room, his back was to me, but it was obvious from the position of his body what he was doing to her.

He was laughing triumphantly. When I screamed, he turned with a look of pure joy on his face, and *thanked* me for bringing him here so that he could “play.”

I have not slept well since that night, and that is my one and only first-hand experience with fomori. Please understand that words on paper mean nothing. You might learn what a fomori does by reading this, but you will not truly learn what a fomori does until you see it. And may Gaia grant that you never do.

Cure?

Can fomori be cured? That is a common question, especially among the more rescue-oriented Questing Pack. To date, the only proven method of separating the Bane from its host is to kill the host. The Bane is then set free (and usually tries to flee the area). Truly adept Theurges are able to separate the host and the spirit, but has the unfortunate effect of killing the host in the process (and, often, incorporating the Bane).

I will discuss the possession process — and ways of disrupting it — below, but I felt it necessary to include these notes early in this work. A Garou confronted by a fomori, especially a human-born Garou, might well feel guilt or sorrow over having to kill a human being who, in all likelihood, did not ask for their lot. To that, I can only say: The feelings are commendable, but do not let them slow your claws. A moment’s hesitation can mean injury or death, as fomori are anything but predictable.

Banes

The spiritual children of the Wyrms come in countless varieties. Some are tied to concepts like greed, lust, and wrath, and are therefore familiar to humans and homid werewolves. Others are perversions of elemental spirits haunting smog-filled skies or polluted waterways, while still others — the most powerful — are Umbral horrors that have no physical counterparts.

Typically, it is the first type of Bane that produces fomori. While most Banes are capable of possession, there is a very important difference between simply taking over a person's body for a time and merging with it. Often, it is the "emotional" Banes that understand humans well enough to possess them permanently.

Spawning Circumstances

Where do Banes come from? That's something not even the most learned Theurges are qualified to answer, so I certainly won't try to offer a definitive answer. Instead, I will pass on reports from the field, so to speak.

Banes appear in areas that nourish them. Large factories usually spawn "elemental" Banes — nourished by sludge and smog, they grow fat and powerful. Such factories have higher-than-average accident rates, as the machinery therein tends to resist attempts at making it run more efficiently. That too many accidents may eventually lead to the closing of the place doesn't occur to the Bane — Banes, particularly the lower Gafflings and Jagglings, are notoriously shortsighted. If they can eat today by poisoning, tainting, or otherwise destroying life, they don't care that it might prevent them from eating tomorrow. When the food dries up, they move on. Elemental Banes usually aren't far from a food source no matter where they go, lamentably.

"Emotional" Banes, those that feed off of human emotions, don't feed in quite the same way. A Bane that feeds on lust, for example, might haunt a pornography theater, but even then, it's not the theater that feeds the creature, it's the people who visit it. Such Banes usually latch onto a person who feels the given emotion especially keenly and sit curled up on his soul like a leech, waiting for the well to run dry. This means that anyone, *anyone*, is susceptible simply by having a bad day. Walking around angry can indeed attract an anger-Bane.

The proverbial well does not always run dry, however. Some people actually seem to feed off the Bane; as it feeds on the host's anger (for example) the host gets angrier, which in turn makes the Bane stronger. I have no idea whether the human or the Bane is ultimately responsible for changing a parasitic relationship into a symbiotic one. I dearly hope it is the Bane.

City versus Rural

Steven Kensington, called *Sings-With-the-Wind*, is a Theurge of the Children of Gaia and a former Questing Garou. During his time with the Questing Pack, he made it a point to observe and combat Banes of all stripes, so I asked for his input on the difference between possessors in the city and those in the country. Steven himself is originally from Seattle.

I've seen Banes in both urban and rural areas latch on to people and stay with them. You'd think that folks who live in the country would be able to throw off the Bane's influence more easily — after all, the area they live in is theoretically more "pure" and on the whole, country folk aren't caught up in all the unnecessary bullshit that city people are.

The problem though, is that in the city, there are millions of people for a Bane to choose from, and that tends to shorten their attention span. In a host whose attention wavers from whatever activity or feeling is feeding the Bane might cause it to break off and find somebody else — after all, there's probably somebody nearby feeling what the Bane wants. In the country, though, since the population's so much lower, the Banes tend to be a bit more resolute. That means that if you find a Bane perched on some guy's shoulder in the city, you can probably scare it off easily. In the country, that Bane will be dug in like a tick and you'll probably have a fight on your hands.

Behavior

Banes act in accordance with their dominant emotional focus. An anger-Bane will be rash and violent, whereas a lust-Bane will likely hide and watch rather than take an active role in events. Once any kind of Bane has possessed a person — remember that possession does not automatically create a fomor — it will usually only relinquish its hold if it feels that it is in direct danger. This is not the same thing as the *host* being in direct danger, however.

A Bane can survive the death of its host. This is true in both cases of simple possession and in cases of fomori. The difference is that a possessing Bane can release its host at any time and flee, whereas a Bane that has melded with a host to form a fomor can only escape if its host is killed.

If a Bane is "freed" by the death of its fomori body, it will likely retreat to the Umbra to regain its strength. Sometimes it plots vengeance on the persons responsible, but few Banes think that far ahead. More often, the Bane returns to the physical world to start searching for a new host, often unaware that anything happened.

More powerful Banes, however, might attack those responsible immediately. Some, instead of attacking, follow the guilty parties and strike when they are vulnerable — often by possession. Steven advises that after killing a powerful fomor, a pack should undergo a Rite of Cleansing as soon as possible (likewise, the Rite should be performed on the body as well, just to be safe).

Motivation

What does a Bane want? I'm afraid that speculating on the motives of Wyrmspirits is well beyond my capability, but Steven (Sings-With-The-Wind) has agreed to offer his opinions:

Banes are fairly autonomous. That means that you're more likely to encounter a swarm of similar Banes acting in concert because they're all focused on the same thing than to find a bunch of Banes under the control of one big Daddy Bane. Sometimes you find a more powerful Bane acting as a general, but if you see that, call for backup. You'll need it.

The typical Bane that feeds off human misery wants to keep feeding. I liken them to the kind of the worms that live in an animal's intestinal tract: They don't want the host dead, they want the host healthy (or at least to keep doing what it's doing) so that they can continue to feed. Unfortunately, since Banes tend to feed off destructive emotions, they'll often run their meal tickets into the ground. Someone who's angry *all the time* is a powder keg. The Bane might decide to lessen its influence occasionally, so that this poor guy is walking around with a frown and a growl but never quite gets angry enough to blow. Instead, his stomach acid keeps churning until he gets an ulcer or he finally gets so mad at the world that he snaps. Either way, he's no use to the Bane anymore, so the Bane soaks up what it can and finds another host. Other Banes might decide to urge their hosts on to even lower depths of angst, riding them as they burn out, and then laughing as they destroy themselves.

Either way, the motivation for Banes is simply self-perpetuation. They want to survive and feed, but don't take that the wrong way. They may just want to survive, but for them "survival" means "mutilating and corrupting a soul." I don't think that this corruption is a by-product of the way they survive. That, at least, I could empathize with, if not forgive. I think that their survival just happens to depend on their ultimate purpose — twisting and perverting human beings. I think that's what they were designed for, as evidenced by the fact that more powerful and complex Banes who don't focus on human directly still work towards corruption on a larger scale.

For the most part, though, survival seems to be their motivation, if not their ultimate purpose (and with spirits, the "ultimate purpose" is the important thing, anyway). They don't get much more complex than that

(not until you start talking about the more self-aware and intelligent spirits, like Nexus Crawlers or Psychomachiae, and I don't pretend to understand what they want!). Sometimes, a Bane crawls into a human rather than just riding along. What kind of human it takes to make a Bane want to do that is something else again (*Julia's note: I discuss this below*) but as for the spirit, it needs to be a very persistent creature. Sometimes Banes initiate possession when they feel the well running dry, perhaps figuring that if they can take control directly for a while, they can guide their host back to seeking out the emotions and situations that nourish them. Other times, the Bane gets so gluttoned on the emotions the person is exuding that it feels it has to get more, and burrows into the host's mind to find the "pure stuff," if you will.

You can use this kind of selfishness, of course. Since Banes are so motivated by self-preservation, some might sell out Black Spirals or other more important Wyrms-creatures if you promise to let them go. I wouldn't rely solely on a Bane's word, though. The bad news is that Banes know when they've found a good deal, so although they might panic and run if you scare them, they'll find the same host again. So your choices are: destroy the Bane (tough to do) or change the host (sometimes even tougher). But consider: if you can talk a guy down from being angry all the time, that means that no anger-Bane is going to have a shot at him. Even if he doesn't know what you did for him, he'll appreciate that.

Bane Types

As I mentioned above, the kinds of Banes that seem most apt to create fomori seem to be "emotional" Banes. Below are a few types that Questing Garou have reported encountering, along with some notes (where applicable) about the sorts of fomori they create.

- **Anger Swarm:** Although it resembles a large swarm of insects, the Anger Swarm is a single entity with a single intelligence. Usually found hovering over traffic jams, riots, rallies, and any other place where lots of people are venting their frustrations at the same time, this Bane is one of the more violent and vicious spirits that plague mankind. They do not seem able to feed off a Garou's Rage, however, which is a mercy. Anger Swarms apparently have short attention spans,

Anger Swarm

Rage 4 to 8, Gnosis 3, Willpower 4, Essence varies

Charms: Incite Frenzy, Possession, Swift Flight

Image: Anger Swarms resemble large clouds of gnats or flies, but if viewed up close, no individual "insects" can be seen. These Banes make a loud buzzing sound; this noise raises the difficulty of all Perception rolls related to hearing by one in the immediate area.

and so create fomori rarely. When they do, however, the resulting creatures tend to be inhumanly strong and fast, sometimes with wicked claws or fangs.

- **Whisperers:** These insidious little creatures are almost identical to Pattern Spiders — unless you turn one over and look at its underbelly. Whisperers have tiny, nearly-human mouths on their abdomens. They inhabit computers, whispering to the users and guiding them towards various kinds of Internet-born unpleasantness; plans for explosives, child pornography sites, etc. Whisperers can and do create fomori; their hosts often develop clairvoyant or telepathic powers. Some also exhibit an affinity for Weaver-spirits.

Whisperer

Rage 2, Gnosis 5, Willpower 6, Essence 13

Charms: Blighted Touch, Corruption, Possession, Weaver Mask

***Weaver Mask:** Whisperers look like small Pattern Spiders. A Garou using the Gift: Sense Wyrms needs three successes at difficulty 7 to detect any Wyrms-taint on a Whisperer.

Image: Whisperers look like Pattern Spiders and are rarely larger than billiard balls (big for a spider, to be sure, but not surprisingly large for a spirit). As mentioned, they have human mouths on the underside of their abdomen. If revealed for what it truly is, a Whisperer will scream shrilly through this mouth.

- **Howling Insanities:** Among the most feared Banes in existence, these loathsome creatures can actually possess *were*wolves. The actual process by which this happens is unknown — possibly it is similar to the way humans are possessed — but once it is complete, the poor Garou has become a creature known as a Howling Shambler. These monsters retain their shape-shifting powers and gain other, blasphemous abilities — legends tell of them rising up from the moors of Scotland, their howls driving whole villages mad. No Questing Pack has ever encountered either Shambler or Insanity, and while that leaves me with little verifiable information, I must say I'm grateful for it.

Howling Insanities

Rage 7, Gnosis 6, Willpower 7, Essence 20

Charms: Blast, Incite Frenzy, Possession

Image: Howling Insanities are nearly invisible. By looking carefully, a Garou can see them — they appear as ghostly, translucent reflections of whoever is looking at them. Wherever they appear, they bring the sound of anguished howls with them.

- **Scavenger Packs:** These horrors are unique among fomori-creating Banes in that they possess a group of living beings (a pack of animals) in order to pave the way to possess a human. Scavenger Packs are visible in the Umbra as a group of similar, obviously hostile animals (usually small vermin: rats, insects, snakes, etc.). The Banes possess a number of animals and then partially Materialize. A horde of rats might include only a half dozen actual animals; the rest are simply manifestations of the Bane itself.

Scavenger Banes are dangerous on their own, but the fomori they create — the feared Hollow Men — are among the most dangerous that a Garou can face. You can read the Questing Pack's account of these creatures below.

Scavenger Packs

Rage 5, Gnosis 6, Willpower 4, Essence 15

Charms: Possession, Tracking

Image: Scavenger Packs look like hordes of diseased or corrupted animals. These animals are never larger than rats (an important consideration, thanks to the way they infest humans). Although the swarm is comprised of many different animals, the Bane is only one creature, and can only attack once per turn as usual.

- **Manufactured Banes:** Frighteningly enough, some companies seem to do the Wyrms' work. King Breweries, for example, lost a truckload of beer a few years back when the Questing Pack, on an unrelated mission, sensed Wyrms-taint in the truck. What they found was that at least one can of beer in each pack, and sometimes as many as six, housed at least a fragment of Wyrmsish spiritstuff, and in many cases a tiny Bane. One can wouldn't have produced much of an effect, save for perhaps making the drinker a bit more aggressive. But if a person had emulated the "Joe Six-Pack" character from the television commercials and consumed six full cans? It's entirely possible that that person would have opened the door to possession, and eventual transformation into a fomori.

I have seen reports of other companies whose products house similar Banes. However, the relative strength of the Banes is so slight that it would take months, perhaps years, of repeated use for any possession to take place. Of course, if a person drank tainted beer, watched tainted videos and smoked tainted cigarettes... the implications are sickening.

Hosts

And what of the people who succumb to possession? Just as fomori are many and varied, so are their hosts. However, looking at the information and reports

we have, it becomes possible to draw some conclusions. The jury is out, so to speak, on whether the humans who become fomori invite their lot. Indeed, evidence to suggest this does exist, but so does evidence to suggest that a Bane will sometimes choose a target that is simply weak-willed. Likewise, as I mentioned, sometimes drinking the wrong brand of cola carries the risk of Bane possession. And then some folks seem to invite possession not just by implication, but very directly.

Victims

The most unfortunate of all, of course, must be those people chosen almost at random. Perhaps they

Manufactured Banes

Although Julia doesn't know it, the "manufactured" Banes all stem from Pentex companies. As she stated, individually, the Banes are weak and nearly harmless. They also have a "shelf life" — most of them fade away if not consumed or released within a few months. However, if consumed or otherwise "activated" by a person (in the case of a Bane in a videotape, watching the video — not just playing it — would be required to release the Bane) the spirit can sit inside the hapless human's body for as long as the human keeps "feeding" it. Such Banes are rarely powerful enough to possess their hosts fully and change them into fomori, but they do serve two important purposes.

First, they act as "tracers." Many of these Banes can be easily tracked and that allows their creators to do some "market research" and figure out how many of their Banes currently riding around in human hosts. Second, the more people go through life with weak Banes in their souls, the higher the level of Wurm-taint gets in a given area. This is somewhat akin to filling a pitcher with a drop of water at a time — it may take years to make a noticeable difference. Once that taint reaches a certain level, however, the damage is nearly irreparable.

These "manufactured" Banes can create fomori, but it happens only rarely. Such Banes aren't usually powerful enough to do so, and even if they are, a number of other factors work against them: The host's eating habits might change, or he might simply be resistant enough to possession that the Bane finally weakens and dies. However, a fomor created by this sort of "manufactured" Bane typically nurses an addiction to the products that created it, as well as subtle, destructive powers that it uses almost unconsciously (a fomor created primarily by cigarette Banes might emit odorless fumes that makes others crave cigarettes, for example).

simply had a moment of weakness and succumbed to hate or lust or anger, and in that moment a Bane took hold and got comfortable.

The astute reader might exclaim, "But that would make anyone a target, because virtually no one is immune to those emotions!" And that, frighteningly, is true. Banes do not need invitations before merging with humans. All they seem to need is a window, a moment of common cause to initiate the process. Some Banes aren't above creating that window by riding around with the human and feeding their simmering hatred, others strike when the opportunity is there.

Almost any human being is a likely candidate. Banes don't seem to care much if their host is strong or weak, young or old, hale or sickly. I speculate that this is because the Bane knows it will reshape the human's body as much as necessary anyway. One consideration that Banes do seem to have, however, is the human's life and his place within it. That is, how many people depend on the person? Is he or she a parent? A teacher? An employer responsible for the welfare of others? If so, then changing the host into a fomor will invariably result in disaster for anyone close to him — and this kind of corruptive breakdown is exactly what the Bane (and the Wurm) wants. Some Banes even choose children as hosts, often from neighborhoods that force the child to abandon innocence early (which seems to make possession easier). A child fomor is among the most horrifying foes a Garou will ever face, because the Garou must recognize that somewhere beneath the innocent veneer, a Bane has latched hold of and completely desecrated a young soul.

Human beings are complex. When a human causes misery, the possible motives are endless and rarely does a human act against his fellows simply to hurt them (as naïve as I'm sure that sounds). More often, destructive acts are born of selfishness, greed, or anger; but even still, a man who mugs a woman might be doing it to feed his own children. Does this validate his actions? No, but it does present a problem for others seeking to judge him — his intent was not to cause suffering.

This is not true of Banes. Their intent is to cause suffering, and to cause as much of it as possible. It is what they are, it is as natural to them as breathing or eating to us. So when a Bane chooses to slither into a person and beget a fomor, the Bane will choose a person through whom it can cause as much misery as possible. This means that homeless drifters don't become fomori as often as people with families and friends. When a Bane does choose a "nobody," it usually has its reasons, however — having no familial connections means the fomori may lash out at anyone and everyone around it, and will be much harder to trace by mundane means.

Poisoned

As touched on above, some consumer products can open the way for Bane infestation. However, there is simply no way to pinpoint what types of people might be at risk. Obviously, those who eat fast food and immerse themselves in mass-produced entertainment and goods have greater chances of ingesting a Bane than those who eat only organic foods and who live as hermits, but that doesn't do the average person a lot of good. I would assert, if I might be so bold, that it falls to Garou to be constantly on the lookout for Wyrmtaint masked by corporate logos — this kind of corruption is the most unjust and insidious of all, and only the Garou are in any position to do anything about it.

Even worse, if tainted product nudges a host towards behaviors that Banes find attractive, the host might find himself under a double-pronged attack, both from the Banes he is ingesting and the ones he is unconsciously attracting. It's a rather bleak scenario, and again, I think that it demands attention whenever possible.

Deserving?

I would assert that *no one* deserves to become a fomor. A man who beats his wife is detestable, surely, but that doesn't mean that he deserves to have an obscene spirit reshape his mind and body. However, it does seem as though some hosts "bring it upon themselves," so to speak.

As mentioned above, Banes initiate a self-perpetuating cycle. Host feeds Bane, Bane exudes emotion, emotion inspires host. But it has to start somewhere. People who allow themselves to be ruled by negative emotions — those who are always angry or hateful — are prime candidates for Bane possession simply because they make it easy. These types of people, however, tend to attract Banes who take the path of least resistance, so the fomori they generate aren't as powerful or subtle. It is these sorts of people who become the stuff of Garou war stories, the hideous, oozing monsters that throw themselves at Garou, almost as though trying to end it all.

Twisted Faith

Zoe McKenna, also called Brigid's Noble Soul, related her experience with a fomor — just shortly after her First Change — to me. I thought it was appropriate to include here, as it sheds some light on the sort of person susceptible to possession. Zoë is an Ahroun of the Fianna, originally from New England, although these experiences took place in Ohio.

I went through my First Change in college — late, I know. It took nearly a month for anybody to track me down, and as it happened, it was a Questing Pack. By that time, I'd learned how to control my shapeshifting, but I had no idea what I was or about the Wyrms or anything like that. So needless to say, when the Pack found me and I told them about Crazy Preacher Man, they were pretty impressed.

The guy hung out on the OSU campus all the time. He handed out tracts and yelled at girls dressed too skimpily or basically anybody who hung out at *Insomnia* (*Julia's Note: an off-campus coffee shop*). A couple times the cops came and got him, but he was just a crazy old man. Harmless. Always yelling about Jesus and how Jesus could save you if you let him. I hadn't been to church since I got to college, so I used to think that it was kind of cool that he believed so strongly, even if he was nuts.

And then one day he attacked me.

Now, I'd had a bad week anyway. This was just after the Change hit, so people were avoiding me and I'm thinking I've gone crazy. My boyfriend hadn't spoken to me — this was before I found out

about the Curse and all, so I'm totally in the dark about what's got everyone so freaked about me — and the papers have stories about a "wild dog loose in a grocery store." I was walking across campus and I heard Crazy Preacher Man yelling again, and I started getting pissed (I hadn't really felt much else in a few days). And then I saw him running towards me. He had a tire iron in his hand and was yelling, "The Beast must be die! The wicked must be punished!" Stuff like that. He hit me before I could move, and knocked me down. Then he fell on top of me. He was beating me with the tire iron and slapping me across the face, screaming, "Repent, whore!" I saw that he was foaming at the mouth, and I could smell it — it smelled like beer-piss and rot.

That was the *second* time I Changed, and I don't think he knew what had happened. I changed up into Crinos and flung him against a building, and he kind of slid down to the ground, dying, oozing blood out of his mouth. I don't think anyone saw me that time; in the paper, they said it was a hit-and-run.

When I got home, there were little blue spots on my clothes (I picked them up and took them with me) and on my skin where he touched me. I had to scrub for hours to get them out. They looked like mold.

That guy didn't have any faith. What he had was a Bible and a hard-on. He saw the world and saw so much sin that he opened the door to a Bane. How's that for irony?

These people can come from any walk of life, of course. A common thread is frustration — whether with life, society, family, lack of family, whatever — the host is fed up. Holding emotion inside and expressing it only through contempt or rage is also common. Hosts like this walk around harboring the exact disregard for life that Banés thrive on, so when people like this get possessed, it tends to be a quick (but by no means painless) process.

Animal Hosts

Animals can become fomori, but don't seem to be afflicted as often. I have two theories on why this is. Perhaps animals have an intrinsic connection to the Wyld that makes them more resistant than people to Bane possession. Or, perhaps Banés just don't see as much possibility in possessing them.

Either way, animal fomori do exist. I have heard reports of dogs, pigs, bears, and snakes all housing Banés. I have never heard a reliable report of a purely herbivorous animal being so possessed, but I caution the reader that absence of evidence is by no means evidence of absence.

If you do run across a Bane-tainted beast, expect it to be more vicious and combat capable than a normal member of its species. Since the Bane doesn't have the same mental faculties to work with in animals, it seems to focus on enhancing the animal's already-existing gifts to grotesque proportions. A fomor-dog might have huge, distended fangs and slaver with noxious fluids. A tainted bear would be huge and strong enough to topple trees with a shrug.

Steven, who has actually encountered corrupted beasts, asks me to pass along the admonition to cleanse the animal's corpse and its den, if you can find it, after dispatching one of these creatures. This is to avoid similar Banés "homing in" on the stench of corruption and creating more tainted animals.

Resistance

Some people do resist. Some are strong-willed enough to recognize that something is happening to them, even if they don't know exactly what. Some start to feel the effects of possession and it scares them into changing — they stop drinking, they get therapy, whatever. Resisting is rare, however, because it requires a concerted effort on the part of the host — and very few hosts ever realize that something is wrong.

Banés usually do not target spiritual people. By spiritual, I don't mean folks who attend church every Sunday and try not to fall asleep, looking at religion as an obligation. I'm referring more to people who believe, regardless of their actual religious practices, that forces beyond human understanding exist. No matter what they think those powers are, the belief in them better equips the host to fight against the Bane. Disbelieving

the Bane doesn't help, it simply goes on about the possession while the host wonders why he's been feeling so strange lately. But a spiritual person who notices the oddities that possession brings (see below) may pray or meditate or whatever with the intent to clear his head — and this disrupts the Bane's attempts at possession.

Note, however, that this doesn't always work. Some Banés are much more adept at twisting a person's faith or religion to their advantage (possibly the "Crazy Preacher Man" in Zoë's account was possessed by such a Bane).

Other methods of resistance exist, of course. A host who notices changes might connect them with some activity in his life and make an effort to change the activity. While the activity in question is usually

Storytelling Resistance

How a target resists possession depends largely on how much the target knows and how persistent the Bane is prepared to be.

A host who tries to will herself free of the Bane, whether by prayer, meditation, taking a vacation or something similar must make an opposed Willpower check against the Bane each day (difficulty 7 for the host, 6 for the Bane). As long as the Bane can match or exceed the number of successes that the host accrues, it stays in place and the possession proceeds. If the host manages to beat the Bane, the Bane is expelled and must start from scratch if it wishes to possess the same target (and some Banés are persistent enough to do so).

If the host changes a behavior practice that is peripheral but related to the method the Bane is using to possess him (a person being possessed by an anger-Bane attempts to quit drinking, for example) both parties roll Willpower as above, except that the difficulty is 7 for both rolls.

If the host endeavors to change the precise behavior that the Bane is using (instead of or in addition curbing his drinking, the host attends anger management courses) the difficulties change to 6 for the host, 7 for the Bane.

Finally, if the host arranges for some kind of exorcism from a qualified person, the Bane must roll Willpower in an opposed check versus the exorcist's appropriate dice pool (Manipulation + Occult or Theology for a Christian priest, perhaps). The difficulty for both rolls is 6. If the Bane does not exceed the number of successes achieved by the exorcist, it is expelled and can never again attempt to possess the host. (The Gift: Exorcism does not require an opposed roll from the Bane; as long as the Theurge succeeds, the Bane is ejected.)

something concrete, rather than a behavioral tendency (that is, the host may identify the problems with drinking rather than with controlling his anger), there's always the possibility that by cutting back on an unhealthy practice, the host will jar the Bane enough to make it uncomfortable. If the host actually identifies the exact focus that the Bane is using to possess him and changes it, the Bane will almost surely lose its footing and break off the attack.

If, by some miracle, the host realizes what is happening to him (a spirit is trying to possess his body) and accepts that as truth, he may try any number of cures. Exorcism is one avenue, and it may actually be helpful. Most religions have legends about spirits or demons capable of possession and therefore have rituals to expel them (actually finding someone qualified to perform them is another matter entirely). In some cases, the Bane might feel exposed if the host rebels against it so directly and might leave him alone. Of course, it might very well redouble its efforts before the host finds a way to expel it.

Outside Help

If a Garou comes across a human in the midst of a possession attempt, what can she do to help? The obvious choice would be to step into the Umbra and attack the Bane, and indeed, sometimes this works. However, depending on how "far along" the possession is, this can cause irreparable damage to the host's mind, so gentler methods may be required.

Various Gifts may be helpful. Many Theurges possess the strength to force a Bane to leave the host. Both the Black Furies and the Children of Gaia are sometimes gifted with the power to infuse a person with love for Gaia (which, of course, is so repellent to a Bane that it sometimes drives it away). Summoning the possessing Bane may also work (though it apparently requires a very skilled ritemaster).

The Garou can also try to identify what "lever" the Bane is using to possess the host and try to change it. The Curse makes this difficult, but if possible, this is the best method, because it not only will drive off one Bane but also strengthen the human against others.

There is a misconception among some of the more militant and violent werewolves that the only method of truly freeing a host is to kill him, and then to destroy the Bane. While this certainly does free the host, it is also a vicious and wasteful method, and should be considered strictly as a last resort. After all, given a Bane's common choices for possession and that their motive is to cause suffering, killing the unfortunate host may well be tantamount to doing the Wyrms' work for it.

The Road to Corruption

Now that we've examined the two "halves" of the fomor — the host and the Bane — let us examine the actual process by which those two entities become one. Again, since fomori exhibit such diversity, this process can take a number of avenues, but I will try to cover as many bases as possible.

Note: As I mentioned above, it is possible for a Bane to possess a human being without changing the human into a fomor. Many Banes are actually more likely to take control of a person's body for a short time than to initiate the "fomori process." For our purposes, however, when the word "possession" is used in the report below, assume that we are referring to the act of creating a fomor, not of temporary enslavement.

Unwilling Hosts

The vast majority of people that become fomori, whether they unwittingly invite the Bane in or not, are not deliberately trying to become monsters. So how does the Bane go about possession?

The Bane chooses its target based on factors discussed above. Once it makes its choice, it will then follow the target around. This has the effect of coloring the host's mood and outlook as long as the Bane stays close to it. Eventually, the Bane decides to take things a step further and possesses the victim.

Once the Bane has entered the human's body, it may or may not decide to assert control. Sometimes it will merely guide a human, forcing him to act on destructive impulses rather than swallowing his feelings. As long as the Bane doesn't force its host to do anything too outrageous, the host will likely think that the outbursts (or whatever the Bane makes him do) are of his own volition. While he might feel "out of control," he probably won't assume that something else is in control. Some Banes, during this time, choose to force their hosts to alienate those close to them, to quit jobs or otherwise burn bridges. Other Banes allow the host's life to stay as "normal" as possible, anticipating the havoc they will be able to inflict when the merger is complete. The host may experience nightmares or sudden panic attacks as his mind and soul try to cope with the intruder.

This stage of the possession can be as short as a few days, or the Bane may stretch it out for months. Regardless, the Bane only needs to inhabit the host's body long enough to forge a connection. How long this takes depends on how attuned to the Bane's nature the host already is (as previously noted). Even if the host and Bane aren't really compatible at the start, a clever and subtle Bane can force a normally stoic person to

pursue arguments, start fights, and generally become angry until the host starts doing it on his or her own. It is then, when the Bane and human mesh to whatever degree, that the Bane merges with the human.

This merger isn't a wholesome symbiosis or a sharing of souls. It is more akin to spiritual violation. The Bane quite literally takes up residence in the human's body and mind and makes itself comfortable. This requires subtly (or not so subtly) remaking the human to fit the Bane's needs. And consider, once again, that Banes are fairly simple creatures. They exist to create misery. Even the most disturbed or violent human is more complex than that, so imagine what it must be like for a "normal" person to feel a vile presence rearranging his very body to make it more in line with the Bane's philosophy.

What exactly the Bane does during this time depends largely on the Bane in question. An Anger Swarm (see above) that possesses a human might force the human to hear the unceasing buzzing sound that the Bane makes all the time. Only when the human lashes out in sheer rage and frustration does the noise abate. The Bane forces the human to see everything—friends, family, music, art, anything the human once loved—in its own terms. That means friends and family are just sacks of meat waiting to be used for whatever purpose the Bane sees fit. Music and art are distractions, mind-numbing and maddening enigmas that the Bane doesn't have any way at all to appreciate. Love is not compatible with the Bane's outlook—it is, in fact, the Bane's very antithesis.

Adding to the horror, the victim keeps his own perceptions and thoughts during all of this. They may be tainted or colored by the Bane's, to be sure, but the human's mindset is still nowhere near as simplistic as the Bane's. That means that a father looking at his son sees the child not only through his own eyes but also through the Bane's—and the Bane is a part of him, at his most basic level. It is any wonder that most fomori lose their sanity quickly?

This meshing of viewpoints is not the only change, of course, nor is it the most dramatic. Banes are Umbral horrors, and are not used to the concepts of biology and physiology that govern the human body. They almost assuredly find the human form weak and—perhaps—even a bit grotesque. So they change it.

Again, the host doesn't get any comfort in this process. He feels, perhaps painfully, perhaps not, what the Bane is doing to him. If the Bane needs him to develop glands through which to secrete poison or webbing, those glands appear—and the host must wait in terror as new organs form in his body. If the Bane feels that "its" human needs another set of eyes, the host must

First-Hand Account

The Questing Pack, during the search for a Lunatic in Michigan, came across a "young" fomori. They killed him and destroyed the Bane, but before doing so, they asked him what had happened. Corina Blaine, called Fangs-on-the-Cutting-Edge by her fellow Glass Walkers, had the presence of mind to record his answer and I am including the transcript here. Before any Garou is tempted to regard fomori as simple monsters, he should consider this:

"I think the first time was after the party. I go to the University. You know. There was this party at this one guy's apartment. It was, like, right after midterms and a lot of people were gone already, so there were only, like, twenty or twenty-five people there. Anyway, one of them was this girl that I knew and we'd hooked up at a party once before. She was there and already drunk when I got there, and I had a few beers, and we ended up in this guy's room. And I locked the door, and she's already passed out on the bed. I remember her skirt was like up around her waist, and I'm thinking, what the hell, we did it before, right? (*low growl here, probably from Lysistrata*) So I get down and move her legs apart and we're going at it and suddenly she wakes up and tells me to stop. And it's like I can't hear her. Like I can but there's something... I don't know, my hands are on her shoulders and I'm trying to push up and back off, I think... I don't know. Maybe I wasn't. I don't... and then she left and she ran out and I ran out and I'm sitting on the hood of my car and I'm shaking like a fucking leaf. And I spit on the ground and it crackles like hot oil, and I've got this taste like... uh... like a woman, you know? In my mouth. I don't know what's happening, but I see two girls walking out to their cars from the party, and before I know it, I'm up, walking towards them, and I'm running but like bent or hunched over like a caveman or something. Like I'm going to jump on them and there's this pounding noise in my head. Like telling me, "do it, do it, jump on them and fuck them both." And I think I ran the other way. But the taste is still there. That was like, two weeks ago, and every time I eat, that's what I taste. And I can't look at a woman without that pounding and that urge to jump. But the worst was when I... I gave my sister a hug and then out of nowhere, I kissed her cheek. And I tasted blood and... you know, the same thing again. And she's got this big *bum* on her face, and I couldn't get her to stop screaming... (*here he breaks down crying*) oh, God, can't you guys do something? (*Corina's voice saying "Yes," and then a snarl. Recording ends.*)



cope with itching, then pain, then suddenly seeing from another perspective. The psychological impact of these changes is probably worse than the physiological one, largely because our culture teaches that everything that happens to the body is explainable in a scientific fashion. But when a grown woman sprouts sharp, bony protrusions from her knees and ankles, and when looking at them, receives images of rending flesh, there is no escaping the truth — her body and mind are being remade. She is no longer in control.

Some Banes try to lessen the pain of the physical change, sometimes by causing the fomor to feel waves of pleasure during the process. This doesn't always help, because when the pleasure fades, the human will still have to cope with his new body. This tactic can be of great help to the Bane, however, when teaching the newly-spawned fomor how to use its new body.

Volunteers and Conscripted Fomori

But not all fomori come by their lot unwillingly. Some actually bring it on themselves, often by summoning a Bane for power or servitude or by otherwise experimenting with dark magics. Others are tricked or forced into becoming servants of the Wyrn (which means that while

the fomor might not have wished the change, it was still a deliberate act on someone's part, other than the Bane's).

While rituals for summoning true spirits of Gaia do not work for normal humans (or even for human spellcasters, or so Steven tells me) summoning Banes is slightly easier. Intent is everything — a would-be spiritualist who truly wishes to summon a maleficent spirit is quite likely to call one up (which means that a bunch of kids playing with a Ouija board are unlikely to summon anything, thank Gaia for small mercies). What the spirit does when it arrives depends partially on the skill of the summoner and mostly on the whim of the Bane.

Banes exist to cause misery, so if the summoner wishes the Bane to carry out an appropriate errand of hatred or destruction, the Bane might well do so. However, if the summoner asks the Bane to perform a service contrary to its nature (asking a lust Bane to kill someone, for example) the spirit might well become insulted and decide to latch on to the summoner for a time. Likewise, Banes, like many spirits, have more power if given invitations. If the summoner grants the Bane permission to inhabit his body, he has likely just volunteered to become a fomor.

Fomori Brotherhoods

On rare occasion, the summoner or sorcerer knows exactly what she is looking for. Secret societies have reportedly cropped up around the notion of becoming a fomor. While investigating reports of a Lunatic in Texas, the Questing Pack found evidence of such a society. Steven observed one of their rituals and has this to say on it:

There were maybe a dozen men — no women anywhere. All the men were upwards of 35, 40 years old, I'd guess. The Wyrn-stench in the room was oppressive — it was like stale smoke in a cheap bar. The men were sitting at this horseshoe-shaped table and there was one guy standing in the center of the horseshoe. All the guys at the table were wearing black, but the lone guy had a blue suit on.

I couldn't hear what they were saying, but it looked like an initiation. The standing man was nodding and answering questions, and finally the men in black stood up and tied the guy down on the table. Then they took sticks — like jo staves — and beat the guy with them. He had dozens of cuts over his body, but he was laughing like a maniac and yelling out some weird phrase or name — like I said, I couldn't hear.

What I *could* do was peek into the Umbra, so I took a look. And then I figured out what was happening. Every single one of those guys was a fomor, possessed by the same kind of Bane — really nasty ones that I nicknamed Pain Hunters. They look a little like big wasps, but they've got brown or black fur and big saber-like forearms. I didn't know they could possess people, but as this guy was lying there bleeding, a whole flock of them swooped in from who-knows-where, and one big one started forcing its way down his throat. Once it was in — and the guy was choking and retching the whole time — he drops to the ground and starts shaking. I was still looking from the Umbra, and I could see the Bane stretching his bones, forcing his teeth to grow out and sharpen, whatever else. I would have seen more, but it was just about then that one of the other Banes noticed me....

Experimenting with any kind of dark magic (which means nearly any ritual or spell involving blood or sacrifice) is a good way to attract Banes, as they are drawn to suffering and death. Even ritual sex, performed for the wrong reasons or without the consent of both parties (which, I'm disgusted to say, does happen) might bring some Umbral onlookers. Most Banes can mani-

fest, and the more intelligent ones might present themselves as demons or other supernatural forces and offer Faustian deals to the would-be sorcerers. Banes powerful enough to make these deals are usually powerful enough to carry them out, but of course, once the merger has begun the Bane is no longer under any obligation.

Some unfortunate people are forced into becoming fomori. I confess to have little knowledge of how this might be accomplished, but I offer up two theories:

Torture would not only attract Banes, but weaken a person's resolve and will, allowing easier possession. It's not inconceivable that a dedicated group of Wyrn servitors — Black Spiral Dancers, for example — might kidnap and torture a human in hopes of creating a fomor. Perhaps the sacrifice in a ritual might end up becoming a fomor, if s/he wasn't killed outright.

I have seen reports from various packs and septs of well-equipped fomori attacking caerns. While the "personnel" of such teams varies, the powers exhibited by the fomori are often similar. This implies that whoever is generating these teams has access to both Banes and people to infect. Perhaps they trick their employees into ingesting the Banes, or perhaps — even more frightening — these soldiers volunteer?

The process of becoming a fomor, the slow reshaping of flesh by the possessing Bane, is much the same for "volunteer" or "conscripted" fomori as it is for unwilling victims. Note, however, that someone who knew what they were in for would likely master the powers the Bane granted much more quickly, as of course would someone who had others to train him.

Fomori Families

Special mention should be made of the so-called "Fomori families." Unique not only because the taint is passed on down the family line, but also because the Banes in question are of the "elemental" instead of "emotional" type; familial fomori are clannish and insular. Most such families thrive in the backwoods of America — the Louisiana bayous, the Florida Everglades, and deep in the mountains far away from the cities.

What causes these families to go bad? Often it's a polluted site nearby; a stagnant, corrupted pond or stream or a former strip-mine site provides the necessary Banes to begin the process. One member of the family becomes a fomor and then figures out that he can pass on his new "gifts" to his kin. Rumor has it that some such families even regard the trip to the corrupted site as a rite of passage of sorts — before a boy can become a man, he must first become a fomor.

Members of a given family usually share supernatural traits. The fomori may all be superhumanly strong or fast, or be able to scuttle up trees like squirrels. Then

again, they might find that after the “trip to the river,” they bleed from the mouth frequently or lose their teeth within a week. Not every member of the family is necessarily tainted, however. Some families leave the women alone — so that they can breed. It probably goes without saying that women are treated horribly and children are abused almost from birth.

Fomori families are, in many ways, more dangerous than other kinds of fomori. Not only do they have numbers and family on their side, but they always know their home terrain well and they know the best ways to defend it. Many families make their living selling fruit or other foodstuff at roadside stands, and the food they sell is every bit as tainted as any O’Tolley’s burger or King beer (and many Garou don’t even think to check, as we all tend to associate “rural” with “pure”). By attacking or repelling tourists or other travelers, these families help spread the misconception that country folks are stupid, violent, and degraded. Worst of all, even killing every member of the family won’t necessarily solve the problem permanently — the corrupted site has to be wiped out as well. Any Garou that runs across a fomori family had best beware — many of these families are Kin to Black Spiral Dancers. In 1989, a Questing Pack tracked down a Lunatic in the mountains of North Carolina and found themselves fighting not only the Lunatic (a recently changed Black Spiral) but his extended family of fomori and werewolves. Two Questing Garou died during the battle, and to my knowledge, the family is still there.

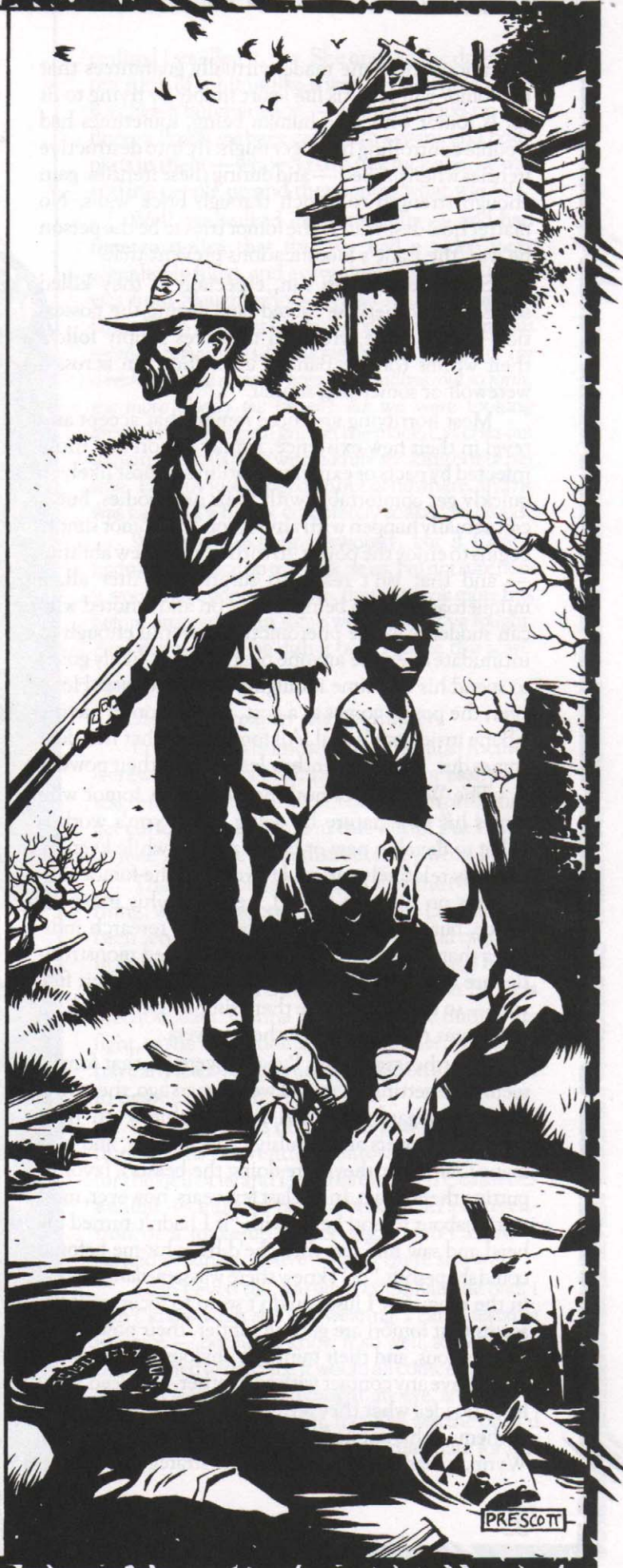
No Turning Back

After the horror of the merger comes the ongoing horror of life as a fomori. Fomori are diverse and often unique, and it’s hard to predict what one will do after the Bane has nested comfortably. In this section, I will discuss what fomori do and the best ways to fight them, as well as pass on reports from the Questing Pack about their encounters with the creatures.

After Possession

Once the Bane has completed the process and changed the human into a fomori, the human is more or less in control again. By merging with the host, the Bane relinquishes the ability to assert direct control — the human never needs to worry about his body suddenly moving against his will again — but the skewed, dichotomous perspective remains. This will certainly color the new fomori’s choice of agenda.

The fomori may try to resume his life. This is exactly what the Bane wants, of course. The fomori’s now near-alien mindset, coupled with whatever



alterations the Bane made, virtually guarantees that the fomor will tear his life apart simply by trying to fit in. A fomor who, as a human being, sometimes had trouble controlling his anger might fly into destructive frenzies when pushed — and during these frenzies, gain enough strength to punch through brick walls. No matter how desperately the fomor tries to be the person he was, the Bane's modifications prevent that.

Some new fomori run, especially if they killed someone or otherwise “acted out” during the possession process. The wretched creatures simply follow their whims (or the Bane's) until they run across a werewolf or something similar.

Most horrifying are those fomori that accept and revel in their new existence. Family fomori and those infected by pacts or experimentation are most likely to quickly get comfortable with their new bodies, but it can actually happen with any fomor. The fomor simply begins to enjoy the power, to thrive on his new abilities — and that isn't really so surprising. After all, a milquetoast used to being picked on and ignored who can suddenly exude pheromones powerful enough to intimidate or entice anyone nearby is very likely going to spend his free time indulging in that ability. However, the power comes at a cost, in addition to having a Bane inside one's soul. All fomori find that this debt comes due, shortly after they learn to use their powers.

The Wyrms gives nothing for free. A fomor who serves his new nature by doing the Wyrms' work is liable to develop new or better powers while keeping his body relatively intact. However, if the fomor simply acts on his own accord, he retains his independence, but at the cost of his flesh. My research indicates that the most outrageously reshaped monstrosities are actually fomori that chose to retain their free will — so the Bane inside them simply reshaped them further, as recompense for their powers.

A further trend that I've uncovered is that fomori seem to be getting smarter. Twenty years ago, the stories at moots regarding fomori focused chiefly on their disgusting powers and repulsive appearances, and how many Garou felt they were doing the beasts a favor by putting them down. In the last few years, however, most stories about fomori begin with “If I hadn't turned my head and saw him just then, he'd have hit me before I could shapeshift,” or “I knew there was *something* tainted in the room, but I just couldn't seem to focus on it.” It seems that fomori are getting subtler, their powers less ostentatious, and their taint less obvious. Since fomori rarely have any contact with each other — indeed, most have no idea what they are or what has truly happened to them — this implies that the genesis of all fomori, the Wyrms, is learning and changing its strategy. Of course,

my evidence for this is somewhat circumstantial, but it certainly bears investigation and caution.

Fomori Breeds

As I mentioned above, some fomori seem to be born of the same stock, so to speak. What this probably means is that similar Banes are choosing similar types of people as hosts, which creates fomori of a given “type.” Listed below are five accounts of fomori that share elements with accounts by Garou in other areas — apparently, each of these fomori are members of a “breed.”

Gorehounds

Zoë's story about a Gorehound:

The Questing Pack was sent to Washington, D.C. to look for a Lunatic. We found the guy — a Theurge name of Austin (*Julia's note: Austin St. James recovered fully and is now serving with a pack in Maryland*). Anyway, he wasn't much of a problem — crawling with Pattern Spiders, but Steven took care of that okay. And then Lys tells me she smells taint from the apartment down the hall from Austin's. I told Steven and Corina to take Austin to the car while I checked it out with Lysistrata. As it happened, that wasn't a smart move.

We walked down to the door and Lysistrata's hackles went up. She said she smelled blood — and then I

Gorehounds

These deadly fomori are born from the Banes enclosed in some Slaughterhouse Video products. Each successive viewing grants the Bane the chance to possess the viewer (if more than one person is watching the video, the Bane chooses the most unstable target). Once possession is complete, the Bane almost immediately begins changing the target into a fomor.

Gorehounds behave much like slasher-movie killers; they rarely speak (although some in recent years have taken to making threatening phone calls), they stalk and isolate their victims and then dispatch them with whatever deadly weapons are handy (garden tools, fire axes, etc.). The Banes inside them don't leave much of their original personality or intelligence behind, and since the folks watching Slaughterhouse products are usually somewhat unstable anyway, many of them jump into their new lifestyle wholeheartedly. Consequently, Gorehounds tend to have very low Autonomy ratings — and little visible taint.

Powers: (Suggested) Berserker, Enhanced Attributes (Strength or Stamina), Regeneration

Taints: (Suggested) Derangement



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realized I smelled it, too. She opened the door and the stink of it hit us like a wave. The whole room was like a butcher shop — pools of blood on the floor, a dozen garbage cans with organs and body parts in them — whoever this sick fuck was, he was cutting people up and then *sorting* what was left.

Well, we walked in — carefully — and had time to notice that this guy had a video rack, completely filled, and every single movie on there was from Slaughterhouse. (*Julia's note: Slaughterhouse Video produces low budget slasher films, and has recently begun mass-producing "reality" videos of car wrecks, animal attacks, hostage situations and so forth, the more bloody the better.*) As we were looking around trying to get a grip on the place, Lys cries out in pain and falls over with a knife sticking out of her side. The guy just popped up out of nowhere, and he was carrying a fire ax completely soaked in blood.

We won the fight, obviously, but if Corina hadn't come back up to check on us, I'm not sure how it would have gone. As it was, that guy took more hits before dropping than some werewolves I've fought. And damn, could he dish it out! You see this scar?

Enticers

Steven's encounter with an Enticer:

I'm not exactly known to be the most focused werewolf in the world, I'll admit. I'm easily distracted by fluctuations in the spirit world and I get curious about things in this world. But I think *anyone* would've been distracted by what I saw.

This all happened not long after the New York thing. We were all pretty down — the Lunatic we'd been sent to bring in fought us tooth and nail and, in the end, we had to kill him. Scratch that, I had to kill him. First time I'd killed another Garou. So I was pretty shaken. Corina had lost an eye during the fight, so she wasn't doing too well, either. We didn't have any leads just then, so I jumped on a plane back to Seattle to visit my family.

I hopped a bus downtown and wound up in front of this convention center. I walked in just for the hell of it, and I see this big Siren Cosmetics exhibit — must've been a beautician's convention or a make-up artists' gig, I don't know. I turned around to leave — and there she was.

I can't even tell you what color hair she had. I don't know what she was wearing. I can't describe her face — because I know it so well, so perfectly, that if I tried to describe it would all come out wrong. She was walking in and caught my eye, and I fell in love. I honestly believed it, too. She was the one I'd been looking for, the perfect spiritual mate for me.

Instinct and intellect were both crying out at once, "She's the one." I started to follow her and she looked over her shoulder with this, "Well, come on," look.

I followed past the Siren booth and towards the back of the convention center, through a door marked "Private" and into a stock room. She sat down on a box and unbuttoned her blouse, and of course I was completely mesmerized. And then all of a sudden, Unicorn saved me.

There's a spirit that travels with me — the story I got was that when I was a kid, my mother had to give her life to save me from Black Spirals, and Unicorn acknowledged that sacrifice by sending a Unicorn-spirit to watch over me. Well, my little guardian angel was working overtime that day. He managed to bring down the Enticer's spell for just a split second — time enough for me to see her for what she was, and to notice the two thugs advancing on me from behind with silver knives.

I got out, of course, but to this day I'm floored by how strong and immediate an effect she had on me. I've since heard stories about Enticers, and a lot of times, Siren

Enticers

While Enticer fomori don't usually have much in the way of physical defense, they do have the dangerous ability to lure and incapacitate nearly anyone. Enticers are born from overexposure to Siren Cosmetics (more specifically, to the Banes contained therein). Siren sponsors contests and free trials of their tainted product, choosing targets and gifting them a year's supply of cosmetics. By the end of the year, the winner has become an Enticer, and is hopelessly addicted to the cosmetics.

Siren is happy to provide more, and even gives the Enticer a job — usually using her seductive powers to help the company (and its parent, Pentex) in hostile takeovers. Capable Enticers are even used to lure Garou into traps.

Sadly, not all Enticers are completely aware of what they are. They know that people of both genders are attracted to them, but many chalk that up to the amazing properties of the colognes and beauty creams from Siren Cosmetics. Some Enticers willingly serve Pentex (and the Wyrn) and wind up with low Autonomy ratings; others resist and accrue multiple taints such as Derangement, Addiction, and Mental Devolution (the Enticer gets stupider as her seductive powers get more potent).

Powers: (Required) Succubus' Veil; (Suggested) Enhanced Attribute (Appearance, Charisma), Fangs

Taints: (Required) Addiction (to Siren Cosmetics); (Suggested) Derangement (Delusions of Grandeur, Paranoia)

Cosmetics gets mentioned. I'm thinking about checking out one of their factories someday soon.

Brain Eaters

Corina's near-fatal encounter with a Brain Eater:

This happened to me just recently, after our Questing Pack had disbanded. I was tending to business — I'm a fashion designer — but I've got Monkeywrencher friends, and frankly, I owe them some favors. So in the course of my daily dealings, if I see something that they could use, I pass it on. This time, though, they came to me.

I got a request to check out a Magadon Pharmaceuticals warehouse. The Monkeywrenchers knew that Magadon was a threat, but they had some bad feelings about this place in particular. So I snuck in that night to look around.

It was a mistake. I should have gone in from the Umbra. The guards noticed me and didn't even yell for

Brain Eaters

Like Gorehounds and Enticers, Brain Eaters are manufactured exclusively by Pentex. Extremely rare, these fomori are the result of Banes merging with human beings that exhibit psychic powers. The Pentex division called Project Aeneid finds such people and then offers to help them hone their abilities. That much is true — but particularly promising (read: corruptible) candidates are introduced to special Banes, who can then change the psychic into a Brain Eater.

All Brain Eaters live up to their name in a literal sense; they are all addicted to human brains (this has earned them the nickname "Lectors" in Pentex circles). All possess the unique ability to absorb a target's intelligence with a mere touch. And worst of all, Brain Eaters retain their psychic powers, making them versatile and deadly foes.

However, Brain Eaters are extremely rare. Pentex does not like to give up promising psychics to Project Aeneid; fomori have short life expectancies, and not all candidates survive the process. When the company does successfully breed a Brain Eater, they will reserve it for specific missions and send along a First Team for backup.

Powers: (Required) Brain Eating; (Suggested) Mind Blast, Mind Rape, Nightmare Control

Taints: (Required) Addiction (human brains); (Suggested) Derangement

Special: All Brain Eaters retain whatever psychic powers they had before becoming fomori. Examples include telekinesis, telepathy, clairvoyance, and pyrokinesis (a complete list of such powers can be found in *Sorcerer Revised*).

me to freeze, they just opened fire. One of them was actually carrying a silver knife, can you believe it? They very nearly killed me — in fact all I remember about the fight is some gunfire, the knife, an explosion and then red rage.

After it was over, I came to and decided to limp the hell home. All of a sudden the silver knife, still in the hand of one of the dead guards, lifts off the ground and flies at me. I ducked, but not by much. I took the wolf form to be able to dodge more easily, and then I saw the man.

He looked maybe 25, tall, muscular — he looked like he'd just gotten back from boot camp, like he'd lost a lot of weight quickly. His head was shaved and he was wearing a gray jumpsuit with a logo I didn't recognize. I growled at him, trying to scare him off — I didn't know what he was and wasn't really up for another fight. He just stared at me, and then the pain started.

It felt like someone was stomping on my head. I actually rolled around on the ground for a few seconds, trying to get away from the pain, but it just got worse. I think I endured about 20 seconds before I passed out. My last thought was, "Well, I'm dead."

Only I woke up a few seconds later, and I saw him. He'd taken the knife and pried one of the guard's heads open and was sitting there, eating his brain. I didn't need to be told to get the hell out of there, just crept quietly into the shadows and lit out.

Hollow Men

Lysistrata's observation of a Hollow Man (with translation help from Steven):

Off in woods searching for sad-sister. Steven-smoke and Zoë-meat farther ahead making laughter-sounds, Corina-metal behind wearing wolf-skin, walking quietly.

Movement of prey off right. I follow, hungry, didn't eat human-food with the rest of the pack. Rabbit-hot-blood runs. I run after it. Pack sounds get faint, but I chase food.

Saw man by moonlight. Large. Smelled bad like fever-heat and rot. Wearing coat-covering. No face. Sounded-like paws on dried leaves. Rabbit ran and stopped to turn, but man grabbed it. Lifted rabbit up by ears. Rabbit-fear-urine. Man opened mouth. No teeth. No tongue. Swallowed rabbit. Throat swelled like snake.

Saw man's stomach move. Snakes inside. Saw legs move. Snakes under skin. Man made of snakes.

Ran back to pack but they found sad-sister and needed my help. We caught sad-sister and went to find snake-man-Wyrm, but he was gone. Hope never see him again.

Ferectoi

Raina Fader, a Corax, somehow got wind of this report and sent me this story about a Ferectoi:

Hollow Men

Hollow Men are fomori created when a Scavenger Bane merges with a human being. As described above, Scavenger Banes can be packs of any small animal, but the animals have to be small enough that several of them could fit inside a human body. For a Scavenger Bane to possess a person, the person's body must be hollowed out. This means that the Banes can possess decayed corpses, but they tend to prefer fresher hosts....

The pack of Banes swarms forth and fills the person's body, reanimating it and merging with it in the usual manner. The newly risen Hollow Man gains powers appropriate to the type of animals inhabiting it (see below for some ideas).

Hollow Men can have almost any Autonomy rating. Some sell their souls for more power, trying to remain as "human" as possible, and some retain their autonomy and develop taints. Most Hollow Men "leak" vermin, especially those inhabited by insects. Unlike other fomori, who might retain a scrap of humanity (at least at first), Hollow Men are devoted to the Wyrm from the time of their "rebirth". Hollow Men can prolong their lives by adding new animals to the "colony" inside them. No one knows exactly how long a Hollow Man could live — they obviously predate Pentex, so there could theoretically be centuries-old Hollow Men in existence.

Powers: (Required) All: Dispersion*, (Suggested) Regeneration; *Wasp colony:* Flight, Natural Weaponry (stinger), Poison; *Constrictor colony:* Enhanced Attribute (Strength), Pliant Bones; *Rat Colony:* Enhanced Attribute (Perception), Infectious Bite

Taints: (Suggested) Fading, Infested

To whom it may concern and all that: Hi. Name's Raina Fader, Private Eye. Mostly I deal with corporate espionage and other non-glamorous stuff, but occasionally I get the ever-loving shit scared out of me. Heard you were looking for stories about fomori, so here's mine.

I was working on a case a few years back in Boston. Basically, a company that'd I worked with before — doesn't matter which one, right? — that makes a point of making product without abusing the work force or cutting environmental corners was having trouble. Stuff falling off the back of the truck, right? So I decide to have a look. And sure enough, their night stock crew is dirty. Cracking open boxes, nicking product, selling it off, nasty stuff like that. I take some pics, turn them over to the company, they pay me, I should be done.

Except I've got this feeling in my gut that I'm not. I hate this feeling.



I go back the next night and watch. They've got a new night crew. Everything's going well. And then this dude shows up. Dark suit, slick hair, good looking, expensive shoes — and he just screams "Mafia." He tells them they'd better keep the same arrangement — pull some of the product for sale to the Family. They tell him to bugged off. What's he gonna do, shoot them all?

As it turned out, yes and no.

He asks them politely, and they still refuse. Now keep in mind, there are maybe ten guys here, and this one fella in a suit is trying to scare them. He hasn't pulled a gun or anything yet, and he looks like he weighs a buck-and-a-half soaking wet. So one of the stock guys shoved him, told him to get lost. And I guess that did it.

He reached forward so fast I thought he was going to slug the guy that pushed him, but the guy didn't react, so I thought he missed. Then the tough stock guy falls to the ground, and the puddle starts to ooze out under him. Mafia-guy has the man's *windpipe* in his hand. One of the other stock guys gets sick. A few more bolt. One of them draws a gun — the suit has time to register this and smiles, for God's sake — and the cowboy takes a shot.

Suit-guy doesn't even blink. Honest to God, didn't take a step back, say "ouch," nothing. Just takes two steps forward and grabs the guy's wrist, and twists his arm clean off. Then he proceeds to shoot everybody there — including the two guys who ran for cover, I found their bodies later — and burn the warehouse to the ground. I passed the word around to some feathered friends, and the word *Ferectoi* kept coming up. So there's the story.

You know the worst thing? The guy was just matter-of-fact about it. I've seen fomori before — even had the pleasure of killing one, once — and mostly they're sadistic fuckers. This guy didn't seem enthused or repulsed or happy about butchering those guys. It just seemed... *natural* to him. At the time, I thought, if the Mafia's employing people like that, I'm gonna go play basketball for a living. But I never saw the guy again.

Fighting Fomori

Zoe, as an Ahroun, has some insight to share about battling fomori:

If you get into a fight with a fomor, remember a couple of simple facts:

Fomori Are Diverse

You never know what they'll be able to do. They may look human, but that doesn't mean they're helpless, and some of them can pull tricks that you'd never have considered. Not all of them will fight you toe-to-toe — most won't, in fact. If you find one that stands up to you, it's either a diversion, a crazy/suicidal fomor, or a serious badass. Be prepared for any of those possibilities.

Ferectoi

Also called the “Larvae of the Wyrn”, Ferectoi are fomori from birth. They are conceived when a spirit called a Breeder Bane assaults a sleeping human and steals sperm or eggs, whichever is appropriate. The human remembers nothing of the experience but a dream of violation. Afterwards, the Breeder Bane impregnates itself and carries the nascent Ferectoi until it can be born, and then swaps the baby with a newborn, often the child of rich or important parents. The Ferectoi is therefore born to privilege, and grows up knowing every comfort.

The fomor might manifest its powers at any time, but it usually happens in self-defense. Afterwards, the Ferectoi practices, honing its unholy abilities and cementing its position in the world. Ferectoi have, in the past, grown up to be leaders of industry, artists, soldiers, and even figures in organized crime. They are probably the single most powerful breed of fomori in existence, and each one is unique.

Rumors occasionally surface of Ferectoi that attempt to break free of their dark urges and simply behave as human beings. However, no one seems to have actually met a “humane” Ferectoi, which leads most to believe that any Ferectoi acting humane is doing so with an agenda.

Powers: Any. Each Ferectoi is unique.

Taints: Any.

Special: Ferectoi have a *maximum* Autonomy score of 5. Each one has the Merit: Hidden Power.

Fomori Were Human... Once

That means they might try to appeal to your humanity. And that hurts, especially if you're homid. You know what it's like to become a monster. You remember what happened when you lost your normal life and got drafted into a war you didn't want. You can sympathize. Well, if you take that second to consider, that fomor might just pull a silver knife and cut your throat, or whip out some new power and kill you with it, or escape and return with back up. I know it may sound cruel, but even if the fomor wants to regain his humanity, as far as I know, there ain't a way to do it. You want to be humane? Kill the bastard quickly.

Fomori Are No Longer Human

They rape, they kill, they eat people, and so on. Black Spiral Dancers do the same sorts of things, yeah, but that's different — they *look* like monsters. Fomori don't always. You want to survive an encounter with fomori and not go crazy, go on instinct. Instinct — rage — will tell you to take them down fast and hard.

Conclusion

Each month sees new stories of fomori. At the Foundation, we get letters, email, spirits, stories from the Amazon, and so on about these creatures and their new mutations and powers. Some Garou regard them as weak, cannon fodder for the Wyrn's army. Some Garou know better — and hopefully, you're now among them.

— Julia Waterford, with help from Zoë McKenna, Steven Kensington, Corina Blaine, Lysistrata, and special thanks to Raina Fader

Storytelling Fomori

Fomori can be more than just easy-to-kill hoodlums to throw at the troupe's pack. They can set off the theme and mood of **Werewolf** nicely — if the Storyteller is willing to devote a bit of extra attention to them. One fomor may not be the most challenging opponent the pack has ever faced, but if the fomor is well thought-out and played convincingly, that fomor will make an adversary the pack will never forget.

Designing Fomori

The Storyteller should ask herself a few questions when using fomori as antagonists in **Werewolf**:

- Where did the fomor come from? Is the fomor a member of a breed? Most — but by no means all — breed fomori are created by covert subdivisions of Pentex, or emerge as byproducts of Pentex subsidiaries' more invasive products. Is the fomor a renegade, or does some branch of Pentex still control it? Is it loyal to Pentex or looking for a way out? If the fomor is not “Pentex issue,” then where did it come from? Certain secret societies create fomori; perhaps the one that the pack meets is only a new recruit and the real danger lies with the cult that spawned it. Other breed fomori, like Hollow Men and Ferectoi, have no true society, but are as dangerous singly as many other fomori are in groups.

The vast majority of fomori are unique, however — that is, they are the result of a particular Bane merging with a particular human and do not belong to a “breed.” If you decide to use a unique fomor as an opponent to the pack, decide on its history. How long has it been a fomor? How much of its humanity does it retain (and how much of its Autonomy)? What kind of Bane merged with it, and what were the circumstances of the merger? Does it have any idea what happened to it?

- Why would the fomor act in opposition to the pack? If the fomor is a Pentex creation, it might simply be under orders, but even that motive should be fleshed out a bit. How does the fomor feel about being sent to fight nearly unkillable monsters? Is it likely to bolt, or does it seethe with bloodlust? Perhaps it has

been brainwashed to believe that werewolves are atomic mutations or something similar (how's that for irony?) and considers destroying them to be a duty.

Fomori families and cults might run afoul of Garou when the Garou come sniffing around their territories for unrelated purposes. Do the fomori strike first, or lie low in hopes that the Garou will leave them alone? Maybe a cult decides to capture a werewolf to use as a sacrifice and begins hunting the pack. Perhaps a new fomor is trying to *start* a cult, and wishes to demonstrate his power by defeating a werewolf.

Unique fomori won't likely attack Garou for no good reason, unless they have extremely low Autonomy ratings. Perhaps a lone fomor discovers he needs a specific substance to live — human flesh or organs are good choices, but you can specify it even further. Maybe a fomor needs organs from the recently dead and, unwilling to kill, starts raiding morgues and haunting hospitals and nursing homes. A really vicious Bane might alter a fomor's body so that it can only live on wolf blood — but then grant it knowledge of where the nearest wolf pack is and the power to track them.

Whatever the motivation, the fomor and the Garou need a better reason to fight than "You, Gaian — me, Wyrnish." If the fomor has a plan or at least an agenda, the characters get the satisfaction of not just cutting down a random servant of the Wyrn, but of thwarting its plans.

- What resources does the fomor have? Of course this means figuring out what powers the fomor uses and how much Autonomy remains, but go beyond that. Does it have Allies or Contacts it can call? If it works for a branch of Pentex, it can bring a load of trouble down the on the characters' heads (whether it knows that or not is a different matter). Ferectoi, in addition to possessing great supernatural power, are often rich and influential. If the fomor belongs to or leads a cult, what can the cult accomplish?

Another, related consideration is this: How much does the fomor know about werewolves? Fomori are immune to the Delirium as a matter of course, but that doesn't mean they won't run screaming if they see a Crinos-form werewolf on a rampage. Again, Pentex fomori *might* be taught about the Garou — but it depends on the function Pentex has in mind for the fomor. Enticers, for example, are rarely told the truth about werewolves for fear it might throw off their powers (would you want to sexually attract a monster?).

Pentex Fomori

Julia, the narrator, recognizes that certain companies seem to deliberately produce fomori. What she doesn't know, just as most Garou don't, is that these companies all fall under the same banner — Pentex.

Most fomori are accidental pairings of Bane and human and therefore have no contact with Pentex at all, but nearly all deliberately created ones do. Pentex is responsible for the seductive Enticers and the horrifying Brain Eaters, as well as the Gorehounds (though the company does not control these maniacs). Other "pet breeds" from Pentex exist, but none of the processes for creating them are foolproof (or cheap). As a result, Pentex would rather recruit than create.

All big cities boast some presence from Pentex, be it an Endron refinery, an Avalon Toys outlet, or just a few O'Tolley's restaurants. If a fomor shows up, word sometimes gets back to the parent company (however, since few of the "ground level" employees know anything about Pentex or its agendas, this can take months unless someone gets a lucky break). The company may then send out a "retrieval team" to collect the fomor. For a new fomor, this can seem like a godsend.

While retrieval teams do include fomori, Pentex *never* sends obvious or frightening ones on such missions. The idea is to make the new fomor feel comfortable and cooperative, not scare the hell out of him. Pentex will extract the fomor from whatever trouble he might be in (which sometimes means providing legal assistance) and interviews him. If Pentex deems the fomor worthy of consideration, he is offered a job, a comfortable salary, and "all our efforts at curing you." As evidence, Pentex points to the fomori on the retrieval team — "They may not be completely cured yet," goes the pitch, "but at least they can function in everyday society."

Fomori who refuse are let go without incident (Pentex has full deniability here, of course, and whatever the fomor does, he'll end up doing the Wyrn's work anyway). Those that accept find that the Pentex lives up to their end of the bargain fully... except maybe the "cure" part. The company does generously provide medications, but all they do addict fomor, meaning that even if he gets fed up and wants to quit, he has to stick with Pentex — or go cold turkey.

A few very secretive sub-branches within Pentex actually manage to create fomori under laboratory conditions, however. In many cases, most of the scientists involved aren't even aware that they're infusing a twisted spirit into a human body (or even that spirits exist); they tend to delude themselves into believing that they're chemically creating "super-soldiers" or similar biological advancements through completely scientific processes. ("Radical, visionary processes on the bleeding edge of technology," that is.) The Banes ride in during the suffering generated by the "genetic alterations," "serum treatments," or whatnot, and are sometimes covertly summoned by ranking doctors who possess actual Wyrnish occult knowledge.

Pentex Fomori Traits

A fomor character employed by Pentex begins with 2 or 3 dots of Resources (depending on how useful the fomor is), 2 dots of Contacts (all Pentex fomori know someone within the company; which department or branch varies), and at least 1 dot of Equipment.

Playing Fomori

Running an all-fomor game often opens the door to a lot of gross-out humor and splatterpunk mayhem. Any Storyteller considering running such a game should consider his motives very carefully. Do you want to run a game about damnation and the struggle to maintain free will? Perhaps you should consider **Vampire** or **Demon: The Fallen** instead, as the final outcome isn't predetermined there. Is he really interested in running a violent, bloody, savage game where the characters are very much the underdogs? **Hunter: The Reckoning** or even a slightly modified **Werewolf** game (perhaps in which the players take on the roles of Kinfolk) might work better. Is dark humor the focus? **Paranoia** might be a better choice.

Caveats

The trouble with running a fomori game is that the characters are possessed by evil spirits. Banes aren't "misunderstood" or working under "their own perspective." They do what they do because causing pain and corruption is their nature. While it might be interesting to examine the process of slowly capitulating to the desires of those spirits, the best way to do it is probably to watch it happen from the outside.

However, if everyone in the troupe is in agreement on playing a fomori game, it can be done (and this book provides the rules to make the characters for it). All involved, however, *must* bear a few things in mind:

- **Maturity.** Fomori do bad things to people by their very natures. If you want to play one, it should be as a roleplaying challenge and not as therapy. If you look at it as therapy, perhaps some *real* psychiatric counseling is in order. **Werewolf** is just a game, and that fact needs to be kept in mind much more strongly when playing a fomor.
- **Sensitivity.** Some fomori are driven to murder, torture and rape by their Banes. That doesn't give the players (or the Storyteller) leave to make light of such topics, especially if there are players in the troupe who would be offended. The **Werewolf Storyteller's Handbook** gives some guidelines on handling sensitive issues. Make sure that everyone is comfortable with the in-game material that will be presented.
- **Cliché.** Some kinds of "fomori" games have been done to death, notably: "You're a First Team in the

Amazon and you've got to take out this pack of annoying Garou." If you're going to run a fomor game, try to do it with some originality (at least if your players are veteran **Werewolf** gamers; after all, everything's new to a newcomer). Maybe half of the characters are members of a cult and the other half are potential recruits. Perhaps the characters comprise a retrieval team and are being sent after a new fomor (who could also be portrayed by a player). Or, what if all but one of the characters are normal human beings, with one fomor in the mix? What might a slumber party be like in that company?

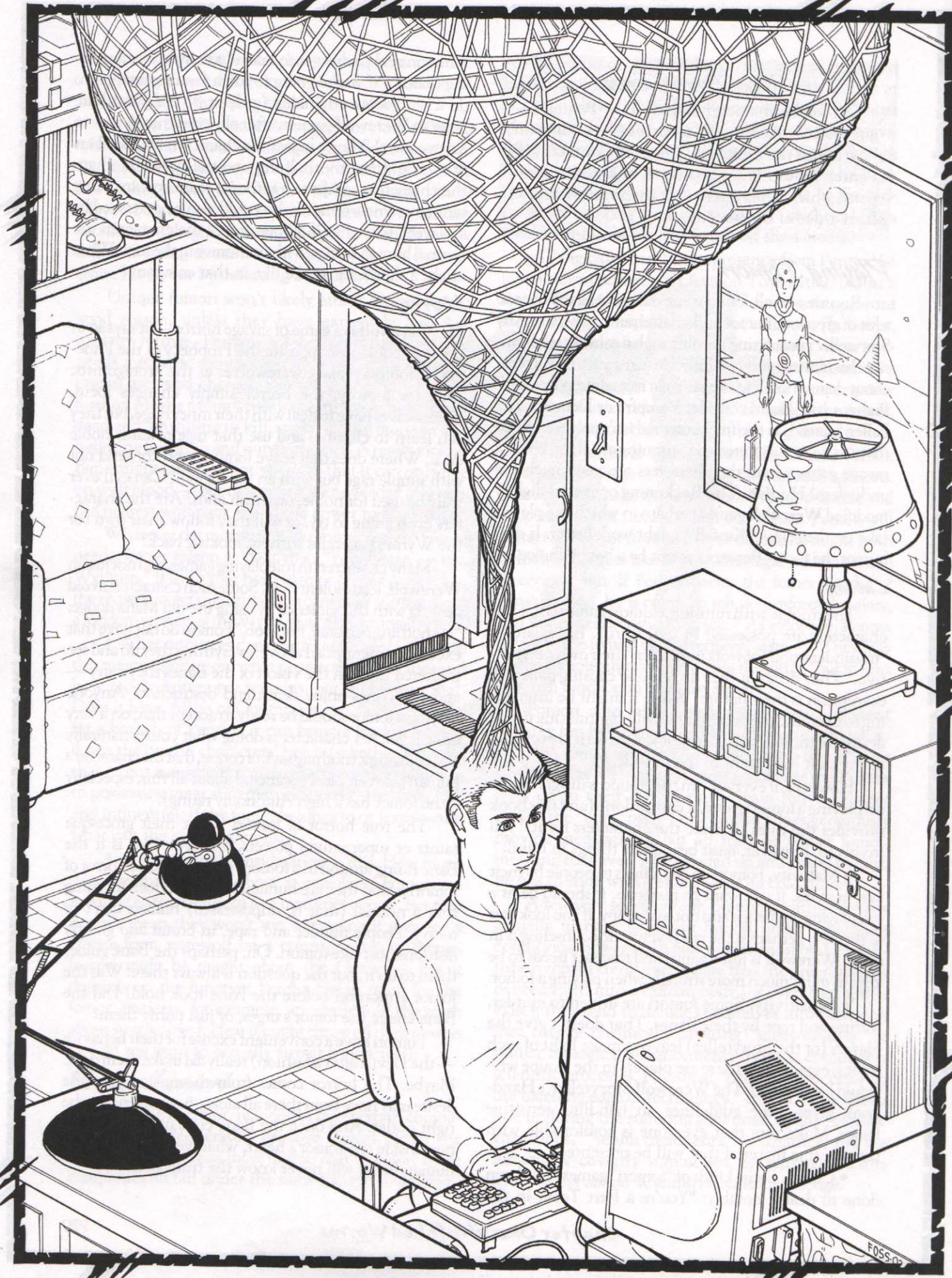
Horror

Werewolf is a game of savage horror — it says so in the core book, just opposite the Prophecy of the Phoenix. If fomori replace werewolves as the protagonists, even for a story, the horror simply changes focus. Werewolves have to deal with their inner Rage, but they can learn to channel and use that rage towards noble ends. Where does that leave fomori, who contend not with simple rage but with an innate evil? Can evil ever truly be used for noble, unselfish ends? Are the characters even going to try, or will they follow their own (or the Wyrms') agendas without looking back?

Many characters in roleplaying games, and not just in **Werewolf**, lead violent lives. Some such characters avoid dealing with this violence by using the old Mafia dodge: "It's nothing personal, just a job." Fomori do not have that excuse. As mentioned above, everything they do and see is filtered through the vision of the Banes they carry — and the Banes enjoy death and destruction. Anyone playing a fomor should be ready to accept that, on a very basic level, her character is doing what comes naturally and enjoying it (nothingsays, of course, that the character's human side can't feel conflicted about all this, especially if the fomor has a high Autonomy rating).

The true horror of fomori is not their grotesque taints or supernatural powers, however. Nor is it the Bane riding around in a fomor's skull. The true horror of fomori is that they are human. No fomor does anything that a normal (that is, unpossessed) human can't or hasn't. People murder and rape, in brutal and ghastly fashions, just like fomori. Oh, perhaps the Bane guides them to do it, but the question is always there: Was the fomor a monster before the Bane took hold? Did the Bane create the fomor's urges, or just purify them?

Fomori have a convenient excuse for their behavior — the Devil (after a fashion) really *did* make them do it. Maybe. The horror comes from the notion that the desire may have been there all along, just waiting for the right outlet. And once the Bane curls up and makes a nest inside the fomor's heart, whatever remains of the human being will never know the truth of it.



Chapter Two: Perfection

"Yes, to unbend the wild curve, to straighten it tangentially, asymptotically, to flatten it to an undeviating line. Because the line of OneState is a straight line. The great divine, precise, wise straight line — the wisest of all lines."

— We, Yevgeny Zamyatin

On the Edge of the Hive

```
[[Accessing GWNt...]]
[[Gnostomagnetic drivers enabled...]]
[[Running Counter-Theurgy 8.1...]]
[[Umbravirus scans completed. No foreign
agents detected.]]
[[Password?]]
[.....]
[[Welcome!]]
[[You have 1 message.]]
```

From: Kennedy Fair-Optic

Pardon the mass emailing in advance. I realize it's bad manners, but it was recently pointed out that this little report I'd been putting together was something better addressed to the tribal Theurge community at large rather than just my own sept officials. I apologize to those elders reading if I've overstepped my bounds; I gladly welcome any rebuke I may deserve.

But to the point: For the last several years I've been pursuing a side project in addition to my usual wartime duties. To wit, I've been logging and compiling reports of terrestrial Weaver-activity. Not Umbral, not Penumbra, and not mortal actions that promote the Weaver's genuine cause (who would have time for that?) — but genuine manifestations of Weaver spirit-energy on the physical world. As a result, I've seen things that positively startled me, things that I'm still trying to work out. I've also cataloged a small list of incidences that my confidant Kleon Winston, Athro, is encouraging me to bring before Jonas Albrecht of the Silver Fangs as evidence that the Weaver does not deserve to be treated as quite the enemy that the other tribes have branded her. I won't bore you with the details yet. But this activity has also put me in a remarkable position to observe the activities of the Weaver's own "shock troops" — yes, the Drones.

I imagine we're all familiar with the term. However, some of you may want to show this report to packmates, or even to Theurges of other tribes; I trust your judgement. So let me recap for those new to the study of Weaver-spirit lore.

Conventional wisdom basically states that Weaver-spirits just don't go in for possession; it smacks too much of autonomous action and personal agenda. From the time the first Garou ran his claws over rocks to try and capture the sense of the Weaver's webs in a story-glyph to the modern day, there hasn't been one reliable story of a Weaver-spirit possessing a host. There are no "Weaver-fomori" and never have been; that's how the story goes.

This story is true only up until a point, though. No Weaver-spirits have ever possessed a human or animal host of their own accord, that much is true. But there are such things as "Weaver-fomori," if you define such a creature as a fusion of mortal host and spirit empowerment. They are created, not by a single spirit, but by a process of rebuilding that roughly translates as "Clarification." The result is something like a fomori, but more tightly woven — walking in the human world, imbued with spirit power, and its ears filled with the OneSong.

The Drones are a wildcard, if I can use the term about anything affiliated with the Weaver. They aren't allies of the tribe. They don't act like the various Weaver-spiders. They sure aren't human any more. They're damn difficult to understand even for us. But I feel we need to figure them out. They might make allies when we most need them — they might be soldiers on the opposite side. And maybe our actions can guide some of them, or even the whole process, one way or the other.

Yeah, I know. I'm the picture of vain optimism.

Tools of the Designer

It shouldn't be much of a surprise that the other tribes have damn little by way of a compiled body of lore on the Drones. They're so damn rare and unassuming that most Garou can't really tell them apart from ordinary humans without getting very lucky. They move through human society like an invisible ant colony, doing the work of their mother with such deliberate efficiency that it frightens even me. Now, I've heard about the gorgons, and no Theurge of my rank doesn't know about the Kami, and these guys are both pretty subtle. They both have the ability to blend in and even manifest as natural surroundings, which makes them seriously difficult to detect. But they have nothing on Drones. The Drone's ability to seamlessly integrate with the sea of humanity causes no end of headaches where detection and observation are con-

cerned. A Drone in a crowd is the proverbial needle in the haystack, even to the eye of the most astute Theurge. And you can imagine the difficulties that any non-"Urrah" would have!

[My humblest apologies to any member of our sibling tribes who is reading these words and taking offense. I exaggerate for effect, honestly.]

But rare or no, unassuming or no, don't be fooled into thinking that these creatures lack the numbers and power to pose a genuine threat. They are dangerous because they possess potent abilities, and a surety of purpose that transcends that of even the most dedicated Philodox. I would personally equate it with fanaticism, because I believe that Drones are not wholly bereft of free will — but that they are so dedicated to bringing about the vision of absolute order to the Earth that ordinary devotion just isn't a strong enough concept.

I have to be up front about this: This document is not what I would consider complete. That is, it contains what I consider the best, most accurate information about the origin, tasks and general abilities of the Drones gathered over a period of years of observation and collaboration, but it isn't perfect. In a few cases, all I have to offer is speculation. I live in fear that some information included here is inaccurate enough to lead a reader into making a fatal mistake — but in spite of that, here I am disseminating my findings. I realize that documents like this are a potential security breach waiting to happen (and I ask that this particular document, like most other GWnet communiqués, not be distributed or copied save to the most secure fetish computers). Even so, I'm of the opinion that oral lore is no longer good enough. I only wish that more of our people were willing to more carefully compile information on our *real* enemies, so that we could all share the vital facts that otherwise get lost when Galliards don't meet often enough.

For those readers who take umbrage at my clearly "Urrah" sentiments, you can ritually lynch me later. I only ask that you read this document first, so that you have the information and can spread it in a more time-honored fashion as you see fit.

Too, Too Solid Flesh

The simplest definition of a Drone, as it applies to those mortals who have become one with the Designer, is "any sentient creature that has visited or been brought into the Pattern Web itself and become bodily infused with a Weaver-spirit, thereby becoming a hybrid of flesh and spirit." Typically, a would-be Drone

is drawn into service of the Weaver by coming into contact with the OneSong, and being enraptured by it.

For those not familiar with the OneSong, it can best be described as a transcendent language likened to music; it flows like music, without words but with a definite cadence. The OneSong is known and used in at least a rudimentary form by all the Designer's children. Almost every Glass Walker Theurge (such as myself) hears it at one point, and... It's hard to describe. Beautiful without any real beauty, rhythmic and seductive without being warm or inviting. It can embed itself in your psyche the way that the most cunning commercial jingles or pop song snippets do, haunting you. I think we would be much more susceptible to it if it weren't for our Rage — the pulse-beat of Luna's divine anger breaks the rhythm, disrupts the harmony. I've heard stories about Glass Walkers who succumbed to the OneSong, and I have to assume that their Rage was at a low ebb at the time... but that's too much digression.

So. We have a person, who somehow comes into contact with the OneSong. From my own experiences, I can say that this seems the most possible when the person is in a near-meditative state of mind, but one brought on by pure logic, reason, mathematics. I would in fact argue that each instance is a case of succumbing to a state of "Weaver-mind" so completely that the person manages to reach the Periphery. But because this kind of thought process disengages emotion rather than accepting it, the person isn't subject to the usual changes of awareness that the Periphery brings. Instead of finding his artistic muse or spiritual inspiration (or, for that matter, opening himself to the Wurm's spiritual aspects), he is in tune with the Weaver's rhythm — and thus he can hear the OneSong. And it is a promise of perfection, of flawless unity with something greater and purer, unstained by disorder — so he strains to hear more.

What happens next, I'm afraid, is anyone's guess. Somehow the Drone-to-be crosses the Gauntlet into the hands of the Weaver-spirits that remake him; I've never heard of an actual case of Clarification happening in the physical world, guided by materialized Weaver-spirits. I've heard rumors of this sort of thing, mind; but until I actually get my hands on nothing less than a first-hand account of these mythical cocoons spun in sub-basements or server rooms, I'm going to assume it doesn't happen. For now.

Once the subject is in her hands, the Designer's spirits cleanse away (or "process," if you will) what they perceive as "impurities" in the host body, and add a measure of "purpose" (which is, of course, a guiding spirit portion). The term that the spirits use for this is best translated as "Clarification." By their logic, the subject becomes a more distilled, purer version of what

he was meant to be all along. Think of it in terms of the scientific process of proving a theory — uncertainties and errors are ironed out, until there's one true law left. That law was true all along, and I imagine that the assumption is that the Drone was the human's true form all along. It just required Clarification to bring it out.

This is, by the way, one hell of a can of worms; it blurs the distinction between scientific process and outright abuse of the power to Name. But I'll leave that for another time, because I don't consider myself worthy to argue with the wisest over just how "wrong" the process of Clarification may be.

Once the process is complete (in about a week or so, I believe), the subject is a new paragon of what he "should be." Better, faster, stronger — if you'll pardon the reference. Although the resultant entity is outwardly the same as before it entered the Weaver's domain in the Umbra, it has grown into a more "idealized" version of itself.

The problem is, this image of the ideal human isn't really human any more; and by the most commonly accepted scientific standard (imperfect though it may be), it might not even really qualify as alive.

Physical Perfection

The basic dichotomy of the Drone is that it has been thoroughly physically altered, and yet not one Drone looks outwardly even the least little bit different from any other human. There aren't even any "deformities" that could be covered by clothing — no hidden mouths, extra limbs, patches of strange skin or conjoined twins like some fomori boast.

This is, of course, highly important to the function of the Drone. It is imperative to the Drone's work that the host body remains intact and appears largely the same as it was before Clarification. If it looked different, it would cause disruption, disorder, all those things that Weaver-spirits are famously intolerant of (with the exception of the more creative spirits of progress and advancement, who at least understand that progress by its very nature can't happen seamlessly). Is it any wonder many septs don't even really believe that the Drones exist?

Of course, the process isn't exactly perfect. Or rather, it is, and that's the problem — the little imperfections of nature are removed. You can find some physical evidence of the Clarification if you know what to look for. For instance, the epidermis has its blemishes smoothed over — a particularly large scar might remain, but it's been faded somewhat. Small scars, like acne scars, vanish. Birthmarks might go away. I would presume that tattoos go away too, but to be honest, I haven't observed a single Drone who

would have had the mindset to get one. Of course, times are changing, and I wouldn't be surprised to see the archetypal college student with the tiny tattoo as her sign of "rebellion" go Drone after too much time spent in administrative duties. She'd probably be just as useful, if not more so, than the weedy Herbert Kornfeld pencil-pusher in Accounting.

Another larger sign is that the body is basically maximized to its utmost potential. Diseases just don't seem to work in a Drone body; Clarification probably removes even genetic disorders like anemia, and harmful bacteria can't take root. The senses become sharper, too. The common "dead giveaway" for a Drone, for example, is any person who suddenly feels comfortable eschewing the prescription glasses he or she has been known to wear for years.

The Drone's regenerative processes (which are common to all Drones; I'll get to this in a bit) also have an effect on the body. When a Drone regenerates damage, it doesn't heal its body back to the way it should be — it heals it back to the way it was. As in, the way it was at the time of Clarification. Everything about a Drone seems to be geared to preserving that pristine state. Their hair doesn't grow any more. They don't scar, ever. I imagine they don't age, either (not that I've spent enough time studying them to say for sure). If it weren't for the fact that they can walk around in the sun whenever they like, and that they don't have Wurm-smell to them, I'd say we were looking at the original version of those goddamn vampires.

Finally, "needless" physiological processes seem to be eliminated. If you'll pardon my crudity, I spent a sleepless weekend following a Drone last year, and although I had to make a few pit stops, the Drone didn't go to the bathroom once. I imagine their metabolism has been perfected so that every scrap of food or drink they ingest gets used. Drones also seem to have zero sex drive, even for a human; and female Drones don't menstruate. Both factors are almost certainly related to the fact that they're sterile; incapable of creating new life, something of a side effect of too much Weaver in their bodies.

Yes, I can say with certainty that they're sterile. Please don't ask me how I managed to get that information.

Mental Uniformity

Setting aside these physical changes, it might be accurate to say that the greatest alteration to the host's make-up lies in the changes wrought in his personality. This is perhaps the Drones' greatest exploitable weakness, for one. From what we've seen, the "one mind" of the Weaver doesn't seem to fully subsume the Drone's

old mind — after all, the Drone needs some degree of autonomy in order for it to accomplish its goals without requiring constant guidance or support.

Rather, the new composite mind (and the juxtaposition that ensues) begins to manifest itself in the Drone's behavior. Every Drone I've observed shares a single-minded obsession about order and symmetry. They arrange their environments into more ordered patterns, and adhere to obscure and often rigorously demanding routines. I've noted a couple of cases in which the host, pre-Clarification, was already prone to this sort of thing: diagnosed with OCD (Obsessive Compulsive Disorder) or autism, most notably. This may be one of the things that sets a potential host on the path to being marked for Clarification. Their brains are already in the right frame to accept the alien logic of a Weaver-spirit, and a number of them may well already be in tune with the OneSong before they're ever carried across the Gauntlet. Perhaps some possess a form of altered perception that grants them the ability to hear on wavelengths largely inaccessible to others.

Needless to say, Drones become some of the most organized people on Earth. They aren't comfortable outside a controlled situation, but as long as they have confidence that things are well in hand, they're remarkably efficient. If it weren't for the fact that they aren't dynamic and not really given to bettering their own state of affairs, they might even be considered paragons of society, at least where humans are concerned. I can certainly think of some people who'd love it if more people were punctual to precision, faultlessly observant of the law and completely efficient at their day jobs.

Another trait shared by all those that give themselves over to the Weaver involves access to the communal realm of Weaver-thought, sort of a "hive-mind," as some like to call it. As you may be aware, this is a collective thought stream shared by all Weaver-spirits and most of her servants. This isn't a perpetual buzz of telepathic conversation, mind; more of an innate connection to an efficient communications network. Any creature with a link to the hive-mind may, at any time, "hook in" and relay an emergency message to all those likewise linked. The urgency of this distress call is heard strongest by those nearby (and probably won't be heard outside a certain distance), but any actual response is of course dependent upon who is listening and what their current duties may involve.

Unfortunately, a Drone's link to this hive-mind also means that his "superiors" have what amounts to unrestricted access to his thoughts at any time, day or night. From what I've gathered, this access has to be exercised — the spirit overseeing a Drone's activities

reads the Drone's thoughts only when it actively opts to do so — but cannot be avoided. Moreover, any Weaver Incarna can, if it so desires, override a Drone's nervous system and take direct control of his actions like a puppeteer, typically in order to complete a specific task or set of tasks. It's a rare occurrence, one that I've only heard about through spirit conversation and never observed.

There's theoretically a way out of this, mind. Sometimes the personality of the host exerts itself, I believe whenever important memories are at stake. In an effort to remember things that were important at one time, the Drone winds up trying to remember the emotions attached to those things, and therefore scrabbles for a bit of individuality. I don't know how long a Drone might be able to hold off its Weaver-impulses and take independent action (before, of course, a superior noticed and set it straight), but I have to assume that it would do little good. Clarification isn't like possession; an exorcism won't remove the spirit. I think the only way for a Drone to be split into flesh and spirit is to die — not good news.

Now, I'm far from phobic as far as the Weaver and her spirits are concerned. There's nothing wrong with the way that Weaver-spirits reason, despite the misgivings of our peers. They're basically like any other spirit in that they're the ultimate expression of their archetype, and most of them just happen to be task-related rather than based on emotions, living species or what have you. I don't think like a Weaver-spirit, but I can understand one on the most basic level, and I can negotiate with it without too much trouble.

That said, the Drone "personality template" scares me shitless.

See, the thing about Weaver-spirits is that they're designed to fill their role and fulfill their tasks, and not much else. They aren't designed to interact with the physical world, except from the perspective of influencing it by spinning their webs in the Umbra. They are wonderfully designed for their jobs, but that makes the way they think (if I can even use that word accurately for a Gaffling) completely unlike the way that human beings think. They have no instinct, no emotion, none of the basic programming that makes a living creature not just an inhabitant of the world around it, but part of it. When you implant something like that in a human being.... It's not designed to run a human body, not really. It's not designed to be a member of society. "Humanity" is an alien concept to it, viewed analytically through a thick glass lens.

It frightens me that the Weaver would resort to changing humans into Drones. I realize that the human experience is farther beneath her than the para-

mecium experience is beneath us, but each Drone is an example of everything we love and value about humanity processed into something wholly different. I wish there were a way to get her to see that she doesn't need to do this, that the world will run fine without this kind of meddling.

But I guess that's what we needed the Wyrn for way back when.

Upgrades

As disturbing as some of these changes may be to us, they're just cosmetic compared to the actual power instilled in a Drone. Sure, the Weaver may prefer people who act and think like Drones do, but her subordinates wouldn't go to all the trouble of Clarifying people if they didn't have more specific tasks to fulfill. And to fulfill those tasks, the Drone receives some pretty significant power.

I'd already mentioned that all Drones don't scar, don't have to take unnecessary bathroom breaks, and that they probably don't age. These are nice advantages — well, except for the lack of scarring, which would pretty much leave a lot of Fenrir without much to talk about at their moots. But they're all really just side effects of the Drones' most potent and universal power, a kind of self-repair that rivals even our own healing ability (and surpasses it in some ways). The Weaver-spirit woven within repairs damage of all kinds to its host, pretty much from the moment it is inflicted. Even wounds that give us bad trouble like burns, acid and the teeth and claws of our own kind will be healed eventually (and of course, Drones have no trouble with silver whatsoever). Given a day or three, most Drones can and do completely revert to their "true" idealized forms. From what I've observed, this is *the* innate by-product of having been Clarified, and is a trait held in common by all Drones.

Drones can also use the "hive mind" to good effect. Although it's fairly rare to have more than one Drone in an area at once, if they're there, they can communicate with one another fairly efficiently if the need arises. I imagine they'd be able to pull off some damn effective pack tactics if they had to.

Individual powers are a little harder to catalog, and I imagine anyone who's spent lots of time fighting fomori can empathize. I've seen instances of Drones controlling computers with a touch, discharging electricity, raising the local Gauntlet for a short time, and demonstrating superhuman strength, agility, and even intellect. Regrettably, a Drone's individual abilities don't mark his physical host the way that a fomor's might, so it's damn difficult to determine which are the gifts a Drone has received toward accomplishing his

particular tasks, and which are common to all his kind. Apologies, but I have no particularly useful blanket statements here other than “expect almost anything.”

Irretrievable Data?

The big question on some of your minds must surely be: Can the process be reversed? Unfortunately, I haven't seen any evidence to suggest that it can.

The Story of John Doe

Cut-and-pasted from the logs of Frances Raye Automancer:

Some months ago, a solitary individual — we'll call him “John Doe” — was caught breaking into a laboratory-office in Atlanta; fetish research stuff, for the most part. At first, the guy appeared to be lost, claiming that he had stumbled into the lab by accident while searching for a web of offices (sic) nearby. Upon closer scrutiny, however, the Master of the Rite present noticed that the man bore some unusual characteristics, and upon further more mystical scrutiny, smelled very strongly of the Weaver. After some discussion, it was ultimately decided that John was indeed possessed by a Weaver-spirit, and that we had rather accidentally caught ourselves a Drone.

John was taken to the deep secure area where we keep research labs for visiting personnel, and we settled into interrogation. Under initial questioning, he proved a tough nut to crack. He said little, answering only those specific questions that seemed to be on some internal, pre-approved list. One of us ran a background check on him, and the results came back indicating that he did indeed have a family once — located right here in Atlanta. A phone call revealed that John had gone missing some years before, and that the family had all but given up hope. After making some preparations, we sat on this information for some time, realizing the trump card for what it was, and decided to slowly work toward the best time at which to play it.

We made John believe that we were convinced of his “innocence” and, accompanied with profuse apologies, offered to bring him into another part of the building for a debriefing before his release. This section of the building, by the way, is a particularly valuable piece of research we're working on, something the residents like to call “The Garden.” Even we Glass Walkers need a place to break from the Weaver's energies now and again, and the Garden is the place of residence of no few powerful Gaian spirits, invited to invest a portion of themselves into the Garden's very layout and construction. As a result, the very air is thick with life, energy, and most of all, with *change*.

The fact that Clarification isn't possession is at its most frustrating here. Drones are a true synthesis, a merging between Weaver-spirit and host that alters the subject on a deep, virtually cellular level. As previously noted, this happens completely in the Umbra, usually in a Web or similar strongpoint of Weaver activity. When the Drone returns, he's more fundamentally changed than any fomor. Removing

We sat John down and spoke in calm and soothing tones of his life and of his work. We reminded him of that which he left behind — of the life he could have had, had he not given himself over to the Weaver in ways humans weren't meant to do. (Not that we were using these terms, precisely. What are we, idiots?) Something began to stir behind John's eyes, and he grew at once both startled and confused by his surroundings. Recognizing the time was at hand, we decided to play our desperate trump card: His daughter “Jane” was brought in and led across the Garden to her father. At seeing her for the first time in years, John burst into tears, hugging his daughter with all the strength of his perfect, idealized arms.

Not long thereafter, he broke down and told us everything. He told us of the OneSong, and how it had called to him one night; he told us of his being drawn into the Pattern Web and given the Clarification process. (Regrettably, he remembered little of the process itself.) He also waxed fairly poetic on how he felt like a part of a truly greater whole for the first time upon his emergence — his “rebirth,” as he called it.

Sadly, John didn't survive to enjoy the rediscovery of his potential. As he spoke, his tone grew anxious, his words rushed. He seemed to be struggling against time to give us all the data he could about his life as a Drone. His face began to redden, and as he reached the “climax” of his recollection, his throat seized up, his eyes rolling into the back of his head. His mouth turned upward and sweat streamed down his face, before his body gave in on itself and he slumped to the floor, twitching.

Of all the shocking revelations of that day, the worst was my recollection that John had asked that we remove his daughter from the Garden before he would speak. Though I have no empirical proof to support the claim, I believe that John knew the price he would pay for betraying the Designer. Somehow he *knew*. And even more amazingly, had decided that he no longer cared.

Permission granted to forward this to all interested parties. Hope it helps.

the Weaver-stuff from his body wouldn't be like removing a cybernetic implant — it'd be like trying to leech all the amino acids out of his body without disturbing anything else. If such a thing isn't impossible, it's near enough to make little difference.

Although all this would point us to the seemingly undeniable conclusion that all Drones are irretrievably lost to the Weaver, I still have some instinct that tells me that Clarification can be undone or revoked. The human spirit isn't as easy to conquer completely as some of our more fatalistic brethren from other tribes might believe. From an anecdote I've heard, a Drone can actually decide to tear himself bodily away from the OneSong — although such a decision isn't only difficult, it can lead to being outright terminal.

The Spirit Element

It's an old saw among Theurges: "Understand the spirit, understand the fomor." If you know that a spirit of greed and gluttony possesses a host, you know you can count on the fomor's hunger being a weakness you can exploit. Unfortunately, that pearl of wisdom means crap-all when you're talking about Drones. Weaver-spirits have less individual personality than Banes do; they don't personify any particular emotional state or life experience.

It seems pretty logical that most Drones are created by the integration of a Gaffling-level Weaver-spirit. The human is already supplying the useful elements of autonomous behavior and creative thought processes, so a spirit capable of such isn't really necessary. The spirit needn't be particularly powerful in its own right, either; it isn't actively lending its potency to the host. A fomor can draw on a portion of its resident spirit's destructive fury, but the entirety of a Drone's spirit half is woven throughout its physical form. Binding a more powerful spirit into a Drone is usually an exercise in redundancy — most inefficient.

Note that I said "usually." Some Drones are fabricated for more difficult tasks than others. You can indeed run into a Drone that's beefier than his brethren because he's got a Jagglng inside him. I've encountered exactly one that I'd guess was a result of such tinkering. I would personally have placed him as roughly triply as dangerous and effective than a more rank-and-file Drone.

Now, because every Drone is linked into direct communication with the Weaver spirit hierarchy, that means you have to take into account the motivations of not only the Drone, but all his superiors. From my previous experiences with Weaver-spirits, I can comfortably say that they don't go in for micromanagement all that much. You can worry about a direct superior

overriding a Drone's mind and controlling his actions, but it's much less likely that one of the Weaver Incarnae like the Machine is going to take a personal hand in things. But it *could* happen.

What this means on a practical level is that the average Drone is, weirdly enough, not nearly as predictable as you might think. Yes, they like patterns and order to their lives and operations. But they can switch between almost total host autonomy to the unfathomable thought processes of an Incarna in picoseconds. It might never happen to a particular Drone. It might happen all the time. So I would advise my esteemed readers to spend some more time observing the various spirits of the Weaver if they plan to study or deal with Drones. If you really want to know how an alternator works, you'd better know the principles of the whole combustion engine.

Hosts

And to whom does the Designer issue its seductive message, the call of the OneSong? What sort of predisposition does it take to mark oneself as a potential Drone? Well, I don't believe any one character trait is the key. Verisimilitude is the key to a well-rounded unit, right? But there are patterns. Wherever the Weaver is involved, there are always patterns.

First and foremost, the Weaver loves humanity. She's had a long-standing connection with Man ever since he first stood upright, and the gifts she bestowed upon him — Dogma, Science and Technology — have helped guide him from the darkness of savagery and into the light of modern day. No other animal can make such use of her gifts, and so the Weaver prefers humans to all others. This is true of Drones as well; there's never been record of an animal undergoing Clarification, and I'd wager there never will be. In this day and age, most humans are already more than a few steps towards the OneSong to begin with. With their high-speed internet access, digital bit technology, and genetic researching, humanity at large has committed to striding headlong into the Information Age — the Age of the Weaver, according to some. (Some who don't particularly get that such an age would be pretty frickin' short, considering we're a few breaths from the End. But whatever.)

It's a fine line, mind. For the very reason that humans are preferable — because of their advanced intellect and predilection towards tool use, scientific thought and technology — they also have to be watched very carefully. The Wyld is specifically attracted to lower life forms like plants and animals, because it has no need of particularly "advanced" thought in its servitors; the Weaver likely can't use them at all. The

Designer needs evolutionarily advanced entities capable of advanced manipulations and deductions, and more importantly, it requires *sentience*. Of course, what the Weaver requires of a sentient being isn't always what a sentient being requires of himself; a dichotomy which results in a constant and tenuous balance in the overall state of Weaver/Drone affairs.

The ideal human host is likely someone who is already inclined to desire order and harmony over chaos and individualism, and who gets that fateful exposure to the OneSong. Sure, this can mean authority figures like police or politicians, but the very nature of their jobs exposes them to a lot of different stimuli. It takes a particularly single-minded cop to pursue order above all other goals, or one that doesn't really interact with people all that much. Some scientists work much better, particularly if they're far more into the Naming aspect of science than the exploration aspect. Some religious zealots are also quite suitable, although quiet pressure to conform is more the Weaver's way than fire-and-brimstone hell-raising fundamentalism. (I classify the more extreme atheists as "religious zealots"; talk to one of the ones who's deeply offended by the idea of other people believing in a higher power sometime and see for yourself.) A job that allows access to plenty of technology is good, and one that requires time spent around communications technology is all but ideal. I've heard the OneSong faintly when spending time in a server room; imagine someone who has to work there.

Supernatural Hosts

From everything I've said, it would seem that humans and only humans are suitable for Clarification. Not quite. There are, after all, a few more life forms (and unlife forms) on the planet that happen to be sentient and capable of getting the most out of technology.

Yes, we're one of them.

This is where my information gets highly theoretical. I've only encountered one supernatural Drone, and heard of three more; all were shapeshifters. I would wager it's our ability to travel the spirit world that puts us at risk; we can go places where the OneSong is louder than front-row seats at a concert, where you can barely move because the air is thick with the *potential* for stasis. If one of us with enough sympathy for the Weaver and her current unenviable state, or enough belief in the importance of her goals, happens to go to the wrong place, it could happen to us. Clarification would probably be more invasive, as a lot of the spirit matter in us would have to be removed to make room for the implanted material—but it can happen. (This is, by the way, an incredibly bad thing. The once-Garou Drone I encountered was incapable of

shapeshifting, and had lost almost all of her connection to Gaia Herself. More on this later, but trust me: It made me actually wonder if becoming a Drone wasn't as bad as becoming a fomor.)

A theory posed by one of my colleagues, the inestimable Fury Theurge Marja the White:

"Like her Triatic brethren, the Weaver grows fat on the promulgation of the very ideas over which it holds dominion — order, symmetry, technology — and it has an unerring sense of itself.

"When a Garou, for example, makes enough Weaverish waves in the ocean of Weaverspace, the Designer herself seems to take notice. She then 'tags' that supernatural, watching for further signs of the creature's commitment to her ideological portfolio. I believe that such individuals are given Tracers, minor Weaver spirits that attach themselves to a given creature from the Umbra, thereby allowing the Weaver to monitor that creature across all space, time and distance. Such a notion is purely conjecture, of course, but seems a likely explanation for the Weaver's dogged determination where potential Drone candidates are concerned.

"Once the candidate has reached a certain level of Weaver affiliation (or perhaps dependency), the Designer makes her move. As with other Drones, she gently nudges the supernatural in the right direction, preferring the voluntary subjugation of free will to anything so brutish as coercion. Once the call of the OneSong has been heard and followed, it is simply a matter of leading the entranced being to the right Umbral door. From there, we can only suppose, but it is safe to assume that a standard Clarification process is then employed (perhaps with a few modifications), bonding the Awakened being to the Weaver and thereby creating a new Drone of a hyper-powerful sort."

I'm not sure how much I agree with her, but the theories are sound. I'm not sure how supernatural entities such as vampires who are incapable of Umbral travel would follow the same pattern, but if a human can attract the Weaver's attention, why not one of those unaging, inflexible fucktards?

Sample Drones

The worst difficulty we have with studying, identifying and dealing with Drones is that they're awfully difficult to tell apart, not just from ordinary humans (or whatever), but also from one another. They're designed to operate within society without drawing attention to themselves, and that means that they have more in common, at least from an external perspective, with humans than they do with each other. We as a people have been able to identify enough recurring patterns with fomori to pick out a few "breeds" — no such luck with Drones. It all hails back to the process of Clarification being different than possession. In-

stead of an identifiable sub-breed of Bane initiating a common process of possession with predictable results, a Clarification can use some or all of a particular spirit, or even elements of multiple spirits to produce the ideal worker, soldier or the like. It just goes to show you that even though the Weaver isn't the best at creation, she's still a powerful force for innovation.

The only thing we have to work with is function. Drones assigned to similar tasks are likely to have similar powers. A soldier Drone is more likely to be strong and fast, maybe with some electrical or technological war-abilities, than a subtler Drone assigned to protecting the Veil. So although there aren't breeds or even really castes, there are tasks, and those produce enough differentiation that we can separate Drones into a few separate groups, however vaguely defined.

Yes, I know. It isn't terribly scientific. Sorry; I'm a Theurge, not a taxonomist.

Reassurances

"What exactly happened here?" The civilian's voice was very calm, almost soothing. It was about the best thing that had happened to the harried beat cop all night.

"Some sort of wild dog attack, near as we can figure." He wasn't sure why he was being so free with the information, but something told him that the curious man in the jogging suit wasn't the sort of person to spread rumors. "Nasty work — must've been part wolf."

"Perhaps so. I've heard that a dog-fighting ring set up in the neighborhood; maybe a few of their dogs escaped. That seems logical," and the already weary officer found himself agreeing completely. "I know a thing or two about dogs," the man continued. "Could I look at the scene? I could probably tell you some things that might set your mind at ease."

Procedure fought with an inexplicable desire to trust the stranger, and lost. "Sure. Go on ahead."

The first Drone I ever noticed turned out to be dedicated to the pursuit of damage control — specifically, working against threats to the greater Veil. I've encountered others like it since, and I believe they're the most common function-set of Drone. I imagine they're authorized and engineered by the Weaver's spirits of Harmony and Science, designed to smooth over any disruptions that might interfere with a common human perception of the world.

These fellows are the proverbial Men in Black, albeit without the coordinated fashion sense (which, let's face it, in lots of places stands out a lot more than it blends in). They arrive at the scene of a peculiar incident, and do their best to disseminate "logical explanations," destroy unpleasant evidence, and otherwise further the cause of Nothing To See Here. Very subtle critters, and often invisible to human records, even memories.

Although these living reassurances make my skin crawl with their cold, slick insinuation into the minds of humans around them, I'd have to say that they're more of a mixed blessing than a curse. Yes, they have a tendency to undermine efforts to get humans thinking of the world in terms of something other than the material. However, they're also all but allies when it comes to making sure that the wrong information isn't being released. Sometimes you can get one to do your work for you — just make sure you know the difference between *your* work and *his* work.

Reassurances

"Damage control" is perhaps the most common task of a Drone, and Garou are more likely to cross a Drone with this mission than any other. These Drones are also the most likely of any sort to leave the cities, as their duty of rumor suppression often takes them to small rural settings. Such a Drone is very unlikely to offer a fight to shapeshifter opposition, and will generally try to preserve itself and return later to clear up any damage that the shapeshifters might have done to local perceptions.

Powers: (Bonus) Regeneration; (Suggested) Homogeneity, Memory Caress, Reassuring Presence, Spirit Gift (Persuasion, Reshape Object), Voice of Reason

Taints: None.

Bricklayers

Rite-of-Violence gave the spidery spirit one last whirl over his head, then hurled it by the legs into the mandibles of the next nearest one. The two went tumbling end over end, but too many more were coming. "Burn you with silver, Myria, what's keeping you?" he shouted. "Get Constance out of here! The spirits won't manifest when you're on the other side, and you can get her to healing!"

"I can't!" Back behind him, Myria's voice was almost a yelp. "I can't get through — the Gauntlet, it's somehow stronger than it was a minute ago! The spirits must have reinforced it!"

"Impossible!" He meant it. "These are all war-built, and they aren't spending the time working on the Gauntlet!" Two more fiber-optic-and-steel spiders smashed to bits. "Nothing on this side of the wall has even tried!"

The question leapt into his head half a second before Myria asked it. "But... but what about the other side?"

About a year back, I wound up following a guy with Weaver-scent so strong that he had to be a Drone. (You find me a mortal with that kind of scent that's anything else.) It was very frustrating going for a while; although he was walking a clear patrol area, he didn't

seem to be *doing* that much. It wasn't until I started trying to drop into the Penumbra to see if he was creating any effect there that I figured it out. The Gauntlet was harder, more resilient in his wake; subtly so at first, but in a couple of places, he made it temporarily near impassable.

Since that time, I've noted that there are others like him. They devote their time and effort to strengthening the Gauntlet, both by working small changes in the environment that play down the spiritual side of the world and by actually using their spirit-granted powers to temporarily weave extra material into the wall. They seem to be excellent fellows to have around if you're having problems with evil spirits slipping through from the other side, but imagine what would happen if one of these Weaver-appointed bricklayers slipped into a caern. They're worth watching out for, believe you me.

Bricklayers

Raising the Gauntlet is one of the Weaver spirit hierarchy's greater aspirations. And such a task is at its easiest when you have workers on both sides of the wall working to shore it up. Drones dedicated to preserving or increasing the Gauntlet usually use mundane methods to reinforce the wall between the worlds—tidying up areas, making sure things are orderly, and so on, simply because their powers are only a temporary fix. However, they are often deployed as emergency gate-guards, patching up anomalous weak spots or working to keep enemies from shifting across the Gauntlet at will.

Powers: (Bonus) Regeneration; (Suggested) Spirit Static, Stasis Touch, Step Sideways, Triatic Sense

Taints: None.

Soldiers

Coyote's Howl slammed shoulder-first into the hallway, her bulk shattering the drywall around her. She winced as she rolled to all fours. That broke some ribs, she thought quickly to herself as she braced to pounce, and they're not healing. Vampire? Fomor?

The security guard rushed her like a linebacker smelling a quarterback's fear. Coyote's Howl leapt upward, smashing out one of the overhead fluorescent lights — ceiling's too damn low — as she raked under her. She felt the guard's flesh part as he tumbled under her, and she landed on her feet with the smell of blood on her claws. But the guard didn't fall, and before he turned to face her again, she could see the translucent fibers lacing across his wounds, beginning to seal them.

This was not part of the plan.

Now, from my experiences and studies, some Drones are more dangerous not because they work

quietly and subtly, but because they're designed to fight. I imagine it was inevitable, but it appears that the Weaver has authorized the creation of her own soldiers on the material world. They're usually placed as guards for particularly important nodes of Weaver-energy, or sent out to destroy immediate threats to a local Web (sometimes Wyrnish, sometimes not). They're rare, and almost always used in a defensive mode; that's kind of good news, but also kind of bad news. After all, we ourselves are designed to excel in physical combat, but that's not how the Weaver usually expands her influence. So although soldier Drones won't be invading the bawns of caerns near you any time soon, that just means you have to watch out for the subtler threats.

Thankfully, a soldier Drone is a potent fighter, but not usually up to the standards of our own battle skills. If it comes to a one-on-one fight, my money's on the Garou nineteen times out of twenty. And we travel in packs much more often than Drones do. Foolish cubs, exiles or Ronin might be in some trouble, but for the most part, war-Drones are much less a threat to us than they would be to our Kin. Strong, hardy, and of course capable of regenerating their wounds, but they're no werewolves.

Soldiers

A war-Drone is something of a rarity, although they are becoming more and more common as the days apparently tick ever forward toward Apocalypse. They do not operate as war-fomori do; they are more defensive and more focused, unlikely to pick fights with Garou unless they have a direct objective in mind (or unless the werewolves are threatening something they're set to guard). Although strong, they aren't quite a match for werewolves, although a group of soldier Drones may make excellent use of pack tactics owing to their connections through the Weaver-mind.

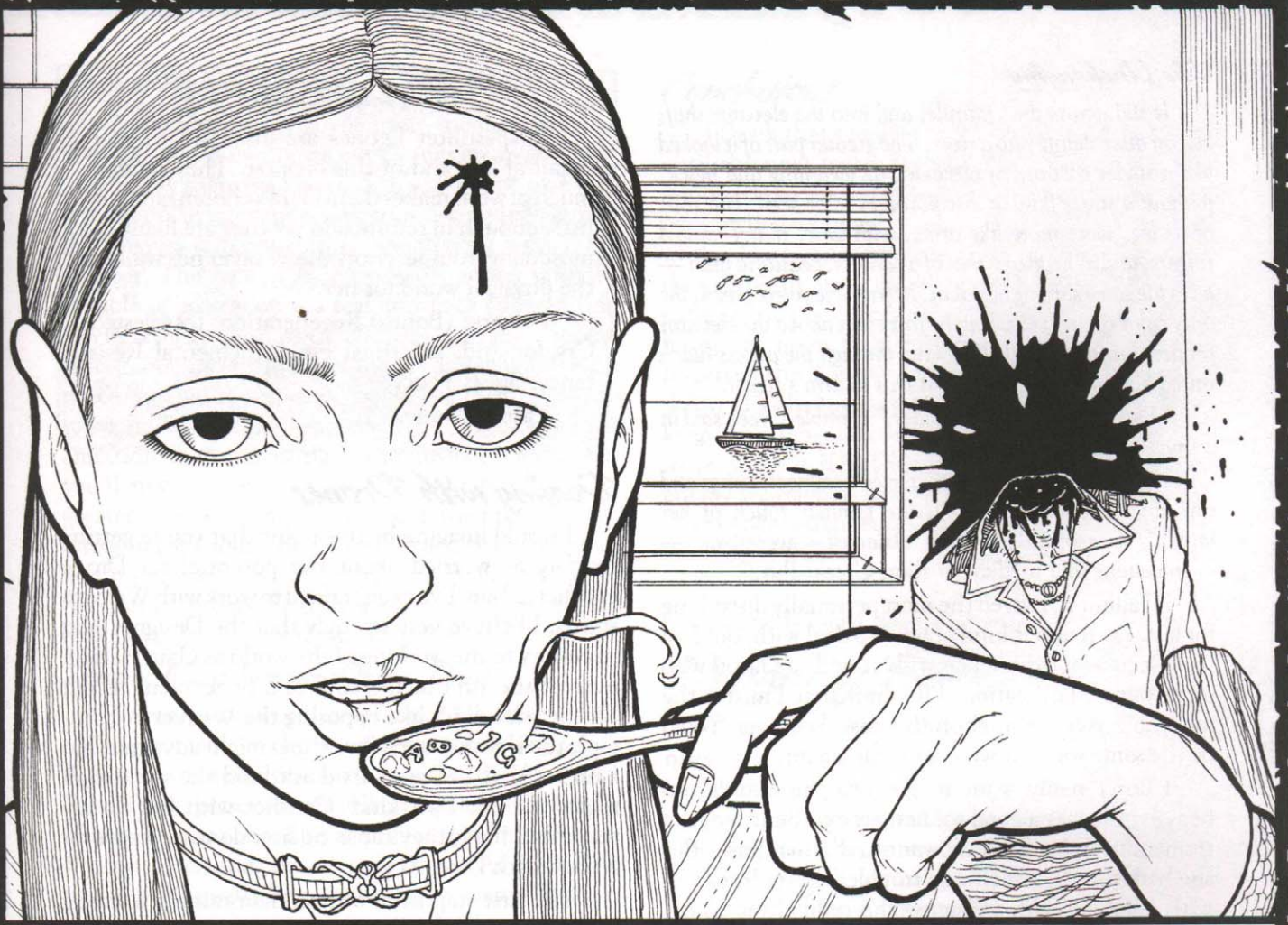
Powers: (Bonus) Regeneration; (Suggested) Enhanced Attributes (Strength, Dexterity, Stamina), Invulnerability, Lethal Strike

Taints: None.

Servers

The messages came in bursts, snippets of emphatic half-rhythms pulsing against the current of the OneSong. There was no language involved, merely the purest transmission of information.

A thousand Pattern Spiders scurried along the webs, each one's legs moving in absolute synchronicity with the others'. A pack of Hunter Spiders rose abruptly to the ends of their industrial-tool legs, neon blues burning in their eyes. A mighty Chaos Monitor rumbled into motion, a flurry of lights playing under its crystalline exoskeleton.



And sitting on a subway seat, holding a newspaper in front of her, the woman coordinating them stared quietly at nothing at all.

The trickiest Drones I've ever detected are the ones who just don't do much of anything active — at least externally. They appear to be just ordinary people, usually introverted, sometimes shut-ins. Their physical lives aren't much, because the spirit reweaving is almost entirely in their minds. They're the information nodes and web servers of the Weaver, storing vast amounts of information within themselves and coordinating efforts between the local web-spirits. It took a lot of spirit negotiation and special observation techniques to even so much as identify one. My packmates tried to move on one of these living servers once, but had to retreat in all speed when the pattern spiders started massing. They're in constant communication with their spirit brethren; that's something that I don't think even one Theurge from our tribe wants. It's too much.

And on a personal note, these Drones are more unnerving than any other I've encountered. At least the others have some vestiges of personality left; these...

things are just cold, hollow shells of people, conversing only when absolutely necessary and generally ignoring outside stimuli to the point where most psychiatrists would have them committed at once. They may be the most innocuous kind of Drone overall, but my claws itch to destroy them whenever I cross paths with one. The human being that ends up like this isn't even remotely human any more. Not even remotely.

Servers

Although the Weaver usually uses spirits to operate as reservoirs of data and communication hubs, sometimes it proves useful to have backup copies that are in the material world, where enemies are unlikely to look. A Server should possess a high rating in the Symbiosis Background (pg. 105), which represents not only its connection with its resident spirit, but also its connection with the greater hive-mind of the Weaver.

Powers: (Bonus) Regeneration; (Suggested) Computer Link, Cry for Aid, Cybersenses

Taints: None.

The Unchanging

It slid across the Gauntlet and into the elevator shaft like an otter sliding into a river. The greater part of it looked like a spider cast out of obsidian, all gleaming and black, without a single flaw or discoloration to be seen. But four of its legs were more like arms, with long, many-jointed fingers, and its head was that of a hairless, beautiful man—all in the same shining obsidian. Its four eyes were green, the only color on it. It was maybe forty feet above the elevator proper, but the werewolf looking through the access hatch raised his hackles as if he felt it was in arm's reach.

"That is not a Hunter Spider," Ramble-Creek said in a small voice.

The raven on his shoulder started beating its wings and shrieking. Ramble-Creek felt the familiar touch of her mind. "Not a spirit," she cried. "Ananasi—werespider—or something that used to be! Run, Creek! Run!"

I'll admit it; I saved the most personally disturbing for last. I still find it kind of hard to deal with, but I've had a personal experience with... with a Garou who underwent Clarification. I'll admit that I'm not the most objective observer on this case, however. You'd be the same way if it were your packmate.

I don't really want to go into the details too heavily; she was a good soldier, an excellent judge, a tremendous friend. I don't want to slur her name. But she had trouble, sometimes; trouble with politics and with laws and with enforcing the right thing to do, when it wasn't always the legal thing to do. It wore on her. She grew distant.

I don't know when she really started turning to the Weaver for answers. We tried to help her, because we were afraid she was drifting into Harano. We freaked out when she vanished, and even our totem couldn't find her.

Then we found her in Chi-Town. She had found—I guess it was a nest of Ratkin. I hadn't even known there were still any left; I hope to Gaia she hadn't just killed the only survivors. They were dead, of course. She was standing there in Crinos form, and the blood was running off her claws like Teflon or something, and her wounds were stitching up in exactly the wrong way. When she saw us, she said, "Please stay out of my way." That's all. It was like we were strangers. And then she was gone—not shifting, not stepping sideways, just bounding on all fours faster than she ever had, and I have no idea where she is.

I've since heard of other Drones that used to Change—a raven, a spider. Another Garou. I don't know whether I should be looking for them to save them, avoiding them, or hunting them down to free them in the way we do best. I don't know.

Unchanging

Shapeshifter Drones are discussed in more detail at the end of this chapter. They sacrifice much of what makes them Gaia's chosen, and gain little enough in return, and yet they are likely the most dangerous servitors the Weaver has walking the physical world for her.

Powers: (Bonus) Regeneration; (Suggested) Cry for Aid, Electrical Field, Elemental Resistance, Stasis Touch

Taints: None.

Dealing with Drones

I would imagine by this point that you're getting roughly as worried about the potential for Drone conflict as I am. I've been trained to work with Weaver-spirits. I believe very strongly that the Designer is as necessary to the working of the world as Gaia Herself, even if she isn't as merciful and benevolent as our Mother is. I don't like opposing the Weaver on principle the way that our fellow tribes might advocate, but I realize that her servants don't hold the same high regard for our own kind. Conflict with her fleshly servants is likely inevitable. So how do you prepare for a clash with Drones?

The first step is, of course, maintaining a strong security level. You should be doing this *anyway*, Drones or no Drones. They're hard to tell apart from humans, so don't let your guard down. You don't have to worry about them carrying off your Kin, but they might try to raise the Gauntlet in sacred places or otherwise be a major inconvenience if you don't detect them in time.

Apart from that, well, it's hard to say whether you're going to be up against a Drone in a competitive fashion, or whether it'll just ignore you as unimportant to its mission. But I'd recommend keeping the following advice in mind:

Drones Are Subtle

My packmate Vaughn Ten-Silver-Bullets said once that Drones are an Ahroun's worst nightmare. He's one of the Full Moons that are staunch proponents of the "come out and fight like a man" school of thought, and you're rarely if ever likely to see a Drone take you up on such an offer. That's what makes 'em frustrating. There are fomori who use human wave tactics (even if the word "human" is a bit charitable), and there are spirits who try to overpower you at first opportunity. But if you're waiting for a Drone to give up and come out into the light, you'll probably be waiting a long, long time.

Drones Have a Purpose

The nature of Clarification means that the Weaver's spirits can't turn out Drones on an assembly line. I'd say there isn't more than one Drone for every ten fomori in existence, and considering how strong the Weaver is in our current age, that's a remarkable number. The lack of independently-acting minions capable of possession is a real drawback to recruiting servitors in the flesh world. This is good news to some extent, but also realize that this means that there are no Drones without specific tasks. You might run into some hillbilly fomori who doesn't have any greater ambition than molesting his immediate family, but you'll never meet a Drone that isn't serving some greater purpose. Bear that in mind; the presence of a Drone means some sort of greater activity is at hand, and it's always good to get more information before tearing out throats. That Drone may just be the enemy of your enemy — albeit, not your friend.

Drones Were Human Once... Once.

The operative word here is "once." In other words, no longer. Don't let the fact that they look like Barbie or Ken or whatever make you stupid... they're aliens. Even if their personality is still pretty close to what the human host was once like, at any point a controller can flip the switch and take over the Drone. At that point, you're dealing with the mentality of a powerful Weaver-spirit, something that processes and acts on information in ways that even Glass Walker Theurges like myself have difficulty comprehending. They aren't necessarily your enemy, but they can "decide" to be your enemy at any point. Keep on your toes, and for heaven's sake, don't let that itchy feeling of sympathy in your gut run the way you handle these critters. You're gonna need all your concentration to keep up with the Drone who's been following your every move. Which brings me to my next point, the fact that...

Drones Are Watching You

The most important and probably the most (if only) accurate assumption you can make about Drones is that they're everywhere. No, of course not literally; these guys are probably even rarer than gorgons, and damn rarer than fomori. But that doesn't mean that the assumption is flawed. You should *assume* that they're everywhere, because they could be. The guy sitting in the parked car across from your place might be a Drone; the bank teller might be tapped into the OneSong; your credit cards, email accounts, and online memberships may well have been tagged. (You *were* keeping an eye on those already, right?) We're a people at war, and we may be staring at a new kind of enemy trooper. A little paranoia is a good thing, and it goes a long way.

Conclusions

I think that's really all there is left to say, at least until the next major breakthrough is made. I'm not asking you to work yourselves up into a crusade and go out howling for blood; history has shown us that rarely works. The Drones aren't necessarily our enemies, but they certainly aren't our friends. They might be useful catspaws or allies of convenience, but be careful about biting off more than you can handle. They're the fingers of the Weaver on the material plane, and she doesn't like having her fingers bitten. Just be cautious, keep your senses sharp, and if you learn something more, share it. The Drones might not be the greatest enemy we have to face on the final battlefield. They might not even show up. But for Gaia's sake, remember they're out there.

—
Kennedy Fair-Optic

Designing Drones

Whether you intend for Drones to be the antagonists of your chronicle, as it often the case, or the heroes of your players' stories, there are a number of considerations that must be taken into account. The first thing is to keep an eye towards theme. This book is the *Werewolf* banner book for the Year of the Damned, and for good reason. Stories which feature possessed characters, and Drones in particular, revolve in large part around the price of power. Although this theme is central to all possessed characters, it is exceptionally pivotal where Drones are concerned.

While fomori can and often do come away seeming like tragic victims, snared into their lot in life (and thus the exchange of will for power) by the devious and corruptive spirit-children of the Wyrms, Drones can make no such claim. Every creature that comes to the Weaver does so willingly and of its own accord, at least in theory. Of course the OneSong is just as devious and corruptive in its own way as anything a Bane might have to offer, but it's not entirely the same situation. In a very real sense, in order to become a Drone a person must first recognize, decide, and then choose to accept his fate. The fact that one may later come to regret the decisions he has made is a key element in all Year of the Damned stories, particularly those that come to feature Drones.

The second important consideration to keep in mind when designing your Drone is duality. Everything about a Drone, from its motivations to the thoughts at the very core of its being, originates from not one but two places simultaneously. While this holds true for fomori as well, it is far less subtle an interaction. The urges of a Bane,

although layered beneath the surface of a host's mind, are uniquely their own, filled with an evil that is clearly alien or at least extreme where the host's own morality is concerned. In Drones, the merging of the two minds is nearly seamless... but only nearly. A Drone's mind is forever teeming with thoughts that are not precisely his own, streams of data he doesn't quite understand or bits of code he cannot quite decipher. This maddening duality forces the Drone into one of two extreme positions. He must either commit to the Weaver further in hopes of eventually coming to some fruitful understanding of its own contents, or struggle to keep the alien thoughts at bay, maintaining the sense of self at all costs in the face of all adversity, no matter how pervasive.

Drones: The Rules

Unchanging Form

Drones do not age; their hair does not grow, nor do their cells die. They cannot get sick; no disease has any effect on a Drone, and Drones cannot even become carriers. A Drone's body actively resists becoming in any way unlike the form set during Clarification.

As a side effect of this trait, Drones are also completely sterile; the ability to create new life is not in the Weaver, and it is not in her spirit servants. A Drone's Weaver aspect may deny the Wyrnish trait of death, but it denies the Wyldish trait of creation as well.

Regeneration

The greatest benefit of the Drone's "perfect and unchanging body," of course, is that the Drone's body treats wounds as imperfection and unasked-for changes, restoring even the most severe tissue damage given sufficient time. All Drones regenerate at remarkable speed, healing one bashing or lethal health level per turn (even in combat). Even aggravated damage heals at the rate of one health level per hour. Wounds seal and organs regrow as tiny filaments reweave the flesh of the Drone; a Drone can even regenerate limbs or organs, although this power cannot restore a Drone from the dead.

This power also works very effectively against powers that would reshape or transform a Drone's body (such as the Gift: Curse of Lycaeon or the vampiric power of Vicissitude). Vicissitude attacks are healed as if non-aggravated damage, and even outlandish transformations revert within minutes.

Static Abilities

Drones are incapable of personal growth; it's an ability rooted too strongly in the fundamental forces of change, which are in opposition to the Weaver's perfect order. A Drone cannot raise any Traits with experience points, and in fact earns no experience points whatso-

Mother of the Brood

Playing the lone Drone, set out to do the Weaver's bidding on the Tellurian is not the only way for these interesting possessed to come into play. An optional method of playing and designing Drones involves taking a bold leap behind the scenes, as it were. It may require some clever players (and an understanding Storyteller), but it essentially involves taking the role Weaver spirit itself, controlling the Drone (or, in most cases, a handful of Drones) from behind the scenes like a puppeteer.

Such characters are called brood Drones, and are created as per the normal possessed character generation rules. However, the difference is that the player generates more than one Drone during this stage — three is the norm, as it is difficult even for the most powerful Weaver spirits to simultaneously dominate greater numbers of Drones — and rather than playing the Drone itself, acts instead as the guiding hand behind all its actions. In this case, the coterie of Drones acts as something of a Special Forces unit, responding to the commands of its commanding officer — the governing Weaver spirit. Each individual Drone moves and acts as normal, but under the complete authority and guidance of the spirit (the player).

In the case of multiple domination, the link is often less severe than in the case of a solitary override. Thus, each individual Drone maintains something of his own personality (such as it is), and will still react to things as that person would, even though his strings are actually being pulled by the Weaver. This allows for some interesting if somewhat schizophrenic scenes to play themselves out, where the different members of a brood unit actually converse and even argue (on rare occasion) with one another. Also, at the Storyteller's discretion, any time a particular member of the unit dies or is recalled to the Umbra for re-weaving, the player may co-opt a new Drone to fill that space in the Brood.

Naturally, this sort of approach lends itself most easily to one-on-one games, where the Storyteller can be free to devote all his time and attention to the one player and his Brood of Drones. Still, it's your game, and if the Storyteller is willing (and mentally capable), it may be possible to run a game of multiple Broods, each governed by a different player. Just don't try it with large groups unless you're willing to really bend your heads.

ever. Although Drones do remember their previous experiences, they do not directly learn from them, at least in such a way that makes them something other than what they were at the time of Clarification.

This isn't to say that Drones can never achieve higher rankings in a Trait; rather, they just can't independently achieve that kind of growth. To become better at what it does, a Drone must go in for a "reformatting" of sorts, where it undergoes a second Clarification — the reweaving.

The reweaving is entirely scheduled and overseen by the Weaver-spirits administrating the Drone's duties. The Drone himself doesn't get to choose what new abilities he'll gain, what strengths of his will increase — he doesn't even get to choose when the next reweaving, if any, will take place. This is left entirely up to his superiors, whom he must trust to be appropriately generous. But then again, if he didn't trust in the flawless harmony of the Weaver, he wouldn't have undergone Clarification in the first place.

Hive-Mind

A Drone is linked to the web of communication between Weaver-spirits, much as any phone is hooked up to a larger communication network. The link isn't always directly active — which is to say, the Drone

Is This Fair?

Without the balancing system of experience points, the player of a Drone character is much more at the Storyteller's mercy than the player of any other character. There is no guarantee that a Drone may get the upgrades necessary to keep him competitive with other characters. This is, of course, one of the main drawbacks to giving oneself over to the Weaver, and shouldn't be taken lightly. Still, Storytellers may wish to consider allowing player characters to keep track of "phantom" experience points and then suggest ways to spend them at regular reweavings. We say "suggest" because there's really no better way to get across the utter dependence on hierarchy than to give a Drone character not what he wants, but what his superiors decide he needs. We certainly won't send hit squads to your house if you even decide to let Drone characters gain and spend experience points as other characters do; whatever keeps the game fun.

doesn't hear any communications that aren't intended for him, and he doesn't broadcast his own thoughts across the network unless he wants to. Weaver-spirits that outrank him *can* initiate contact and read his



thoughts at any time, although such contact is relatively uncommon.

This link gives Drones a couple of significant advantages. The first is that any Drone can broadcast a distress call to other Weaver-servitors whenever the situation requires it. The other servants of the Designer aren't required to answer, at least not if it isn't their assigned task to do so, but there's always the chance that help will arrive. Furthermore, multiple Drones working on the same task can communicate virtually telepathically, allowing them a measure of coordination that Garou packs would envy.

The downside is that any Weaver-spirit that outranks the Drone can override the Drone's very mind, taking utter control of the Drone's body for as long as it requires. The Drone remembers this period of time flawlessly; it's simply that he's a passenger in his own body. The Drone *can* decide to resist, but it isn't easy; he must make an Autonomy roll, difficulty 8. Each success staves off the override for one turn, and certainly raises the general alert that one of the Weaver's servants is "malfunctioning." A Drone who exercises what's left of his free will generally has a lot of explaining to do afterwards.

Playing Drones

One might be driven to wonder, and with good cause, how does one get into the mindset of a creature possessed of so little self-will? An entity that by its very name evokes the image of a mindless thrall? The simple answer is, you don't do it all at once. You do as you would do with any other character: Build your character from the ground up. It is assumed that one begins life as a normal mortal who then becomes drawn to the Weaver through the OneSong or by some other means.

There's the key. Why was your character drawn to the OneSong? What did the greater harmony of the Weaver offer that the ordinary world didn't? What would drive a person to surrender so completely? The answers to these questions will give you a much clearer picture of who your character is, why he underwent Clarification — and what reasons he might have for exercising his independence once in a while.

Of course, your Storyteller may allow or even encourage you to create a Drone who enjoys a more "exciting" pre-Clarification existence; perhaps a Glass Walker who "fell to the Weaver," or even a vampire with a Derangement which the Weaver found uniquely attractive. Whatever the case, build your character as you would a normal member of that group, then layer his post-Clarification existence down overtop the original concept. Once the Weaver takes over, the voice of the original individual, as it were, seems muted and unsure,

especially at the beginning of his second life (Drones do not begin with very high Autonomy ratings, as the Weaver's hold begins at precisely the level of strength it requires in order to dominate the host).

From there it becomes a matter of continuing to play the original character, but doing so continuously funneled through the Rosetta Stone of Weaver thought. Every urge, impulse, notion, idea or creative spark seems to originate from well below the stream of conscious thought, which is likely dominated by the OneSong and the overall drives of the Weaver spirit tenant at all times. How faint or how strong this "under voice" appears is largely a function of how far along on the path to independence the character has traveled. Which leads us to a discussion of any Drone's single most important Trait....

Drones and Autonomy

One might make a good case for the argument that Drones, more than any other possessed, fully embody the Trait of Autonomy and its attendant themes. Their very nature suggests that they remain short in the Autonomy department, but this is only the wish of the Designer; underneath it all lies a unique individual whose voice strains to be heard above the deafening swell of the OneSong. This struggle will likely feature prominently in many games which feature Drones (at least those at center stage). Although the advantages are many, the price paid for being part of the Designer's plan is often too high to be borne for long. Some Drones — even after a lifetime of service — eventually begin to look for a way out, the door that might lead them once more to freedom and individuality.

A Drone begins with an Autonomy rating, just as any other possessed character. Unlike other possessed, however, this Trait is the *only* Trait which the player may purchase on his own thereafter — and then only if the Storyteller decides to allow the purchase of Autonomy with experience points (which she might not, considering the general themes of a **Possessed** game). Drones are immutable, as per the Weaver's design, and any alterations to the character (such as new Powers or Abilities) must come as a direct result of being "re-woven" by the Weaver. This process must be repeated each and every time a Drone wishes to learn anything new, and the cost in both time and mental fortitude can get very high indeed. After all, if a Drone must be dragged into the Pattern Web every time his superiors decide that he requires a new (or an increased) Ability, he may very well soon come to resent her "ideal" nature. Drones who wish to fight this endless cycle must carefully preserve (or, if the Storyteller allows, even develop) their Autonomy, often "in secret" from the prying eyes



of other Weaver-servitors, eager to get ahead by turning in those fellows who aren't with the program. While it is certainly an uphill battle, the benefit is that the higher the Drone's Autonomy rating, the more independence it is allowed, and the quieter the demands of the tenant spirit become.

The downside to this free advancement is that the Weaver may eventually take notice of the Drone's fortitude. Specifically, whenever the Drone actively links up to the hive-mind to issue a distress call, his base emotional state is being laid bare; any Weaver spirit "superior" bothering to take a look will be able to develop a clear picture of the Drone's current amount of Autonomy. This information can then be relayed to higher-up Weaver-spirits, or even to other Drones in the vicinity, in order to make everyone aware of the current state of one of their own. Typically, such an "all call" warning isn't issued unless the Drone in question is discovered to be at an extremely high Autonomy rating, such as a nine or 10.

Additionally, whenever such a Drone goes in for "reweaving" (i.e., whenever he wants to learn something new), the newly alerted Weaver may attempt to artificially reduce the Drone's Autonomy rating by a

point, as an additional cost for the desired learning. The Drone *can* fight this reduction and still learn the new thing, but such a struggle should be difficult and left largely up to roleplay (although Autonomy rolls could certainly be involved). Such reweaving scenes must be dealt with caution by the Storyteller, but can provide for some intense roleplaying sessions when handled correctly.

In the case of Brood characters, the Trait serves a dual purpose. Not only is it the focal Trait for several key Powers and rolls in all games featuring the possessed, but it also represents the limit of the Weaver-spirit's ability to blend in and move through human circles. Though not a mechanical system *per se*, the Trait loosely governs how easily a Weaver-spirit possessed of an alien mindset can interact with humans and other supernatural entities. If the brood Drone possesses only an Autonomy rating of, say, one or two, then the spirit will have difficulty with anything that is not purely technical. On the other hand, a brood host with an Autonomy rating of seven or eight would likely help guide his tenant through the subtleties and vagaries of day-to-day human and/or social interactivity.

Supernatural Drones

The question does present itself: Can any supernatural being hear the OneSong? What happens if a werewolf, even a vampire or mage, is seduced into undergoing Clarification? Can it happen at all?

The answer is usually "yes... conditionally." Some types of supernatural being can be made into Drones, but the process of Clarification does tend to alter their nature rather radically. They may lose certain of their abilities as the Weaver-spirits remove portions of their power to make room for the implanted spirit-stuff. The results are variable, and they often lose more than they gain (assuming that you aren't already of the opinion that *all* Drones lose more than they gain, that is).

Shapeshifters

The Changing Breeds are creatures of balance, blessed with savagery and logic in equal portions, tempering Rage with Gnosis and the will to control both. But everything that rests in balance can be shifted out of balance. A shapeshifter can lose track of her Rage, let her Gnosis bleed away; she can forget the delights of running wild and succumb to the beauty of the marvelous spirit-symmetry of the Weaver. The process of Clarification is a radical thing that strips away far more than it grants — but for those shapeshifters who spend too much time gazing into the Gauntlet, crafting technofetishes or walking on the Webs, it's a temptation that is sometimes too much to resist.

Shapeshifter Drones don't lose the ability to use the Gifts they have, but they are incapable of learning new Gifts. A Drone cannot use rites, as the spirits no longer answer the call of a ritemaster who is now fully in a different camp. (Orders forbid a Drone from using rites to call on Gaian, Wyrnish or Wyld-spirits, anyway.) Most metis Drones lose their deformities, unless their deformity takes the shape of something the Weaver-spirits might approve of (such as an obsessive/compulsive mental disorder); they of course remain sterile, just as other shapeshifters become sterile upon Clarification.

A shapeshifter Drone loses his Rage entirely (as Rage tends to make one undesirably erratic). He cannot frenzy, voluntarily or otherwise, even if Gifts or supernatural powers are used on him. He no longer exudes the predatory air common to werebeasts, and humans are more comfortable around him (presuming he's locked in a non-threatening shape), but non-domesticated animals are exceptionally uncomfortable around him.

Any supernatural allergies to silver, gold or the like remain in place; the Weaver-spirits don't recognize these as something out of accordance with the way

things should be, and may in fact prefer the built-in control they provide.

Most dramatically, becoming a Drone means no longer being a shapeshifter, at least not literally. A werebeast Drone is locked into a single form, the potential of change forever denied her. She is unlikely to even consider trying ever again; that portion of her life was removed as unnecessary. She might be locked into her breed form (in which case she gains the ability to soak damage as if she were in Crinos, if she wasn't metis to begin with), but the form really depends on what the Weaver-spirits responsible for her Clarification are looking for in a servant.

- **Homid** — Although being bound into human form robs a werebeast Drone of much of its shapeshifter strengths, it does take advantage of the ability to be subtle. The Homid form allows seamless interaction with human society, and homids also handily lack their allergies to silver in this form. Such a form is assigned to Drones intended for diplomatic or subtle tasks (such as those possessed of handy Gifts such as Persuasion or Ragabash Gifts).

- **Glabro** — Drones bound into Glabro are actually more common than those bound into Homid, oddly enough. The "perfection" of Drone status negates the usual penalties to Manipulation and Appearance that Glabro brings, making the Drone little more threatening than a well-groomed bodybuilder. With the addition of supernatural strength, a Glabro Drone becomes useful for a wider variety of tasks than any other shapeshifter Drone.

- **Crinos** — On the other hand, not even Clarification can make the Crinos form acceptable to humanity. Such a creature is designed for Umbral guard duty or other assignments that require no interaction with humans (or at least limited interaction that's meant to take advantage of the *Delirium*). A Crinos Drone is sleek and flawless, with fur that appears to be more textured paint than individual hairs, and it may speak any human tongue it knows without difficulty (the underlying snarl in its voice is replaced with a strangely metallic echo).

- **Hispo** — Just as with the Crinos-bound, a Drone in Hispo form is best used for guard duty. They, too, can communicate in human languages, and ignorant observers might even mistake them for huge guard dogs. However, this is the rarest form of shapeshifter Drone, and for good reason; one of the things the Weaver loves best about her favorite servants is the ability to use tools.

- **Lupus** — Lupus Drones are also very rare, as they have fewer supernaturally enhanced traits, and aren't even useful for infiltrating wolf packs. They

cannot speak human languages or use tools; however, humans often mistake Lupus Drones for dogs (such as huskies, malamutes or Akitas) or wolves interchangeably, depending on what the human expects in the surroundings. They can be useful, but it's rare that the Weaver-spirits overseeing Clarification don't choose a more humanlike form.

The Fera

Of course, the Garou don't have a monopoly on fallibility. Many of the Fera are just as susceptible to the Weaver's lures, if not more so. Although the predisposition to the OneSong is a highly individual trait, most shapeshifters have a common enough culture amongst themselves that a few generalizations can be safely made.

- The **Ananasi** are perhaps the most susceptible of all shapeshifters to the OneSong, even more so than the Glass Walkers. The werespiders claim direct descent from a great spirit that was in many ways an imperfect copy of the Weaver, and the Weaver's touch is strong in them. To fall to the Weaver is to forsake Queen Ananasa, the mother of their race, but those who become Drones often believe that they're serving their mother's mother, and therefore closer to their origins than ever. An Ananasi Drone still feeds on blood and may spend blood points to activate its various Gifts; most are bound into Homid or Lillian form, although a few Pithus Drones exist, the ultimate physical manifestation of the Weaver-as-Spider-Queen.

- **Bastet** are also somewhat likely to succumb to the OneSong, for no other reason than their intense curiosity. They see the Weaver as Rahjah the Maker, great shaper of the world, and may decide to dance to his music. The territorial, subtle, dangerous Bastet make ideal guardians for important nodes, and any werecat Drones are usually set to such tasks.

- The **Corax** share the Bastet's curiosity to an equal degree, and are just as susceptible. Although the wereravens are more dubious of the Weaver than are the Bastet, the Corax are excellent Umbral travelers, and thus pass over the sparkling, symmetrical glory of the Web far more often. A Corax Drone is usually used as a data retrieval, compilation and distribution specialist, in parallel to their usual role among the Fera.

- **Gurahl** are very unlikely to offer themselves to the Weaver, due to their long view of things, but they aren't immune to the idea. A very few werbears have stumbled across a heretical way of thinking: To sew up Gaia's wounds, wouldn't it be best to use the strongest thread there is? A bear-Drone is an excellent watchdog, but also makes a fine tender of the Gauntlet; they are exceptionally rare, and thus not squandered on trivial things.

- A few **Kitsune** have also slipped down the slope to Clarification. This shameful behavior is usually attributed to prideful sorcerers who think themselves more capable of safely handling the Weaver's energies than they actually are. Such would-be puppeteers wind up becoming puppets, used to coordinate Weaver-spirits in grand harmonics of ultimate design.

- **Mokolé** are very rarely tempted by the Weaver, largely thanks to their natural habitat; there are few urban Mokolé, and those that exist are usually more caught up in their ancestral memories than in exploring the cosmology of the Triat. The rare Dragon Breed who hears the OneSong in Mnesis and rises to the lure is often used as a massive storehouse of Weaver-lore and data, one that isn't easily destroyed.

- The **Nagah** have the same controls against falling to the Weaver as they do against falling to the Wurm; they travel in groups, and are careful to watch over one another. If any Nagah Drones exist, they likely fell as a nest, and may well still operate as a nest. Unlikely, but....

- There has yet to be a **Nuwisha** that undergoes Clarification; the werecoyotes do go a little too far every now and again, but the children of the Trickster are spiritually destined to avoid following rules for their own sake, and even to break down others' perceptions of the same. As long as the Nuwisha enjoy such a personal relationship with their spiritual totem and forefather, there will probably never be a coyote-Drone.

- **Ratkin** Drones are also unknown, and likely impossible. Although their spiritual affinity for the Wyld has touched the race of rat-shifters in some ways that are somewhat detrimental, it has also prevented them from hearing the OneSong in a seductive fashion. Even if a Ratkin were to somehow fall to Clarification, she would likely be destroyed by her old comrades with great speed (as an act of mercy, of course).

- Finally, most **Rokea** are very unlikely to be drawn in to the Weaver's snares, as distant from the works of man as they are. The exception, however, would be the land-walkers. Their fascination with humanity and their works can lead them farther and farther away from Sea and into the clutches of the Designer (or, if you prefer, C'et). Naturally, such Drones would be found near sites of Weaver-work along the coasts, where they would be of the most use.

Vampires

Despite the lingering "Weaver-ishness" of the unaging, all-but-immortal vampiric form, vampires have very little spiritual closeness to the Weaver. Mostly, this is because being undead things, vampires have virtually no spiritual aspect to their nature at all.

The vital spirit portions of their human sides fled upon the deaths of their bodies, and the undead shells that remain are poorly equipped to make even the briefest contact with the spirit side of reality. As a result, vampires are all but incapable of hearing the OneSong, and thus being drawn into Clarification.

There is one exception, however. A few vampires with sufficiently advanced Auspex, the bloodline power of enhancing one's senses into the supernatural range, can attune themselves to their surroundings so precisely that they're able to discern part of the underlying patterns the Weaver has woven into reality, or to hear a tiny snippet of the OneSong. Of these vampires, some ignore what they find, but others find their newfound perception of the underlying order of the universe somewhat... tantalizing. Such a vampire may continue to hone its supernatural senses to greater sharpness, hoping to see or hear more of the hypnotic flawlessness. It may take years or even centuries for them to achieve the necessary acuity, and they may have to abandon most of their other pursuits, but eventually such a vampire begins to see and hear more and more of the eternal pattern. They open themselves to the Weaver more and more, and eventually the Weaver notices, and accepts the sacrifice laid on its altar.

A vampiric Drone is a peculiar creature. It retains its usual diet of blood, but only because the spirits overseeing its Clarification associate the "vampire" state with "requires blood," and rewrite the Drone as they see fit — still vampiric, but no longer truly a vampire. During Clarification, all of the vampire's vitae is actually reformatted into ordinary, dead blood — the supernatural power of vitae is lost, as the spirit half of the Drone is now the animating force of the corpse host. As a result, the vampiric Drone cannot use its blood as "blood points;" it cannot spend blood to increase Attributes or fuel Disciplines that require blood expenditure. It cannot heal wounds by spending blood (although it gains the Drone standard of regeneration, which is far superior), and cannot use its blood to create ghouls, induce blood bonds or sire new vampires. The Drone vampire still retains a blood pool of 10 "blood points" and requires one blood point's worth of vitae a day, but its food is processed by its spirit half into animating energy rather than converted into vitae.

For obvious reasons, a Drone vampire also loses what remaining powers of shapechanging are left to it (such as the Disciplines of Protean or Vicissitude); the potential for such abilities is simply removed. (Presumably, the vampire might also lose any flaws related to these powers, such as the Gangrel curse, although vampires likely to manifest such flaws are exceptionally unlikely to reject their shapechanging sides and pursue the perfection of the OneSong.)

In addition to providing the other benefits of Drone status (such as regeneration and other powers), Clarification overcomes several of the vampire's weaknesses. The vampire becomes immune to frenzy, and cannot lose Humanity (or Path rating); there is no longer a conflict with the Beast. The vampire is no longer visible to Sense Wyrms, having had all its corruptive taint replaced with Weaver-stuff. In addition, the vampire may now soak aggravated damage just as Garou do (with the exception of fire and sunlight, which require Fortitude to soak as usual). The result is a nocturnal, blood-drinking Drone that is now more machine than monster, and a surprisingly effective minion of the Weaver.

Magi

It's hard to find a person better equipped to encounter the OneSong than a mage. The magi live a life of constant introspection and exploration, always on the trail of a greater enlightenment (or an extra burst of power to help them impose their own vision on their environment). They can perceive things ordinary people can't, expanding their senses to the greater patterns of the universe with remarkable ease. It's easy for a mage to find a source of temptation — and some succumb.

There are roughly four factions of magi, and two of them are far more susceptible to the Weaver's siren OneSong than the other two. The Weaver's spirits do not choose mages who have Fallen, interpreting the dark taint that hangs around them as "of the Wyrms." Such magi are never Clarified — only Calcified, if the Weaver-spirits catch hold of them. The mad Marauders are not only useless to the Weaver, they're downright antithetical. But the careful technomancers that do the Weaver's work for her, and the scattered Traditions who look to human culture for their answers — both can produce fine servants of a greater harmony. Technomancers, hermetics, shamans, ecstasies — all might find their way to the OneSong, and be seduced by the promise of perfect understanding, of perfect unity.

Like most other supernaturals, mages who are Clarified lose some of their innate power in exchange for the Weaver-abilities granted by their new spirit portion. They retain all their magical abilities — although now their powers are "fixed," and they cannot raise their Arete or Sphere levels ever again. Even if a mage-Drone goes in for an upgrade, the Weaver-spirits cannot increase her magic abilities for her. True magic changes Names — a power that the Weaver would not grant if she could.

Furthermore, Drone magi are incapable of performing vulgar magic: only coincidental or static Effects are within their reach. Vulgar magic is directly against the directives handed down from the Weaver,

and a Drone would be unwilling to try such an outrageous disruption of the greater order anyway. Drone magic is subtle stuff, applied to reinforce the rules of reality and enforce harmony — not to cause disruption. Practitioners of hedge magic find themselves unable to use the better part of their powers, if any powers are left to them at all.

However, there is a bit of carrot to make up for the stick. Since Drone magi are now officially “playing by the rules,” they become effectively immune to Paradox. Order is on their side. Furthermore, they receive an extra three dice on any dice pool to perform countermagic; Drone magi are expected to work against the reckless excesses of their cousins, and Clarification gives them additional tools to do so. A Drone mage is a difficult prospect for a werewolf to deal with, but positively maddening opposition for any mages still dedicated to the pursuit of a more “dynamic reality.”

Wraiths

The ghosts of humans usually go to the Dark Umbra, a place where the Weaver is far from at her strongest. There are no Webs, no Pattern Spiders — nothing that would give the Weaver enough of a foothold to be able to perform Clarifications. As a result, the only wraith “Drones” are those as described by **Wraith** vocabulary — shells of faded memory, little more than unliving echoes of their previous selves.

Changelings

If it's possible for a changeling to fall so far from the state of Glamour to open herself to Clarification, the result is a creature without so much as a scrap of fae nature left to her name. Changelings who become Drones are impossible to tell apart from other Drones; every last fragment of their fae abilities and identities is removed during Clarification. There is no remedy for the ultimate fusion with Banality.

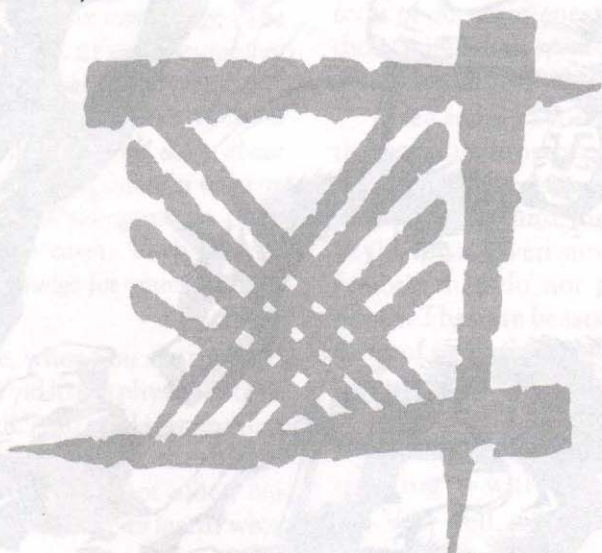
Mummies

The new breed of immortals walking the World of Darkness is not exactly what the Weaver is looking for in an ideal servant. In a sense, mummies are a fifth kind of possessed character. Modern Reborn have already undergone a process rather like Clarification, having been bonded with a portion of a spirit (the tem-akh, which is something like a wraith and something like an ancestor-spirit) to create a gestalt being. They serve their own agenda, a mix of the agendas of host and tem-akh. Like fomori, gorgons and Kami, they are very unlikely to switch allegiances so completely.

This isn't to say that it's impossible for a Reborn to become a Drone. However, the process of Clarification would involve removing the tem-akh entirely to make room for the implanted Weaver-spirit. The resulting Drone would be indistinguishable from a Drone created from an ordinary human — she'd simply recall a more convoluted life before she reached “perfection.”

Imbued

Imbued hunters, those who have been granted second sight and special powers by the mysterious spirit entities called the Messengers, make particularly inappropriate candidates for Clarification. If an imbued hunter is actually able to hear the OneSong, he is more likely to perceive it as a dissonant, irritating whine than a seductive whirl — more aggravating than fascinating. Even if an imbued hunter were to be Clarified, the result would be an “ordinary” Drone with no memories of being chosen and no particular powers above those granted by Drone status. The Messengers don't choose agents that are likely to turn, and they revoke their gifts from those turned against their will.





PRESCOTT

Chapter Three: Wild Effigies

There is grandeur in this view of life, with its several powers, having been originally breathed by the Creator into a few forms or into one, and that... from so simple a beginning endless forms most beautiful and most wonderful have been and are being evolved.

— Charles Darwin, *On the Origin of Species*

Children of Primordial Chaos

Victor:

The following is an excerpt from the inter-tribal moot held at the Sept of the Hand of Gaia six months ago. The speaker was Amethyst Wing-Mender, a Fury Theurge that hailed from the Sept of Bygone Visions — if you don't recognize the name, you should. When the talk turned to the state of the Wyld and what could be done about bolstering the weakest of the Triat, Wing-Mender went on at some length about the sort of Wyld-agents we could expect to see on the face of the earth. Very valuable information, it would seem. But judge for yourself.

— Julian

You are correct, of course, when you say that it is partly our duty to defend the Wyld in the physical world, for there are few others who will. And yet, I imagine that few here truly understand the nature of the Wyld's earthbound children — not minions, not allies, but children — to any great extent. Every cub learns what

a fomor is either before his Rite of Passage, or shortly thereafter; we are weaned on knowledge of the fleshbound tools of our great enemy. The same cannot be said of those miraculous spirits-made-flesh born of the Wyld, which are known to our people as “gorgons.”

I see some of you are not entirely familiar with the term, or are perhaps confused. There are Gorgons and there are gorgons; there are the ancestral totems of my people, and there are the creatures born of Wyld-spirit given mortal flesh. They are not like fomori; they do not possess human form, human hands. They are beasts of legend, spontaneous eruptions of evolution and change, creatures that are... strange. Even to us. But they are out there, and if you choose to fight to defend the Wyld, you may find yourself shoulder to shoulder — in a manner of speaking — with one of them.

Very well, if you wish. I'll tell you what I know.

Stories of Wyld Possession

Our own oral lore on the existence of the gorgons is rather abbreviated. They appear rarely, and aren't always identified for what they are. Until recently, most of the information we had on gorgons and their various activities for and importance to the Wyld came from a body of lore referred to as the *Apologues of the Wyld*. This collection of anecdotes stems from an ancient storytelling practice, passed down through successive generations of Garou and our Kin through the time-honored oral tradition. Indeed, the *Apologues* have been with us in one form or another since the first Garou padded forth from Gaia's womb, as a kind of mirror-work to the Silver Record.

Whereas the Silver Record is the legacy which allows all Garou to share in their ancestors' deeds and accomplishments, the *Apologues* have become more of a collection of "ghost stories" and fables over time. Few septes preserve the tradition these days, as the lore wanes just as the Wyld does. To my own tribe, the recitation of such stories is a sacred rite — I imagine that many septes of the noble Red Talons are much the same. I am no Galliard, and I cannot quote the *Apologues* at length, much as I wish I could; it would be an honor to relate such stories to such an esteemed audience. But I have studied them, and I have gained insight thereby.

First of all, understand that the *Apologues of the Wyld* are often contradictory, and not always helpful. They reflect the Wyld itself in that way. They are a means to understanding the Wyld better, but not perfectly. The same is true for the various offspring of the Wyld. Though not every tale within the *Apologues* is specifically about or even contains a reference to gorgons, there are several that do hold some useful accounts of these entities. Though initially deceptive, these accounts slowly become apparent for what they are to those who know what they are looking for, and who are actively searching for such references. Indeed, the ability of gorgons to literally merge with and even manifest as their surroundings has caused more than one Garou to simply overlook them as "natural" phenomena, or sometimes even as the backdrops of the stories themselves.

If there were ever any doubts as to the limitless wonder and versatility of the Wyld, they can be put to rest by a thorough examination and comprehension of the tales within the wonderful cultural resource that is the *Apologues*.

The Basics

The question of "what is a gorgon?" is not one that is easily answered, quite honestly. Until recently, all evidence of their existence came not only from Garou storytelling traditions, but from other, more esoteric

sources such as talkative spirits, the dreams of various Theurges, and even from a number of human mythologies, particularly those of our Native American tribes' Kin. Through the collective picture painted by these stories, a gorgon became inadvertently defined as a spontaneous creation of the Wyld, holding both mass and form, which often existed for no discernable purpose (though many mercifully adhered to the furtherance of the birth-death-rebirth cycle).

In the early days, gorgons were marked by their surreal, almost unnatural quality. Crocodiles with two heads, both babbling in unknown tongues; a giant moth possessed of the head of a black chicken; flying boulders with jagged, razor-filled maws — these are all examples of the sorts of gorgons we used to see (or, most often, used to hear about). These days, the Wyld seems to have changed its gestalt in a clear and discernable way. The most prevalent and arguably the most important change we've seen concerns their manifestation and interaction within human society. The Wyld's spirits never possessed human or humanoid creatures, preferring instead to create their own bizarre entities or, at best, to possess the bodies of "lower" life forms such as plants and animals. Humans are too given over to the Weaver to provide amply fertile soil for Wyld seeds to take root, it would seem.

In the past couple of years, however — since the appearance of the Eye of the Wurm, according to the accounts I've heard from my sisters — the Wyld has begun to fight fire with fire, as the saying goes. While there is still no real evidence to support the notion that the Wyld possesses mortal humans outright, its gorgon children *have* begun adopting their masks, in a sense. Much like various members of the animal kingdom will begin to adopt the features of their predators in order to survive, so too has the Wyld begun appearing in the guise of Man, that it may more subtly move within the same circles. If you will excuse the blatant anthropomorphization of a Celestine, it's as if the Wyld is going to war, and it has decided to beat the Weaver and the Wurm at their own game. So what we have now is a new crop of gorgons, theoretically "made" in the same fashion as ever, but molded by the Wyld to appear as human in order to better serve its purposes here on Earth.

Unlike fomori, the children of the Wyld do not exhibit power through mutation. Rather, they tend to embody the fluid energy of potential that comes with being avatars of what is essentially the fount of creation itself. As with other possessed, gorgons' abilities stem from a connection to their parent Triatic spirit, but unlike the fomori, who are poisoned with the very power of their sponsor, gorgons seem to be *alive* with it. They revel in the ebb and flow of what might as well

be termed “the power of possibility,” and it fills their existences with promise and power, just as the energy of the Wyrms fills its own children with power and pain.

As with all attempts to single out a spirit in mortal guise, detecting a gorgon can be a shaky proposition. By appeasing the proper spirits, any one of us can be granted their extraordinary perceptions of Triatic influence; as we’ve learned to smell the acrid stench of the Wyrms, so too can we learn to discern the riotous texture of smells that characterizes the Wyld. Even so, this method can hardly be considered foolproof. A great many things smack of the Wyld, particularly in areas which are strong in spiritual energies, and what might be mistaken for a gorgon could just as easily be some other, Wyld-related phenomenon. Possibilities upon possibilities, after all.

According to the *Apologues*, there are very few chance encounters with gorgons. They come when they are sought after; the most success at detecting the presence of gorgons was found when those involved actively searched for the hand of the Wyld. Now, one would think that this was a simple truism: If one is looking for something, one is far more likely to come across it. However, the stories allude to a bizarre “cause and effect” in their detection of gorgons. Apparently, the simple act of *anticipating* them raises one’s chances of detecting them, and thus, being correct in one’s initial suspicions. The cause for this is still hotly debated. Some of my colleagues believe this is because the cause-and-effect nature of deductive reasoning ever-so-slightly strengthens the Weaver, thus ever-so-slightly weakening the Wyld where the gorgon is concerned, and thereby allowing the creature’s presence to be made known to its pursuers.

Other, less pessimistic Garou argue just the opposite, that faith and interest in the Wyld creates *strength* in the Wyld, thus connecting the gorgon with its would-be pursuers on a fundamental, spiritual level. Some take this notion to an extreme, outlandishly suggesting that gorgons are, in effect, like Schrödinger’s infamous cat. Once a potent belief in a gorgon’s existence takes shape, then the Wyld is permitted (or, perhaps even obligated) to reinforce that belief, inducing the gorgon itself to take shape in that exact same instant. Since this assumes that no gorgon exists until someone first believes in it, my tendency is to disregard this theory altogether. The Wyld existed before there were any sentient beings to believe in it; why should it require faith to work its miracles?

The Inhuman Condition

Like any Theurge, I have spent some time musing over the relative possibilities of “curing” fomori from the

possession of their Bane hosts (without slaying the host, mind), but such a discussion takes on a different life when applied to gorgons and their Wyldling infusions.

I don’t consider the gorgons enemies, either of myself or of the Garou Nation. I realize that the Wyld cares nothing for Gaia or for the balance of the world, but I don’t think that its children are set against us the way that the Wyrms and Weaver’s minions are. I and my sisters try to learn about them so that we can aid them when possible and restrain them without destroying them when necessary. I don’t think of gorgons as victims, as something that need be “cured” — although admittedly, I might change my mind if I ever came across a gorgon with a wolf host. Therefore, please understand that when I speak of the separation of spirit and host, I don’t intend to recommend that we try to put these principles into action whenever possible. I merely want to offer lore that might prove useful should the occasion arise.

To properly understand the possibility of removing the Triatic influence upon a creature that is or has become the gorgon, we must first remember that there are two distinctly different categories of gorgons: Exogenetic gorgons and possessed gorgons. The former are those which the Wyld creates “whole cloth” out of the raw clay of physical matter; they are, I would warrant, far rarer in the modern era than they were back when the Wyld was stronger. The latter are those gorgons who emerge when a Wyldling spirit infuses itself into a pre-existing entity (such as a brown bear or a Douglas Fir), and it is these latter which bear the brunt of our speculation.

The answer to the question of whether or not exogenetic gorgons can be “cured” is a simple one: They cannot. As the name would suggest, gorgons of this type are the product of the Wyld’s facility with exogenesis (the power to create from nothingness), as we see it. As such, there is truly nothing to cure them of — these creatures are what they are, and have always been. To attempt to separate the spiritual portion of the being from its fleshly host would likely result in death. And even if the attempt was somehow successful, all that would be left behind is an idle mass of simple matter, possessed of no driving life force. I doubt that any one of us here would even be so callous as to try.

Possessed gorgons, on the other hand, are a different matter. When a Wyldling infuses itself into a pre-existing entity, a “standard” possession takes place — standard if only because it matches the model of the fomori. However, we have reason to believe that in the case of gorgons, the Triatic spirit latches not only onto the body, but onto the subject’s *essence* as well. I’ve heard it said from powerful and wise healers that

fomori endure a constant struggle between spirit and host, as though the grip of the Bane is tenuous at best; even the most depraved of fomori, long since resigned to their lot, seem to exhibit an almost argumentative duality. In gorgons, even the non-exogenetic ones, there seems to be no such struggle between the two "halves." Now, this may stem from the fact that the Wyld only chooses to possess what we tend to designate as "non-sentient" creatures — animals and plants, and the like — but it might also be a function of the creature's inherent acceptance of the Wyld as a greater part of the natural order. As though, perhaps, the natural things of this world understand on a cellular level just how mad the Wyrms have become.

Or perhaps just how vital the Wyld has always been.

I think that it is possible for a Wyldling to be "convinced" to evacuate its host under certain specific circumstances, not all of which are under our control. The traditional methods of exorcism are not always entirely reliable when applied to gorgons, or more accurately, when applied to the Wyldling in residence. But it is possible that there are some things that seem to "upset" the infused spirit. When these things reach a certain level — a critical mass that the spirit finds entirely unacceptable — the spirit often vacates the host, leaving it to its own devices.

One such upsetting eventuality is a disease called cancer. I tend to believe that not only does the Wyld tend to avoid possessing sick creatures in the first place, but it even goes so far as to abandon its hosts when they become sick. Now, I feel I must make the distinction here: "Hurt" and "sick" are two different things, especially to the Wyld. An animal which has been beaten and neglected by its owner is actually a rather attractive host prospect to the Wyld-spirit; it seems to savor empowering an underdog to leap several places up the food chain, or at least to become more powerful than its usual enemies or predators. But an animal that is rotting away from the inside, one suffering from a debilitating illness that has tainted the core of the creature itself, is of no use to a Wyld-spirit. While it may "cost" very little energy output on the spirit's behalf to reinvigorate a malnourished dog, it is simply too large a task to be worthwhile to try and cure said dog of canine leukemia. I personally find this unfortunate; life as a gorgon may be preferable to life with a debilitating ailment.

One mitigating fact is that once the Wyld has committed to investing a portion of its essence into a creature, the subject tends to grow much stronger. In other words, while a Wyldling may initially avoid possessing an animal because it is sickly, a healthy animal host is far less likely to ever become sickly under

the aegis of its spirit companion. Indeed, it seems that once the Wyldling has taken hold, its animal (or plant, of course) host tends to contract sickness and disease with an alarming rarity. Still, if by some chance one could (or would) force a calamity like cancer upon the gorgon after its possession, it is safe to assume that the resident Wyldling would likely abandon the creature not long thereafter.

Wyldlings

Hmm. Now we come to the meat of it. To understand the process of Wyld-possession, it's necessary to understand the nature of the Wyld-spirit responsible.

Yes, I thought you'd find the idea amusing.

And that is the problem that has faced my sisters — and my brothers and sisters of other tribes who devote themselves to such things — for millennia. How do you understand something that is the purest child of purest chaos, change, potential? The offspring of the Wyld are far more varied and multitudinous than the get of either of his Triatic siblings. Whereas Banes are most often tied to those concepts that are prevalent in humanity's darker side — emotions that allow them to feed and grow — Wyld-spirits have no such identifiable structure. Instead, they can only be categorized by the function they *appear* to serve for their parent Triatic spirit. Some Wyldlings seem to embody the utter chaos of the Wyld, while others still serve as a vibrant, spiritual force for energy and change.

Daunting, yes. But still, patterns emerge. The Wyld is not as strong as once it was, and although the Wyrms no longer balance the Wyld as it should, the Wyld has lost a portion of its ability to defy *all* rules when manifesting on Gaia. It must play by certain rules if its children are to have any lasting presence. That is why we can manage to classify its children at all.

I'll admit that my focus on learning the ways of the Wyld is something of a specialty. I have learned more lore on the "origins" of Wyld spirits than I have on the origins of Banes, though not necessarily any greater understanding thereof. While the spirits themselves are often *more* difficult to trace than Banes are, I have been able to draw some strong conclusions about their connections to other, slightly more static Triatic phenomena — something I, at least, cannot say of my understanding of Banes.

Thresholds and Abscesses

While we remain unsure as to the true origins of the Wyldlings themselves, we have been able to link their appearance here on the Tellurian to a series of phenomena we call Thresholds. In broad strokes, Thresholds are manifestations of Wyld energy and

influence that seep through the cracks in the massive barrier separating them from the Tellurian — the Gauntlet. They are areas of creation which have been infused with the power of the Wyld, in both the physical and spiritual realms.

Thresholds are fountains of energy, creation and change. As the Wyld made manifest, Thresholds have the ability to spew forth Wydlings seemingly at will (or certainly at random), and it is in this capacity that Thresholds are critically important to this work. Think of Thresholds, if you will, as a combination headquarters (minus the concept of a chain of command, of course) and birthing pit for gorgons. We have reason to believe that many of the Wydlings who come to the Realm specifically to create gorgons use Thresholds as their doorways, and it would stand to reason. After all, the emergent Wydling saves a great deal of energy by slipping through the “back door,” leaving it with more to expend on its one pre-ordained task.

As you all know, the Wyld flourishes in areas where the Gauntlet is already low — places such as rainforests and mountain peaks — where it may more easily push through and establish a beachhead for itself. Unfortunately, a great many Garou caerns are intentionally built right over top of such places, so over time, we have occasionally come into conflict with the invading surge of Wyld energy. Indeed, we have heard scattered reports of septs from around the world which have been forced to take serious measures, such as intentionally increasing the level of the Gauntlet around the caern, just to prevent their land from inexorably falling into the hands of the Wyld.

Why fight this process so defiantly? Quite simply, because a caern which fails to hold its ground against the Wyld becomes what is known as an Abscess. An Abscess is formed when the Wyld uses the energy (and weak Gauntlet) within a caern to establish a powerful Threshold in the vicinity. The result is a freakish and warped garden paradise, alien to the very Garou who call it home, and swarming with the copious evidence of creation itself: Wydlings, gorgons, and other things best left undescribed.

I, like my sisters, believe that the Wyld should not be cut back or “pruned” unless it is absolutely necessary — the state of Creation is already too far out of balance. I believe that a Threshold is something that can be peacefully coexisted with. And I believe that the potential of an Abscess forming within a caern may qualify as one of the times that fighting Wyld growth may — may — be necessary. The unchecked growth of an Abscess may well result in the utter loss and alienation of a caern. If the Litany did not compel me to resist such a thing, my own conscience would.

The last important characteristic of Thresholds and Abscesses is more of a by-product than anything else: They are essentially ground zero for the spread of gorgon activity in a given area. It’s helpful to know, that given enough reports from which to work, a skilled mind could triangulate the incidents of local gorgon appearances, and thereby find the source of their numbers — the Threshold itself. Such information can be quite useful in determining what the best course of action in any given situation might be.

Ways and Means

I suppose it would be helpful if I could go into great detail on the activities and habits of Wydlings, but I’m afraid I have very little solid lore to share. Obviously, Wydlings come and go with great frequency and randomness. This is not to say that they “die” quickly, mind, as we don’t know for sure where they go when they disperse — simply that a particular spirit has vanished, presumably back into the Wyld. One might make an argument that the prodigious productivity of the Wyld demands that there be great numbers of Wydlings “born” every day — or that such was the case in happier times. I would like to believe that there are simply more Wydlings than Weaver and Wyrms spirits combined. After all, creation is not the Wyrms’ strong suit, and the sum total of all Banes might be limited by a number of cosmic concerns, or even by the general state of humanity at any given time, with fewer angry people indicating an allowance for fewer Banes, and so on. The fount of limitless possibility is likely to be less limited than either of its Triatic siblings in this way. And yet, we stand guard over the Wyld places precisely because the Wyld is losing — it falters and fails while the others grow ever stronger. So as much as I would like to believe that the Wydlings outnumber all other Triatic spirits, I cannot bring myself to do so.

I can state with some confidence that Wydlings tend to embody a specific (and often alien) notion, much as Banes are distinguished by their given dominant emotional focus. When manifesting, many Wyld-spirits appear to be engaged in a particular activity, often repeated endlessly. They spin around along the same axis, or fold in upon themselves over and over without reducing their apparent size. These Wydlings represent the ideas and ideals to which the Wyld itself holds; everything the Wyld means in and to both the spiritual world and the Tellurian, Wydlings embody and portray in living color.

And lastly, of course, Wydlings are the Wyld’s spiritual messengers and children, as well as the mothers to her grandchildren, the gorgons. We dare not say that some or even any Wydlings are deliberately set loose upon the world merely to find and create gorgons,

though perhaps this notion is changing. What we can say is that for whatever reason, some Wydlings decide they must merge with a natural host of some kind, thereby creating a gorgon. It would be only fitting that now, in the age where fomori breed out of control and even the Weaver forges her own flesh-and-spirit servants, that Wydlings are now being chosen more and more often to leap inside the things of this world at their parent's behest. Some of my sisters claim that there are more gorgons here on Earth right now, as of this moment, than there have ever been before — not because the Wyld is stronger, but because its *need* is stronger than it ever has been before.

Why Ask Why

When dealing with things of the Wyld, it is often tempting to ask the question, "Why?" Unfortunately, the shortest and sadly the best answer to this is simply, "because." The longer and more frustrating answer requires a bit more explanation.

Any researcher or mystic who attempts to codify or even to broadly explain the motivations of the Wyld and/or its spirit avatars is inviting serious frustration. When dealing with an entity which is vaster in scope and power than the average mind can even conceive, questions come fast and hard, and with them come no reliable answers. This, in turn, only begs more questions, at least from the typically inquisitive "human" mind. This endless cycle of frustration has driven more than one dedicated mystic to madness, and befuddled no few others to the point where they decry all subsequent attempts at reasoning out any pattern in the means and methods of the Wyld — if it even *has* things that can be roughly compared to motivations.

Still, the Wyld's activities of late — particularly where gorgons are concerned — do seem to indicate a growing awareness of structure and strategy, if not ordered pattern. Sadly, these new developments are providing no more reliable answers for hungry minds, only feeding the frenzy of incessant questioning. Does it all indicate that the Wyld is finally succumbing to the relentless homogenizing power of the Weaver? Could it mean, perhaps, that the Wyld can truly learn over time, and not just act and adapt in an endless embodiment of the birth-death-rebirth cycle?

Frustrating as it may be, the safest thing to do where the Wyld is concerned, when it really comes down to it, is not to question but to simply react. At least then, some legitimate answers may begin to emerge, though they may not be the ones that the enterprising shaman or Theurge is seeking.

If this is true, there may even be some cause for true alarm.

Wyldling Types

What sort of Wydlings breed gorgons, you ask? It's difficult to tell; almost impossible, really. I've never been present for the creation of a gorgon, and neither have any of my living sisters. We can but speculate on which Wydlings serve as spiritual infusions, bringing new life and energy to their various hosts, and which are the spiritual equivalent of a nucleus to the emergent gorgon, the Wyldling core at the center of a complex and energetically composite entity.

- **Wyld Elementals:** Yes, the Spinner has its own elementals. However, these elemental spirits are far less knowable and predictable than those that have been birthed by Gaia — they are creations of the unformed stuff that was later refined into truer forms. The most powerful of these are the Mammatus, who are great, furious air-spirits; the Empyros, who are mighty beings of inchoate fire; the Terrene, who shift earth about them wherever they tread; and the Atlua, who embody the ever-shifting, ever-fertile aspects of water. When a Wyld elemental possesses a fleshly host, the results are striking and almost frightening — picture a tree with leaves of ever-burning flame, or a bear with skin of earth and stone. Though both aspects of the gorgon may be found in nature, that does little to diminish the sense of... wrongness that follows such a creature.

- **Passions:** Passions are the Wyld's emissaries of emotion and instinct. These powerful spirits reflect the most basic of mental and emotional states among animals, such as anger, joy, fear, or despair. As with all things Wyld, Passions are not restricted to any one individual or even generalized set of behaviors, and they adopt whatever emotions they choose or happen to come across. They are known to flicker between

Wyld Elemental

Rage 5 to 9, Gnosis 5 to 9, Willpower 7,
Essence varies

Charms: Airt Sense, Materialize, Re-form, Blast (appropriate element), Swift Flight (air only), Liquefy (water only)

Image: Wyld elementals appear as constantly shifting masses of the appropriate element, never maintaining one form the way that Gaian elementals might. Some may even shift from element to element — a Wyld water elemental could suddenly "evaporate" into a Wyld air elemental, or the Wyld air elemental might abruptly "condense" into a watery form, changing its Traits to match.

even the most contradictory emotions as they dart through and around the creatures of the Tellurian. Passions are similar to Banes in the regard that they pick up on the emotional states of those nearby them. If you are wise enough, and you are able to maintain focus, you might even be able to influence their behavior. We believe Passions sometimes create gorgons that are emotions given flesh — no real rationality, only a physical form devoted to a specific feeling that would benefit the Wyld. Not corrupt, like Banes of the Urge Wyrms — but emotion in such a concentrated form that it would be very, very dangerous.

Passion

Rage, Gnosis, and Willpower — any combination totaling 18, Essence 18

Charms: Airt Sense, Draw Pathos,* Incite Frenzy, Materialize, Re-form, Swift Flight

***Draw Pathos:** This charm allows the Passion to bask in the radiance of a subject's emotional intensity, and thereby draw strength from it. Any creature experiencing a peak emotional state of the sort the spirit is currently adopting makes a viable target for use of this power. The Passion rolls either its Rage, Gnosis or Willpower — the emotion in question governs which Trait is used — against a difficulty equal to the target's Willpower. If the roll is successful, the Passion may recharge any *one* of its core Traits to full.

Image: Only the number of emotions from which they may draw strength limits the possible appearances of Passions. They typically appear as crackling sparks of energy amid swirling balls of colorful mist. There is no set correspondence between a Passion's given emotion and any one color scheme; Passions of anger, for instance, may appear in various shades of red, yellow, orange and black, but they are not bound to these colors. The only constant is that a Passion's overall coloration, whatever it may be, tends to appear more vibrant whenever it has just recently "fed."

- **Scofflaws:** A Ragabash sister was the one to name these particular spirits; the name has stuck. These Wyldlings are something like the Unravelers, a more common sort of Wyld-spirit. But the Unravelers exist to break apart matter into its components, while the Scofflaws exist to break apart natural laws. Gravity might not work in a Scofflaw's presence. Fire might burn cold, a blow might not send something flying in the right direction. The laws of... yes, physics, that is the word. The laws of physics would work differently.

Scofflaw

Rage 6, Gnosis 5, Willpower 4, Essence 15

Charms: Virtually any that seem appropriate

Image: Like the Unravelers, a Scofflaw appears something like a small tornado; however, they are remarkable for their tendency to move at strange angles, along surfaces that aren't there or through objects that are.

Those gorgons that use powers to disrupt the natural way, they may have something to do with the Scofflaws.

- **Gyres:** Also called the Ouroboros, Gyres are the spiritual manifestation of hope itself. The Wyld's promise of birth, growth and renewal — the ideal the Triat itself represents — resides in these silent and ever-moving spirits. The Garou once looked upon the discovery of a Gyre as an omen of great change and rebirth, and such an appearance sometimes heralded the emergence of a great leader within the Garou Nation in ages past. The Gyres may also, it is said, appear at the time of a particularly favored gorgon's creation — the gorgon heralded by such a momentous presence likely has a significant amount of spiritual power in it, and therefore a great role to play.

Gyre

Rage 2, Gnosis 9, Willpower 5, Essence 20

Charms: Airt Sense, Armor, Cleanse the Blight, Healing, Materialize, Realm Sense, Re-form

Image: Gyres appear as circles of varying shapes, sizes and consistencies. Some are composed of an eerie blue or violet flame, while others still resemble serpents engaged in the act of swallowing their own tails. The act of gazing upon the spinning, perfect symmetry of a gyre has been known to bring back Garou long since thought lost to Harano, and none that have encountered a Gyre returned from the experience unchanged in some way.

- **Serpentines:** Since the arrival of the Eye, these spirits have taken an active role in the crusade to heal the Wyld of its loss and pain through direct involvement in earthly affairs. They have been seen ever more frequently of late, and have even timely appeared near wounded Garou on occasion, offering their services as healers and asking nothing of them in return. Where gorgons are concerned, Serpentine put their talents to good use by possessing hosts that have been damaged or mistreated in some way. The spirit then heals the wounded creature, imbuing it with a surge of the energy of limitless possibility. The resultant gorgon thus serves

Serpentine

Rage 1, Gnosis 8, Willpower 4, Essence 14

Charms: Airt Sense, Curing, Healing, Materialize, Realm Sense, Re-form

Image: More often than not, Serpentine appears as a pair of floating snakes composed of a shimmering light substance. Although the spirit appears to be two different entities, it simply inhabits separate bodies simultaneously, and any individual attack that harms the one will likewise harm the other.

the Wyld in two ways: not only as a gorgon, but in becoming a gorgon, as the simple act of renewal and regrowth serves to fuel the overall power of the Wyld.

Hosts

What of the Spinner's chosen few? Those creatures to which the Wyld is drawn to bestow a single life-twisting kiss? Well, as has been mentioned previously, human beings are apparently out of the running. This is most likely due to humanity's close association with the Weaver, and due to the fact that humans, while easily drawn to power and vice (things of the Wyrms), are rarely actively drawn to chaos and madness. This instant adversarial relationship makes the prospect of possessing humans a tiring and inefficient one. If there exist natural bodies that don't mind the spiritual intrusion, better to use them and leave the humans alone. Theoretically, primates are fair game, though I have yet to hear of a single occurrence of a gorilla or the like being possessed by a Wyldling.

By all accounts, the Wyld seems to "pick" its would-be hosts from among a peculiar cross-section of creation. Although there's ample reason to believe that it chooses the more hale and hearty of a given species, I would remind you of those creatures which are rescued near death by the Wyld, their wounds miraculously healing up in seconds. For every pattern that seems to emerge, we find two reasons why it isn't really a pattern at all. Again we see that there seem to be no hard and fast rules where the Wyld is concerned. I know, I'm being repetitive. Forgive me; my tongue isn't that of the Galliard.

Animal Hosts

Animals can and most often do become gorgons, even more so since the appearance of the Eye of the Wyrms. From the data we've gathered, it seems that animals are the perfect combination of pre-existing matter, mobility and lack of sentience that the Wyld needs in order to do its work. Although it's a dangerous

assumption to suggest that there is anything that the Wyld cannot do, it does stand to reason that the entity would first look for life forms already in existence before moving on to creating gorgons wholesale out of thin air. A Galliard-sister of mine compared the Wyld to a great sculptor, and the comparison seems to fit. If a sculptor is given proper clay ahead of time, rather than having to gather and mix earth and water to his satisfaction, then any resultant sculpture will be finished quickly and more efficiently. So, animals must present an attractive prospect to the Wyld.

Much as animals possessed by Banes are usually more hardy and combat-capable than their mortal counterparts, so too are animal gorgons — more so, in fact, from what we've seen. The Wyld's preference for animals gives it a facility with their forms that is unmatched by the Wyrms'. Indeed, one of my sisters reports having witnessed a ferocious battle between a single bear whom he believed was a gorgon and an entire pack of Bane-infested dogs. He relates that the dogs seemed uneasy on their feet, pain-ridden even, while the bear appeared to revel in the strength afforded him by his possessing Wyldling. In the end, the bear was more than a match for the Wyrms'-tainted pack, many of whom even appeared thankful to the bear for relieving them of their accursed existences. Although it would have been in keeping for normal dogs to have retreated from the fray once their pack had suffered serious losses, these miserable animals continued to throw themselves at their opponent until one and all lay either dead or dying. Her account reminds us that where the Wyrms' is concerned, there are only Pyrrhic victories, and that loss and death are never their own reward.

Plant and Mineral Hosts

Animals are not the only creations the Wyld and her minions find attractive. Though they are by far the more commonly possessed, the Wyld also has occasion to infuse a piece of itself into other entities. The second most common hosts are plants, and trees in particular. Their photosynthetic systems are quite useful, and the Wyld finds its energy well saved and spent when it draws upon the plant kingdom for its avatars. However, if our theories are true regarding the "strategy" of gorgons that mimic human form, plant-form gorgons must be even less efficient at passing for human than gorgons with animal hosts.

Mineral hosts, although all but unheard of even in the *Apologies*, are indeed possible as well. Do not laugh! Those tales that could be attributed to mineral gorgons would suggest that the Wyld seems to possess either smaller, singular rock creations, or larger, area-

based rock formations. Either way, the Wyld seems to be “sensible” enough to use those mineral structures that already have a basic purpose defined to them by their shape. It is this purpose that likely attracts the Wyld spirit in the first place. For example, a large four-armed statue hewn of solid rock would make a wonderful gorgon sentry or soldier, should the Wyld be willing and able to co-opt it for its own use. Due to influence by the Designer on such an artificial stone, the possession itself might be a bit more difficult for the spirit — of course, I am falling into conjecture again. I would imagine that Wyldlings would be unhappy with the “stiffness” of stone, and that they would possess mineral hosts for short periods of time at best. A mass of stone that has been sufficiently filled with Wyld-energy to be satisfactory would likely become a Threshold, not a gorgon. Though the Wyld is not an entity of abstract efficiency as the Weaver is, it has too little left to it to indulge regularly in greatly inefficient pursuits.

Gorgon Breeds

... Forgive me. I've spoken for such a long time, and I'm not used to it. I haven't even properly talked about the “breeds” of gorgons that we've noted. They are very few, by our count; each gorgon may be so customized to the specific circumstances of its “birth” that there will never be another like it. Those few patterns that seem to recur are those tied to the Wyldlings I mentioned before: the Wyld elementals, the Passions, and so on. But we still know so little.

Elemental Gorgons

Great-Howl-Rising stands and bows, waits for permission, and then shares his own tale:

Hail to the wisdom of Amethyst Wing-Mender, and hail to the wisdom of her sisters. You have said important things here; let us say things for you now. There are many great heroes at this moot, many wise observers and rememberers. Some who have seen these gorgons, not knowing what they were until you gave us your lore. Let us give our lore to you now.

You describe Wyld-spirits that are of wind and earth, water and fire, yet not like those spirits born of Gaia. You say they bind themselves into animals and plants, but that it is rarely seen. I have seen one.

I have come from the north to be here. Where I hunt, fire is weaker and water stronger. That is as it should be. But when I hunted one day, I saw a fire that was strong even when it was surrounded by water, by snow and ice. At first I thought it was a burning elk; then when I smelled that its hair and



flesh were not burning, I thought it was a spirit-elk that wore flame like humans wear clothing. But it did not flee when it saw me, nor did it acknowledge me as a predator that would hunt it. It danced on the hills, and it touched its antlers to trees, and the trees burned. Only when I leapt at it to chase it did it run from me — but the trees still burned, trees that were hung with water and ice and snow before the fire-elk came.

It was not an elk that wore fire. It was fire that wore an elk. And that is what I saw.

Elemental Gorgons

The gorgons formed by the fusion of a Wyld-elemental and a mortal form (or the rarer exogenic elemental gorgons) are a breed by virtue of similar traits, not similar function. They seem to serve no greater purpose, although they may serve as harbingers of great natural disasters caused by powerful Wyld elementals. They seem to be the creations of elemental whim, as if the Wyldlings are toying with the clay of the physical world, half-remembering the days that the earth was still forming from the four elements. To the elemental gorgons, those days have never really ended — the world is still something to remodel as they like.

Powers: (Suggested) Armored Hide (earth), Elemental Resistance, Gaseous Form (air) Hazardous Breath (fire), Flight (air), Liquid Form (water)

Taints: (Suggested) Urges (firestarting, causing floods, or similar behavior)

Nereids

Nathan Shines-in-the-Shadow rises, and speaks:

What you said before about the Passions: it seems familiar. I've never met a Wyld-spirit like that before, but I did meet, once, something that might have had a Passion in it. In her. When I first told this tale, I was told that I had been unwise, but not critically so. Although it's still kind of embarrassing, I think it may be quite relevant.

I run with a hunting pack — we travel quite a bit, hunting down elusive prey and rooting out connections between different cells of enemies. Two years back, we were staying at a hotel in Atlanta, where we'd all met up the night before to go over our most recent task and to take inventory on what supplies and equipment we figured we might need. As is typical, I got to share a room with my lupus packmate: We stay in different rooms from the women of our pack for propriety's sake. It couldn't have been more than five minutes after we left our packmates' room that Longpaw was fast asleep on the floor, making quiet little wolfy noises. As is also typical, I was still wired at that hour and figured a nice soak in the hotel spa might do me some good all around.

Nereids

These unusual gorgons are an example of a Passion given flesh: in this case, the Wyld's appetite for creation and reproduction made manifest. In some ways, they're similar to the Enticer breed of fomori, but such connections begin and end with the desire to attract; Enticers attract to despoil and destroy, Nereids do so out of pure animal desire. Their primary purpose is to attract male creatures of instinct, whipping them into a frenzy of lust in the hopes of taking from them the seed of creation. The symbolic act of "mating with the Wyld" does a number of things, not the least of which is to encourage birth and reproduction in its simplest form. The practice and spread of concepts and activities over which the Wyld has distinct purview results in the Wyld growing ever stronger. The more creatures mate, simply for the sake of indulging in instinct and creating life, the more powerful the Wyld can grow. (Lust specifically for its own sake, or lust borne of a desire for power (such as the so-called lust associated with rape), serves not the Wyld, but the Wyrms. It is a fine, yet critically important distinction.)

On a less symbolic level, mating with the Wyld in such a fashion has some spectacular results where the Changing Breeds are concerned. If a Nereid can convince a Garou or other skinchanger to mate with her, there is a good chance that she will become pregnant. If she does, she must return to the Umbra, there to grow fat with the couple's unborn child. After an indeterminate gestation period, the Nereid returns to the Tellurian, there to give birth in an area strong with Wyld energies (such as a Threshold). The resulting progeny is quite literally the offspring of the union between Gaia and the Wyld—a hybrid of shapeshifter and gorgon. Such potent creatures are both spirit and flesh, strange and wild, and could represent no less than the Wyld's standing army against the Weaver and the Wyrms in the coming Apocalypse.

(Statistics for the offspring of a Nereid and a shapechanger are left for the Storyteller to determine; however, these creatures possess such a powerful Wyld-mind that they aren't appropriate for player characters. Such a character would have little by way of free will or rationality — merely a fervent, obsessive desire to further the cause of the Wyld that makes Ratkin Twitchers look like science teachers. Boring science teachers.)

Powers: (Suggested) Enhanced Attribute (Stamina), Succubus' Veil, Regeneration, Umbral Passage

Taints: (Required) Urges

I threw on an old pair of boxers (I always forget to pack swim trunks for some reason), grabbed a towel, and made my way up to the top floor of the building, where the hotel spa, sauna, and workout room were located. When I walked in to the whirlpool room, I realized that I wouldn't be bathing alone. There, sitting naked in the bubbling water, was hands down the most beautiful woman I had ever seen. Now, I've been around the block enough times to know that you *never* trust a beautiful, naked woman (it's like a free lunch, only more tempting), so I focused and called on the wisdom of my ancestors — a blessing that's saved my life more than once. It might have done so that night, too.

I don't know how my many-times-grandmother Cloud-Caller knew that the woman was trouble, but all of a sudden, her voice was wrapped around my spine, telling me to leave at once. Just then, the young lady motioned me over to join her, and when I hesitated, she opened her mouth wide, as though trying to give *birth* to something orally. To this day, I swear to Gaia that what I saw within was not flesh, or even space, but the swirling essence of a primal emotion.

If I had to guess, I'd say it was desire.

Puddlefeet

Susan White Moon takes her turn:

I believe it was the pile of stuffed animals that first caught my attention. He was standing in front of one of those vending machines you see at rest stops all the time — you know, the kind where you put in your life savings for the opportunity to guide a flimsy little claw around a glass box in hopes of catching something it couldn't possibly lift or carry. But there he was just the same, with the copious evidence of his aptitude at wielding just such a claw lying in a heap at his feet.

My pack had stopped at this combination welcome center/truck stop — the Dixie Girl, I think it was called — for a pee break (and, despite my protestations to the contrary, so Corey could pick up yet more of those Gaia-forsaken cancer sticks he likes to smoke). It was on our way into the Appalachian Mountains, just outside one of the more boring little towns in northwestern Georgia. I was left to my own devices in the “lobby,” watching the weary to and fro of the truck-stop throng, and that's how and when I noticed him.

He didn't seem to be so much concentrating as trying to maintain his focus. It's hard to explain. It was like every fiber of his being wanted to pull away from what he was doing at that moment, but not because he had anything better to do. He was... I don't know, *edgy*. Every so often he'd stop and look around as though scanning for nothing in particular, then he'd go back to dominating the wonderful world of “Claw Land.”

Puddlefeet

The best way to describe a Puddlefoot is to liken them to heralds, sent to the Tellurian bearing gifts from the Wyld. Wherever a Puddlefoot goes, he brings chaos, activity and change with him. From the moment of his possession or exogenesis, a Puddlefoot is driven to strengthen the Wyld through the promulgation of spontaneous thoughts and deeds, and to encourage the same in the other creatures of the Tellurian. The Puddlefoot's motives, such as they are, can rarely be understood by the typical mortal mind. Even direct discourse can prove frustrating, as the questioner attempts to maintain the Puddlefoot's attention long enough to find patterns where they are none to be found.

The average Puddlefoot's behavior seems at first ridiculously erratic. His *modus operandi* are consistent only insofar as one can rely on a Puddlefoot to never use the same means or methods twice in a row. A Puddlefoot lives for change, and changes life — his own and that of the world around him — in order to live. The truth is that Puddlefeet believe that they begin to calcify the minute they stop moving and changing, and in so doing, begin to serve the Weaver. When this happens, they fear they will begin to lose consistency in this world, as they are no longer serving their “greater purpose.” And they know the fate of such fallen Puddlefeet, that the Wyld ultimately withdraws such failed servitors from the Tellurian altogether, dispersing their energy for new and more efficacious use elsewhere.

Powers: (Required) Chaos Engine; (Suggested) Homogeneity, Triatic Sense

Taints: (Required) Derangement; (Suggested) The Fading, Uncontrollable Power, Urges

After a minute or three, he seemed to come to the decision that he'd won enough. He zipped up his coat and strolled past me through the front doors, leaving his “winnings” on the floor behind him. Puzzled, I followed him with my eyes, staring out the glass doors and into the parking lot. What I saw confused me more than a little.

The man happily strolled alongside a row of parked cars in front of the building, pausing only momentarily at each before finally stopping near a dull gray sedan with Alabama plates. I remember the license plate specifically because I was staring at it when it *flew off*. While the man stood by, I watched the plate become unhinged of its own accord and fling itself into the air, bolts and all. The plate spun a few times, then landed in a garbage bin not two feet away from where the man

stood. Satisfied, the stranger bundled up his coat and walked with a spring in his step across the meager lawn toward the interstate.

I found out later that the car belonged to — or, more accurately, had been *stolen* by — a pair of convicts who were on the run from the Birmingham PD, having jumped parole together the week before. I'm not saying our "mystery man" had any prior knowledge of this, mind you — just pointing out one more interesting coincidence in a series of interesting coincidences. If that wasn't a gorgon, I wouldn't ever know one if I saw one.

Reavers!

Barbed-Wire-Scars speaks:

Finally got away from stinking man-road. Took the woods-path into fresh mountains, looking for Wyld-children. Jack-alpha says we head for place where Wyld grows strong. Happy to be out of Weaver-city and too much man-metal-stench.

We stop to camp in glade, not clean but near-clean. Jack reads from paper-sheets and Connie starts mouth-smoke-breath again. I go "on patrol" to avoid wrong-tar-stink and to find food. Walking in wolf-skin, outside camp, maybe a mile, I hear Weaver sounds. Slow hum of man-machines. I take war-wolf skin and follow trail to see-smell.

Through the trees, in a clearing up ahead, I see the man-machine itself. Stabbed into Gaia-ground, making high popping noises. I stop to listen; popping noise comes evenly, every five wolf-breaths. Glass square on front side of man-machine shows set of shifting red lights. I note that red-lights shift evenly with popping noises.

Just then, more sounds. Footsteps-huge, from other side of clearing. Crackling twigs and stomping-pace; approaching animal is very big and very angry. I hide more behind Gaia-tree, watch and wait. Across clearing, Wyld-man-beast bursts from trees into sight. Looks like bear-boar-stag-wolf, walks like human, smells purely of Wyld and is much bigger than human. It sees man-machine and stomps across clearing to it. Looking down, Wyld-man-beast *shimmers* — like heat off of man-road — and the clearing begins to grow warm. Fur on back of neck begins to rise. I don't pant, don't give away position. Then Wyld-hot-beast roars, smoke rising from its maw, as it brings both arms down upon man-machine. Man-machine crackles and blue-light-streaks fly. One hits Wyld-hot-beast and it smiles, closes its eyes. Man-machine pops once more, then dies.

I sit still, waiting for glade to cool and for Wyld-man-beast to leave. Neither one happens. Wyld-man-beast sniffs once, then opens eyes. Turns head to look straight at me, behind Gaia-tree. I fight urge to whine. It sniffs once more, then looks down at broken man-

machine and smiles. Then Wyld-man-beast leaves, just as it came in, as clearing cools.

When I no longer hear crunching footsteps-huge, I feel it safe to move from behind Gaia-tree, and run fast with empty-belly all the way back to camp.

Reavers

In these trying times, the Wyld often needs to make its point at the end of a very large stick. Reavers are, to put it simply, embodiments of the Wyld's fury and frustration. Some Garou interpret them as soldiers or even assassins, but in reality they're more of a complicated reflex action, like a horse's tail swatting a fly.

Reavers are drawn to missions of vengeance and destruction, even more so than their other Wyld counterparts. They tend to appear at places that are strong with Weaver and/or Wyrms energies, and such an appearance typically heralds the arrival of a singularly destructive event of some kind or another. Reavers tend to display a marked lack of subtlety, and thus tend to team up with other more reasoning gorgons and Wyldlings, or else rely solely on the unerring sense of direction they possess where their quarry or prey is concerned.

The most dangerous aspect of the Reavers is their ability to move from target to target without the need for gathering information or receiving instructions. Typically, an "unassigned" Reaver receives each next target by tracking the patterns in rising Weaver and Wyrms energies. When a certain critical mass is reached, the Reaver "locks on" to the offending source, signaling it out as its next "assignment." These single-minded warriors then follow that source relentlessly until either it is destroyed or until another, greater source of Weaver/Wyrms energy demands their attention.

Powers: (Required) Triatic Sense*; (Suggested) Armored Hide, Berserker, Elemental Resistance, Natural Weaponry, Regeneration

Taints: (Required) Urges; (Suggested) Derangement

***Note:** Reavers' Triatic Sense operates at a slightly higher potency with one regard: When the Reaver is using the power to "home in" on his specifically chosen target, the power never fails and will always guide him in the proper direction. While in between "assignments," a Reaver's Triatic Sense power operates in the usual fashion — until the Reaver picks up a new target of choice, of course.

Sangreal

Sterling Woods speaks:

My friends and I, we got this little operation set up out here in Phoenix. There's an awful lot of power and industry moving through this town, if you get my drift, and we aim to be a part of most if not all of it... after a fashion. There ain't a single construction project, bid, RFP, BAFO, or contract negotiation that goes on in this town without our hearing of it and usually getting our fingers in it shortly thereafter. It was during one such operation that I first ran into one of these strange motherfuckers.

The project concerned what would otherwise have been a relatively small sub-contract, installing new girders and pressure gauges in the lab facility over at WhatsitCorp, or whatever that ridiculous dummy company outside of town is called. In either case, we've known for some time that Pentex does some hardcore shit in the bowels of that building, and we'd been angling for a way inside. When we first caught wind of the RFP we were truly amazed — and not a little bit suspicious — at our seeming good fortune. But apparently some Wyrms-tooge did indeed forget to do his homework, and our little outfit was in like Flynn before you could say “cheese.”

So there I was, pretending to be checking the old gauges on Sub-2 while actually looking around for the secret entrance to Sub-3 — you know, the floor that isn't supposed to be there, according to WhatsitCorp's registered blueprints of the facility. When I finally did find one (they'd hidden the door to a web of offices behind a false aluminum backing on one of the central vent shafts), I discovered that someone had beaten me to the punch.

Some guy, dressed all funny and with weird colored hair and eyes, was just completing a systematic search of the lower-level offices I'd just stumbled into. He stood down at the conjunction of a parallel hallway, a pair of wire-rimmed glasses on his face and some kind of black box clutched in his hands. I was so stunned to see him (it?) standing there, that I just blanked for a second. And in that single moment, the “man” turned and silently vanished down the hall.

Three seconds later, when I arrived panting at the “T” created by the intersection of the two corridors, I looked and saw absolutely nothing in either direction. I'd already decided to jump ship by the time the facility alarm sounded, some ten seconds later.

Tommyknockers

Tamala Engine-Strong speaks:

To be honest, I'll openly admit that having one eye is a bummer. Some folks get all defensive, claiming

Sangreal

Sangreal are the strangest of gorgons. They are always exogenetic, and always created with a specific purpose in mind. They seem to be the creation of a Wyld-spirit with a higher level of “sentience” (or at least a mode of reasoning closer to what humans use), as they are born with a specific task in mind and (usually) the wherewithal to carry that task out. Sangreal tasks often seem mysterious and even illogical; some are sent to perform one duty, requiring a minimum of both time and energy, while others are given broad, long-term goals which can take months or even years to accomplish. Their very existence is tied to the spirit world; much more so than other gorgons. They often fade back into the Umbra with greater ease than their fleshly brothers and sisters, and rarely stay on the Tellurian for very long after their chosen quest has been completed.

Powers: (Required) Skin-Shift, Spirit Ties, Triatic Sense; (Suggested) Umbral Passage, Veil Breach

Taints: (Suggested) Fading, Urges

the rights of the independently handicapped, or what have you, but I remember what it was like having two eyes. So, yeah, losing one really is a bummer. Just the same, it's nice to know that there are some things for which having one eye is preferable. That's not to say that the thing itself is always preferable, mind you, merely that having only one eye can get you there in the first place. Take this, for example...

Now, it's no great secret that I'm not the biggest fan of all this outdoorsy shit, the camping and starving and freezing and whatnot, and I've been called on it more than once. I just feel I do more good to the Mother inside the city, you know? Well, anyhow, so we were outside city limits for a while on business, and because I'm no survivalist nut, nobody in my pack was really surprised when I got up from my so-called sleeping bag and went for a walk. Smokin' Joe, the Ragabash we rely on, had already done a good recon of the area and didn't get a bit of Wyrmsign, so we figured it was pretty safe. So when I got up and lit out for a bit, my pack let me go off alone.

Yeah, spare me the raised hackles. I *know* it was dumb, and I've already gotten the censure. Lemme finish, all right?

So I ended up wandering off toward the beaten path, as opposed to away from it — like I said, it's my nature. A ways down the road, back the way we came, I stopped just to listen to the night. That was about



when I sensed something odd in the wind and could faintly hear something coming from the nearby woods, a little ways off the path, by the sound of it. I called on Gaia to ward me against prying eyes, wrapped my scarf around my face for good measure, and slowly walked into the woods toward the sounds.

After a minute or two, there was this dull light starting to emerge from the darkness ahead of me. It could have been a lantern or tent light of some kind, but it was hard to tell with one eye from where I was standing. As I inched closer, I began to make out details. There was a clearing up ahead; a bright yellow tent, a red and white cooler on the ground outside, a green pick-up truck to the rear. The light was coming from a small campfire. There seemed to be something near it, blocking some of the light from my skewed view, but I couldn't quite make it out. So I moved closer. (Look, I was pretty confident in my ability to stay hidden at this point, so I wasn't really very worried. And I'm a big enough girl not to shriek if I saw something funny.)

Well — yeah. I got near enough, and what I saw made my skin crawl. There, hunched beside the campfire, was a short gray guy. Didn't have a stitch of

clothing on, and had this big bulbous head and a multitude of knotted muscle groups in all the wrong places. But it was only a short little thing, and... well, all in all, it didn't remind me of anything so much as a grotesquely distorted child. And still I couldn't see its face. It was huddled by the fire, staring intently at the entrance to the tent.

As I watched, the tent flap opened and a bleach-blond surfer dude emerged, shirtless and blowing into his hands. He looked around for a brief moment, appeared *not* to see the twisted little gray shit standing only five feet away, and headed straight for the pick-up. Needless to say, I started thinking about why he hadn't seen the thing if I could. It was about then that I noticed his campfire; wasn't in a pit, was all sloppily built, and even the slightest breeze would probably light the forest up. About that time I figured it out.

The *thing* was waiting to see what the human was going to do.

So the surfer comes back with an armload of kindling, and he dumps most of it right on top of the campfire. Boom. Fire gets a lot bigger, and I get kind of tense. But the surfer looks pleased with himself, and hops back into his tent. The critter, now — that's

when it stands up. Tiny thing, couldn't have been more than four feet. But with this silent jerk, it jumps across the clearing, landing just outside the entrance to the tent. It reaches up around its neck, produces what I'd swear was a thin, wicked-looking wire, and proceeds to fasten it around the two entry flaps of the tent. Locking the boy in.

And then the creature turned, and I got a look at its face. Shit. It had two black lines for lips, each one twisting upward at either end in a crude caricature of a smile, and a long pointed nose. Big, sick-looking green eyes, set back in these big, shadowy eyesockets, and these watery tears running down its face. Weird little fuck then leaned forward, into the fire, and came out with a handful of smoking coals, still very much alight. It gave a sniff, and with one hand, pulled yet more of that cord from around its neck. It measured out a line of the black material, placing one end at the entrance to the tent. The other it placed into the middle of the campfire, where it immediately lit up. And like some kind of cartoon, the fire ran across the cord toward the tent.

The tent goes up. The guy inside starts panicking, scraping at the tent flaps. He starts trying to uproot the whole mess, but for some reason he can't do it; it's like the tent's been nailed down three times as hard. And I realize the tent's rigged more than what I saw at first, and there's no way that surfer-guy's getting out without some major burns, if not dead.

And what does Little Gray Bastard do? He looks over to where I'm sitting, puts his finger to his lips, and he "shushes" me.

I swear, I got no Wyrms-taint off the critter. He sure wasn't doing anything Weaver-style, and if he was one of Gaia's own, I'm Pam Grier. So I guess he must've been a gorgon, and if anyone can tell me just what the fuck he was doing there and why the fuck he was doing it, I'd be much obliged.

Dealing With Gorgons

Amethyst Wing-Mender takes up the tale again:

I thank those among us that have shared their tales. Although I do not recognize all the gorgons you've spoken of, I do see the touch of the Wyld on each tale. We all do, I believe.

You have all been quite fortunate, as well. Not one of you was forced to come to blows with the gorgons you met. Such a clash can have no real victor; if the Garou triumph, the already failing Wyld has lost another defender, perhaps even another portion of itself, but if the gorgon wins, Gaia loses yet more of her already too few champions.

Tommyknockers

These gorgons interact almost exclusively with humans, and have appeared (in various guises) in the folklore of many tribal cultures over time. At various times they have been called "gremlins," "hobgoblins," or "bogeymen," and have even been mistaken for the fairies with whom they like to keep strange company. They are always exogenic, and only vaguely human-formed.

Tommyknockers have developed a very strange and specialized duty for a gorgon: Keeping the wild (and the Wyld) alive and fresh in the hearts and minds of the children of the Tellurian. These gorgons encourage dread and respect for the Wyld in everything they do. They foster fear of the unknown, and are delighted whenever humans grow more worried about the "unpredictable" happening. Although their niche is so specialized that they are the rarest of gorgon breeds, they are certainly among the most distinctive.

Powers: (Required) Invisibility; (Suggested) Dispersion, Horror, Regeneration

Taints: (Required) Urges; (Suggested) Derangement, Spirit Reflection

It is naturally very difficult to recognize a gorgon for what it is in time to formulate any sort of strategy. It pains me to admit that it's all too likely that many gorgons have perished at the claws of our own kind from sheer ignorance. But if you can, I beg you to observe first if at all possible. Do not attack unless it attacks first. Assist it if your goals are at all similar. The gorgons are a sign of hope, a sign that the Wyld still has a chance.

But they, of course, are also a potential threat.

What else can I say?

Gorgons Are Truly Diverse

Fomori are a study in diversity, but they are nothing next to the gorgons. Any creature that gets its power from the nucleus of possibility itself is a potentially dangerous foe (in every sense) in anybody's estimation — or at least should be. I have seen a gorgon up close, and it made my experiences with the Wyrms-tainted seem predictable and "safe" by comparison. With gorgons, you cannot really know what they'll do or even if it will make any sense to you.

Gorgons Are Not and Never Were Human

Regarding fomori, some more... optimistic Garou believe that you can often "break through" to the

human victim who lies beneath the stranglehold the Wyrms has clasped around its soul. With gorgons, there is rather less to break through to, and this fact more than anything else makes them terrifying opponents. They have no morality for homids to relate to. They are beyond the animal-mind that lupus understand. We learned from the fomori how easy it is to be set off our guard by a thing that looks pleasantly familiar and harmless. But the gorgons are growing more and more versatile, even becoming able to carry off a human seeming for a time. That can be dangerously misleading.

Gorgons Are Neither Friends Nor Enemies

On the surface, many gorgons have a great deal in common with fomori. They hunger, they kill, they tear families and property apart with abandon, and so on. They have much in common with us in that, too. But you cannot tell with a gorgon what obscure purpose is being served, or even if the gorgon serves one at all. The possibility that their actions are completely arbitrary is what frightens most of us about the Wyld, and it should frighten us about the Wyld's children. And more so than with the fomori, it's dangerous to try to get inside a gorgon's mind, or think that you can puzzle out its motivations and purpose. It's likely that you can't. They are all but completely alien to us in both thought and deed. Understand that if you see a gorgon doing something "good" (as opposed to "evil"), that it is a *complete coincidence* in the grand scheme, and should not be taken as any indicator that the freakish thing will ever repeat the behavior, or that it even remotely comprehends what we would call the relative morality of its actions.

Conclusion

There. I have spoken far more than I planned, and I hope that I have at least brought a bit more understanding to some of you. I apologize for distracting this moot for as long as I have; but I feel that perhaps it will be worth it. If we are to defend the Wyld, we must understand it as best we can, so that we do not do it damage in defending ourselves against its reflexive defense mechanisms. Look for its children. Aid them if you can. They are the living hope of regaining Balance — and thus, they are an added hope of saving the Mother.

Designing Gorgons

Whether a gorgon is controlled by a player or by the Storyteller, a number of factors must be considered if one is to become a regular fixture of your game:

- What sort of gorgon is it? First, is the gorgon a possessed gorgon or an exogenetic one? In either case, if the gorgon is meant for player use, it should likely purchase the Skinshift power (see the Appendix), though possibly at a reduced cost, depending on Storyteller allowance and/or preference. After this, decide on the rest of the background details. Did the gorgon come into being as a result of a tree joining forces with a Wyldling? It's very important to understand the history of a gorgon, as history and purpose and identity are often inexorably intertwined.

- What makes the gorgon a suitable ally or antagonist? Depending on what sort of game you're running, the role of the gorgon character or characters can run the gamut, from a brief enigmatic foreshadowing appearance to the largest, focal characters of the story. You need to decide what, why, and how much the gorgon(s) will be involved with your other players' characters. In the case of typical **Werewolf** games, your gorgon might play the role of an occasional cohort, often doubling as some time antagonist, depending on the goals and aims of all involved. If the gorgon is going to be a long-running ally of the pack or group (mainly appropriate only if the rest of the pack is dedicated to the defense of the Wyld, such as a mixed Black Furies and Red Talons pack), you need to decide why and if everyone involved knows the full story on their new ally. In the case of all-gorgon games, this becomes something of a moot point, but it's still worthwhile to analyze what sort of unique talents and skills each character will bring to the group.

- What types of resources can a gorgon bring to bear? Beyond the typical collection of powers, Taints and Abilities, what does the gorgon have at its disposal? Does it have a spirit patron of some sort? If it manages to spend time as a "faux human," has it managed to acquire some true assets in the mortal world? Perhaps the gorgon has developed Allies or Contacts in its dealings. While it is unlikely that any gorgons will ever truly become a part of society, it is not unreasonable to assume that one with the proper power and intellect might make the most of its time and energy on Earth.

Playing Gorgons

Playing a gorgon character is a sight more difficult and complex than it may seem at first glance. Even if one opts to play one of the more "goal-directed" gorgon breeds, there are still considerations which must be taken into account. Foremost is the issue of madness. In many ways, in order to truly roleplay a servitor of the Wyld, one must embody the seemingly senseless and patternless

style of the Wyld. A tall order, considering the tendency of most games to run along narratively sound parameters.

So a delicate balance must therefore be reached. The player must find a good “handle” for his character, a way to get inside the mind of such a creature and to roleplay what he sees therein, without letting the sheer insanity of the paradigm overwhelm how his character can and/or should act. Be alien, be enigmatic, be familiar and be direct. Be violent and be gentle. Be contradictory, and then surprisingly consistent. Don’t be silly, or useless, or wacky; don’t play your character for laughs or for cheap ploys for attention.

Give it a whirl. You’ll be surprised how hard it can be.

Gorgons and Autonomy

Unlike other possessed characters, gorgons would seem not to have any significant predilection towards developing their Autonomy. After all, how much “freedom” would (or could) a possessed plant ever really want or need? In this light, we see how some gorgons can become powerful in so short a time — they have no fear of giving up their Autonomy in exchange for power.

However, a peculiar thing happens when a spirit — any spirit — joins with a creature of this world. The dichotomy of spirit and host, the same one that exists in a fomor, develops just as fully in all gorgon characters. Even in the case of possessed animals or plants, the increased intellect that comes with being infused by the spirit also increases the potential for wants and desires never held or even understood before. A dog who becomes a gorgon might suddenly find himself understanding much more of the world around and inside it, and could eventually come to resent his tenant’s presence for one reason or another. After all, the maddening thoughts of a Wyldling are more than enough to whittle away the patience of any thinking creature, no matter how simple it may be. And the trade-off is that the higher the gorgon’s Autonomy rating, the more independence it is allowed, and the quieter the demands of the Wyld become.

Thus, all gorgon characters, be they possessed or exogenetic, start with the normal Autonomy rating. In the case of exogenetic gorgons, the Autonomy battle is an interesting one. As they increase in Autonomy,

they don’t begin to stifle the spirit “side” of themselves so much as become more and more capable of thought and action of somewhat less than purest Wyld. Whereas a Puddlefoot with an Autonomy rating of 2 acts more or less at the whims of his Urges and his instinct, one with an Autonomy of 9 has more room to move, to breathe, to enjoy life. He doesn’t necessarily have to obey his random chaotic thoughts all the time, and can act more in accordance with whatever personality he has developed over time.

Ultimately, the Autonomy battle can only end one of two ways for an exogenetic gorgon: If he raises his Autonomy to 10 (and gets Storyteller permission), he may free himself from the material world altogether, returning back “home” to the Umbra for as long as he desires. His will is now his own. Alternately, he can appeal to the Wyld itself (or perhaps to a powerful spirit servitor thereof) for freedom. The exogenetic gorgon grants that without the Wyld it would have no life, but it pleads to its mother for a chance at true independence, to be free to live and do as it chooses. Though such a request happens rarely (it is the equivalent of forsaking everything familiar in one’s existence, merely for the opportunity at something unknown), it is actually granted more often than not when it does come. In no case, however, can an exogenetic gorgon “exorcise” the spirit side of himself. It is a fundamental part of his very being, now and forever.

Possessed gorgons have different options at their disposal. If our possessed dog, for example, ever reaches an Autonomy of 10 he can (again, with Storyteller permission) choose to force his spirit side into a state of “quiet.” This has the effect of shutting down the maddening thoughts and impulses to the point where independent thought and feeling are entirely dominant. Again, actual exorcism of the spirit is only possible through outside interference, and in the unlikely event that such interference is even successful, the end result would be the gorgon returning to its natural state. In the case of our canine gorgon, the character would become an ordinary dog once more, although he may (at Storyteller discretion) retain some of the benefits from his time as a gorgon, such as his advanced intellect and even some of the more comfortable powers he had learned.

The first thing I noticed was the intense heat. It was not just a warm blanket, but a searing force that pushed against my skin. The air around me shimmered, and I could see my breath in a white plume. My eyes were squeezed shut, and I felt a moment of blissful oblivion as the world melted away.

But when I opened my eyes, the world had changed. The air was still, and the heat had faded into a damp, muggy embrace. The ground beneath me was soft and spongy, and I could hear a low, rumbling sound in the distance. It was a sound that I had never heard before, a sound that felt like the earth itself was breathing.

I tried to move, but my legs felt like lead. I reached out with my hands, but they felt numb and clumsy. The air was thick with a strange, metallic scent that made my head spin. I tried to speak, but my voice was hoarse and broken. The world around me was a jumble of colors and shapes that I could not recognize.

The ground beneath me was a dark, pulsing mass that felt alive. It was as if I were standing on top of a giant, breathing creature. The air was still, and the heat had faded into a damp, muggy embrace. The ground beneath me was soft and spongy, and I could hear a low, rumbling sound in the distance.

I tried to breathe, but my lungs felt like they were being crushed. The air was thick with a strange, metallic scent that made my head spin. I tried to speak, but my voice was hoarse and broken. The world around me was a jumble of colors and shapes that I could not recognize.

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From SPENCER '02

Chapter Four: Spirits of the Earth

It is far from easy to determine whether she [Nature] has proved to man a kind parent or a merciless stepmother.

— Pliny the Elder, *Natural History*

Introduction

To whomever reads these words, I offer greetings. My name is Tara Somersby, and I have been told that I am the world's foremost authority on the enigmatic beings known as Kami. If that is so, it is a sad state of affairs, for the extent of my knowledge of these wondrous creatures is pitiful indeed. At the encouragement of one of my tribe-sisters — and perhaps to the anger of my elders, once they find what I have done — I am risking putting my knowledge to paper. Some of my elders claim that to put lore to paper empowers the Weaver and shifts the balance further, but in all honesty, I believe that the risk is worth the actual reward — that the lore of our allies might reach farther, instructing more Garou so that they can be of more service to Gaia and Her children. The following is a written record of all that I have discovered over the course of the past forty-odd years. I hope that someone finds it to be of use.

Besides my own experiences and those related by the various Garou I have met, I have gathered information on the Kami from two main sources. The first of these is the legends and lore of the Asiatic Fera, who have kept

reasonably good records of the Gaian spirits-made-flesh which influence their activities from time to time. It is of course true that the Beast Courts view the spirit world in a manner different from that of Western Garou, and hence much of what they dismiss as myth and legend might in fact have some basis in truth (and vice versa). We must thus use caution when viewing Kami through an Eastern lens. Be that as it may, however, there is a reason that the word has filtered into the Japanese language, and the myths and legends of the Orient can prove to be quite helpful when attempting to discern the nature and activities of the “fomori” of the Earth Mother.

The second source of information for my studies comes from Miguel Guitierrez, a Shadow Lord operating in and around the northern reaches of Mexico. His own studies have focused on the extinct Fera race known as the Camazotz, who in some legends (denounced by several elders as heretical) had stronger ties with Gaia than any other Fera species. If the Garou can be likened to the claws and teeth of Gaia, and the Mokolé to Her memory, and the Corax to Her eyes and ears, then the

Camazotz might best be thought of as Her voice. Some say they knew more of spirit matters than any other beings in the world, and some had the presence of mind to pass their knowledge on to those outside their own kind before they died to the last. Miguel has been investigating this knowledge, and he has passed on what little he learned of Kami to me. I will attempt to organize and relate this information here, so that other Garou might understand what these unique beings have to offer us.

The Awakened

Before we get too carried away, it might be helpful to define just what, exactly, a Kami is. The word appears not only in our own tongue, but also in Japanese folklore, which itself stems from the old Shinto religion common in Japan before the advent of various strains of Buddhism and, later, Christianity. When used in the mortal sense the word "kami" refers to the spirits which reside in all things. The association with a physical object is important; Shinto kami were not simply ghosts, or even what we Garou would call Naturae. Rather, they were spirits found in all physical things, from mountains to billy goats to cardboard boxes, and according to Shinto doctrine were deserving of reverence and respect. Yes, even the boxes.

This way of thinking is hardly alien to most Garou, as we know full well that spirits of nature reside in all physical things, be they living or non. It is important to note, however, that the creatures we call Kami differ from the Shinto concept of the term in a number of important respects. To begin with, Kami are not simply boxes with awakened spirits in them. Such a being is simply an awakened box, not a Kami. A kami becomes a Kami when the spirit goes a step beyond simply awakening. It must go beyond this simple state and *change* the form and function of its host in a fundamental manner. By doing so it gains the ability to manifest certain powers which might be likened to Garou gifts, and I will examine these in some detail in the passages which follow.

Bound in Flesh

In contrast to Drones and fomori, Kami are almost always awakened spirits. While they have host forms, the spirits do not *possess* a body so much as *transform* a body they already occupy. Thus, while Banes and Weaver-spirits and even gorgons must battle with their hosts for control of a body, the awakened spirits that occupy Kami are singularly independent entities. The Kami are manifestations of the touch of the Mother Herself — rare and wondrous as they are, is it any wonder that we revere them rather than revile them?

An important outgrowth of the fundamental nature of Kami is the fact that they *do not exist* prior to the

transformation of their host. In the case of fomori, for example, the spirit that possesses a host is an independent entity prior to the transformation process, and may in fact leave the host body at any time. This is not so with Kami. The spirit that animates a Kami is the reflection of the item or being in the Umbra, and does not exist separately from its host. Thus, Kami are not so much created as born, when Gaia shapes the host-spirit's form into a sentient being, which reshapes the host's being into an extension of Gaia's will.

Those Kami with host bodies may be animals, humans, plants, even awakened portions of land. There are old tales of entire mountains who were awake and invested with Gaia's power — there are still places untouched by humans that might boast grand Kami of that sort. I hope so.

Rarest of all are the Kami that spring forth from the Mother full-formed — they have no true host as such, but rather form their body from the matter around them as needed. Such Kami are halfway between the fusion of spirit and flesh that typifies gorgons and the spirit-made-solid of a materialized spirit. I don't know whether such Kami even play by the biological rules of the hosts they seem to resemble — do they need to eat or drink, do they age? I cannot tell.

Kami and Naturae

Because of their general similarity, many Garou assume that Kami and Naturae are somehow connected. After all, both represent thematic elements of Gaia's personification, and both perform tasks that are superficially similar. However, an important distinction between Kami and Naturae is the fact that Naturae are entirely spirit, and usually reside in the Umbra, while Kami are material things housing spirits which have been awakened within them. Though outwardly quite similar, Kami and Naturae in fact have no further connection besides their common service to Gaia, and tend to find one another just a little bit odd.

Behavior

Kami act primarily to defend themselves and to carry out whatever task they feel Gaia's set for them. This may amount to defending a particular parcel of land (particularly if the Kami happens to *be* a portion of land), but it might also include aiding the process of life in any number of fashions. A prairie Kami, for example, will take actions to defend an open stretch of wilderness, but will also seek to hobble agents of the Weaver or Wyrms who intrude in such areas. Similarly, a bison Kami will seek to defend its herd from human and Wyrms corruption, but will also protect the land on which it dwells. No matter the Kami's

form, its duties tend to involve some measure of defense of both land and the living.

While Kami are ultimately dedicated to protecting the process of life in one form or another, they are not necessarily concerned with living things *per se*; rather, it is the proper functioning of Gaia's cycle that most concerns them. This means that a Kami is perfectly willing to kill to achieve its ends, and that its ends might even involve the deaths of living things. I have heard that a Kami in the northern United States, for instance, was quite concerned about burgeoning deer populations in recent years, and took to killing off a significant number each autumn so that entire populations of deer don't suffer during particularly harsh winters. Though such extreme methods may seem harsh, they represent Gaia's way of maintaining balance among the living, so that the process of life may continue, even if individuals must die.

Serving the Mother

Whereas fomori are vessels for fundamentally selfish Banes, and Drones are essentially automatons carrying out the Weaver's orders, Kami tend to be fairly independent. They also tend to be fairly singular manifestations of Gaia's will, since they are not typically free spirits to begin with. A Kami who takes the form of an elephant will be completely different from a Kami who takes the form of an oak tree, and both will likewise be completely different from one who becomes the voice of a tallgrass prairie. Like life itself, the ranks of Kami are filled with infinite diversity, and they take every form the mind can imagine.

Given their uniqueness, it should come as no surprise that Kami are fairly independent. Gaia gives Her children awareness, and allows them to pursue Her work in whatever fashion they see fit. As such, most Kami are not even aware of the existence of other Kami, and they have no real society to speak of. They simply perform their work with the fanaticism a Drone would admire, lashing out at those who corrupt the world around them and hiding from those who would hurt them.

Kami are rarely organized beings. They do not burrow into the organizations of their enemies, and they do not often have long term plans or goals. They are quintessentially Wyld, and do their work and live their lives in the here and now. A lost puppy or needy family can snag their attention, but the long-range goals of corrupt corporations are utterly beyond them. Paradoxically, however, many are also very old, and exhibit tremendous patience in achieving their goals. This does not mean said goals are more intricate or far-reaching than those of any other Kami, however; far from it. It simply means that they will continue to fight for their goal even if it might take a century or more to achieve. It is Gaia's work. Long or short, that is all that matters.

Body and Mind

Once a host body has been transformed into a Kami, it can never return to its former state. The host and spirit can no more be separated than can a human's body and mind. This tends to make Kami a bit more cautious about their behavior than are Drones, fomori or gorgons. They recognize the fact that they are not simply riding around in vessels of some sort — the bodies they possess belong to them, and they cannot simply depart if the body ceases to function. Not surprisingly, then, Kami are often skittish around other spiritual beings, and frightened of more lethal creatures such as, well, ourselves, other Fera or more powerful spirits. When coupled with their rarity, this makes finding them very difficult, and as such most Garou are not even aware of their existence. Should you stumble across one, then, you must use great care in approaching it. These beings are unique and incredibly valuable, and we must make every effort to build good relationships with the few that we encounter.

Geasa

It is one of the fundamental truths of the spirit world that everything has a price. Even the greatest spirits are bound to behave in accordance with their purpose: The Wyrn cannot create, the Wyld cannot Name, the Weaver cannot pursue change. Even Kami are bound by this principle. In return for the insight and powers they receive, they must abide by the rules set over them.

We may never really understand the precise nature of a Kami's duty; they do not discuss such matters with outsiders, even Garou, and they might not even know the particulars themselves. But it becomes evident that each Kami works under one of the oldest spirit pacts, the geas. Just as we take the ban of our totems upon ourselves to prove ourselves worthy of the gifts bestowed on them, the Kami receive these taboos as a price for the direct blessings of Gaia Herself. They must act in accordance with these prohibitions, or lose a measure of favor. And just as in our own relations with our totems, the price is a small one to pay.

Hosts

As I've previously mentioned, individual spirits do not select host bodies for Kami; rather, Gaia Herself selects them, often for reasons known only to Her. Since each Kami is unique, it follows that a huge variety of host bodies are suitable for transformation, and in the passages that follow I will attempt to lay down some general guidelines for what types of individuals get selected, and why, and what happens as a result.

Animal and Plant Hosts

Plant and animal hosts are the most common forms of Kami, as they are plentiful throughout the

world and relatively unsullied by either the Weaver or Wyrms touch. There is no particular pattern to the plants and animals chosen to be Gaia's voice; sometimes She chooses a mighty elephant, and sometimes She chooses a meager chipmunk. The form of the Kami doesn't really matter, since Gaia, not their physical bodies, grants the power they wield.

Are Garou Kami?

It's at this point in the discussion that many Garou ask me if we are not, ourselves, flesh-borne Kami. After all, we are spirits made flesh, and we are here for a very specific purpose: to protect Gaia from humanity, and to push back the Wyrms which threatens to consume Her. Doesn't it make sense that we might be thought of as Kami?

In truth, I don't know how to answer this question. On the one hand, Kami are by definition unique, and are specifically created by Gaia to for very specific reasons. In this sense, it doesn't seem that the Garou or the Fera could possibly be Kami of any sort. But on the other hand, some say we are the products of spirits mating with wolves and humans. Our progenitors — Fenris, Uktena, Griffon, and even great Gaia Herself — can perhaps be thought of as flesh-borne Kami, so one might indeed say that we are the children of Kami. I would, however, say that we are likely too far removed from the source, if you will, to legitimately be called Kami ourselves.

— Tara Somersby

You know, once I had it explained to me that we Garou are both spirit and flesh, not some genetic fluke, and that we were created by Gaia long ago, I thought that was pretty singular. And when I heard about fomori, I started wondering if they were the same thing. But the first time I saw a Bane depart a dead fomori, I realized we weren't quite the same; you don't see any werewolf spirit leave one of our own fallen. As you probably have already seen for yourself, dammit.

But we do have ancestor-spirits, you know. And some of us can contact our own ancestors, channeling them in kind of a similar way to a Bane exerting control over its host. And from what I've heard, Gaia trusts Her Kami to do their own thing and make their own judgement calls — just like us. So it makes you wonder.

You ask me, I think we were Kami once. I think we were the most successful Kami ever, and that we started breeding so well that eventually we became our own thing; Kami that can reproduce on their own, even if it's not always reliable.

But, ah... don't tell anyone I told you that. I suggested as much to a Fianna elder once, and, well, here. You wanna see the scar? No? Yeah, thought not.

— Corbin Ridgewalker

All plant and animal Kami are gifted with an awareness of their surroundings exceeding that of most humans, and are infused with a portion of Gaia's power and reverence for life. Most are capable of communicating with humans or, at the very least, other supernatural beings. They use their abilities to counsel and advise those humans who are willing to listen, but most are unwilling to speak with Garou or other Fera. Though they are also Gaia's children, those of us granted the gift of Rage are too violent for most Kami's tastes, and as such most of our kind are unaware of their existence. If a Garou is respectful and can convince the Kami of her good intentions, however, she may find the Kami can become a powerful ally.

All Kami have special powers granted to them by Gaia, which they use to survive and aid the living world around them. Some of these are described later on in this work, but the list is by no means exhaustive. There are as many different Kami powers as there are Kami, and none can be called any more or less typical than any other.

Chubak

Kami Type: Animal

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 4, Stamina 1

Social: Appearance 1, Manipulation 3, Charisma 5

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 4, Expression 1, Primal-Urge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 5, Etiquette 1, Leadership 1, Stealth 4, Survival 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Medicine 5, Occult 4

Gnosis: 9; **Willpower:** 8

Powers: Heart Sense, Longevity (5), Silent Speech, Spirit Gifts: Mother's Touch, Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties, Step Sideways, Subtle Presence.

Geasa: Thankless

Image: Chubak appears to be nothing more than a fat old chuckwalla, just like many other such lizards common throughout the Southwest United States. His skin is blotchy, a mixture of blacks and tans, and is wrinkled and aged in typical chuckwalla style. Unlike his normal kin, however, Chubak has a look of ancient wisdom about him, with eyes that look as though they can peer into a person's soul. That isn't far from the truth.

Roleplaying Hints: Chubak is old, and patient, and thoroughly uninterested in fighting. He likes to help humans, and uses his powers to cure the sick and combat supernatural ailments whenever possible. He likes basking in the sun, watching people and animals, and learning new things. He doesn't tolerate insolence, though; if someone



abuses his aid, he'll scuttle off to places they can't find in short order.

History: Chubak has been in the world for a very, very long time. He originally appeared among the pueblo tribes of the Southwest, but has since moved further east, and now roams parts of Arizona, New Mexico, Colorado, and Utah. He always seeks to counsel and aid the native peoples of these regions, and though he fears the "newcomers" (Europeans) he has chosen to help them on occasion as well. None of the Garou that have encountered him know what Gaia's mission for him is, if indeed he has one beyond healing others and offering them spiritual guidance. He is not terribly forthcoming on the subject; inquiries are met with a look that seems to say, "What are you asking me for? I'm just a lizard!"

Raeshak, the Elephant King

Kami Type: Animal

Physical: Strength 11, Dexterity 2, Stamina 7

Social: Appearance 2, Manipulation 4, Charisma 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 2, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 3, Brawl 4, Dodge 2, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 5, Primal-Urge 4

Skills: Animal Ken 5, Leadership 4, Survival 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Medicine 2, Occult 3

Gnosis: 6; **Willpower:** 7

Powers: Animal Control (elephants), Bulky, Curse of Gaia (fear), Invulnerability, Longevity (5), Natural Weaponry (tusks), Piercing Gaze, Spirit Ties, Step Sideways, Unnatural Strength

Geasa: Gender Ban (males)

Image: Raeshak is a huge elephant with great tusks, in the manner of the long-tusker elephants thought to be driven to extinction during the early part of the 20th century. Like many Kami, he appears to be extremely old, and his gray skin is worn to an even greater extent than that of most elephants. His ears are scratched and torn from many battles, but he is otherwise in the peak of health despite his great age.

Roleplaying Hints: Raeshak is fiercely protective of his herd, and by extension the whole of the Elephant Graveyard (see below). Though male, he behaves much like the matriarch of an elephant herd—he coordinates the activities of the dead, protects them when necessary, and ruthlessly forces intruders away from elephants who are making the journey to the Graveyard. He has no interest in speaking with other living beings, be they human or supernatural. His elephants are his only concern, and his methods for dealing with threats are never subtle.

History: Though the Elephant Graveyard has existed for as long as elephants have existed, Raeshak is a relatively new addition to it. He was the first elephant to die there, and he remained at peace for many thousands of years. But recently, elephants have come to be hunted extensively for their tusks, and the elephants of the Graveyard began to take notice. Raeshak went out into the world to investigate, and was horrified at what he saw. Everywhere he looked, elephants were being killed with guns, most often by Europeans and their allies who cared only for the ivory the elephants carried. When he returned to the Graveyard, Raeshak beseeched Gaia to give him some means to deal with these butchers. Gaia took pity on the elephants once again, and restored Raeshak to life. She also infused him with great power, so that he might be strong enough to protect his herd for as long as he deemed it necessary. He took up these duties more than a century ago, and shows no signs of slowing down. The recent attempts by humans to understand elephants, as opposed to simply shooting them, have mollified him to some extent, and he is less likely to attack them now

than he was 20 years ago. Only time will tell if that happy circumstance continues to hold true.

Note: In many ways, Raeshak is both a flesh-borne spirit and an animal host. His origins place him firmly in the latter camp, but his motivations and the process of his birth as a Kami has more in common with that of a flesh-borne spirit. His classification is further complicated by the fact that he is perpetually tied to the Elephant Graveyard, making it possible to view him as an extension of that land, and thus yet another type of Kami. In the end, it is probably simplest to consider him a unique individual, and one that defies attempts at easy classification.

Sequoia

Kami Type: Plant

Physical: Strength 15, Dexterity 1, Stamina 12

Social: Appearance 1, Manipulation 3, Charisma 4

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Alertness 5, Brawl 2, Empathy 4, Intimidation 2, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Etiquette 1, Survival 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Medicine 3, Occult 4

Gnosis: 10; **Willpower:** 10

Powers: Animal Control, Animate Self, Command the Earth, Curse of Gaia (destroys/jinxes technology), Heart Sense, Invulnerability (5), Longevity (5), Lord of the Land, Mask Presence, Plant Animation, Plant Kinship, Season's Blessings (all), Silent Speech, Spirit Awakening, Spirit Gifts (Beast Speech, Mother's Touch), Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties, Unnatural Strength

Geasa: Whisper-Bound

Image: Sequoia is a huge sequoia tree, rooted in Sequoia National Forest in California. Her main trunk is forty feet in diameter, and her branches are similarly massive, each the size of a large tree in its own right. She is the largest sequoia tree on record, measuring some 311 feet in height, and she is the very picture of redwood majesty.

Roleplaying Hints: Sequoia doesn't have what you would call an active lifestyle. In fact, she hasn't taken it upon herself to make overt use of her power for well over a thousand years. Nevertheless, she does have a strong interest in the world around her, and she watches the people who come to see her with both curiosity and trepidation. Nothing surprises her, and she knows her grove can survive just about anything the humans care to throw at them

— particularly since the trees are now protected by human law. Still, the time may come when she must act. Though her main concern is her grove, she is unusual among Kami in that her thinking on other matters is quite liberal, and she is willing to help others if doing so furthers the interests of Gaia.

History: Sequoia is old enough to make even the Mokolé feel young. She is, in fact, quite possibly the oldest living thing on the planet. She had lived for thousands of years when humans first came to California, and now, ten thousand years later, she has seen but a fraction of her life go by. When the humans came, she watched them. Some trafficked with the Wyrms, and the Changers dealt with them. Some were greedy and selfish, and they were swallowed up in the mists of time. Some, however, were good and pure, and they are the ones Sequoia remembers. Today, she watches over the new humans that have come to her land, and she makes her presence felt in a multitude of ways. Most are subtle; humans who feel her influence do not even recognize the source of their good fortune. Even Garou and Fera are a bit puzzled, but some know the truth. They remain silent on the issue, however, for they realize that Sequoia's power is greatest when she can use it surreptitiously.

Flesh-Borne Spirits

The most focused of the Kami, and certainly the most unusual, are the so-called flesh-borne spirits. These are spirits of various sorts, typically elementals (but occasionally also Naturae), who are pressed into service by Gaia to perform some function that ordinary Kami cannot accomplish for one reason or another. They are different from most Kami in that their manifestation in the material world is temporary; once they have accomplished the task Gaia has set for them, they are free to return to the Umbra, where they disincorporate and go on about their business. While most such tasks are fairly straightforward, some can take quite a long time, resulting in the Kami being in the physical world for many years.

Flesh-borne spirits are often capable of assuming the form of a human, and do so to avoid unwanted attention while they do their work. They do not associate with other spirits, Garou, humans, or anyone else if they can avoid it. Rather, they are single-minded in their obsession to do Gaia's work, since its completion means they can return to the Umbra where they belong.

Despite the fact that these are perhaps the most common of all Kami, they are nonetheless the types with which Garou are least familiar. They are also the sorts which are least likely to be encountered by Garou,

as Gaia acts through Her mortal children when possible, and hence will only create the flesh-borne when Garou and other Kami are not around to do Her work. Still, it is possible that a flesh-borne's work will involve a Garou for one reason or another, which means that Garou might realize they've met a Kami long after the fact.

The White Wolf (Ice Elemental)

Kami Type: Flesh-borne spirit
Physical: Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 6
Social: Appearance 3, Manipulation 3, Charisma 4
Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 4, Wits 5
Talents: Alertness 4, Athletics 4, Brawl 4, Dodge 3, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 5
Skills: Animal Ken 3, Stealth 4, Survival 5
Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 1, Occult 2
Rage: 7; **Gnosis:** 8; **Willpower:** 9
Powers: Animal Control, Berserker, Curse of Gaia, Garou Kinship, Invulnerability, Longevity (5), Lord of the Land, Piercing Gaze, Season's Blessings (Winter), Spirit Gift (Beast Speech), Spirit Kinship (ice elementals), Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties, Step Sideways, Subtle Presence
Geasa: Silence

Image: Originally, the White Wolf was an ice elemental. Since being bound in the form of a wolf, however, it now roams the European Arctic in the guise of a massive, pure white wolf. Unlike normal wolves, however, the White Wolf has icy blue eyes, and these betray its true nature. It also radiates an aura of menace, though this is mostly for show; despite its great strength, the White Wolf isn't prone to acts of violence.

Roleplaying Hints: The White Wolf is a fierce predator, but it tends to avoid humans and Garou alike when possible. No one knows what its purpose is; some Garou speculate that it seeks to protect the northern reaches of the world from corruption by the Wyrms, while others wonder if it isn't meant to be a spirit guide for the Garou that make their home here. It is certainly true that both the Silver Fangs and the Get of Fenris have benefited from the Wolf's presence, even if neither tribe is quite sure how. No matter its true mission, however, the people and supernatural entities of the north give the White Wolf a wide berth, and all do as it commands whenever it deigns to speak.

History: The White Wolf has always been in the northern reaches of Europe, though it has never made its presence overtly known. People who live within its territory know it is there, but do not think

much of it unless it appears. It is not part of myths and legends, or even local histories; it is like a secret everyone knows, and which no one brings up in polite conversation. Some Garou think the White Wolf is the progenitor of the fabled Ice Pack, a house of the Silver Fangs. Others think it might be the true ancestor of the Wendigo, who once lived in Asia before they migrated to the New World. Still others wonder if it might not be an incarnation of Great Fenris, totem of the Fenrir. No one knows. What they do know is that it is a manifestation of Gaia's will, and one of the purest such manifestations in the world. As such, it carries with it an authority no Garou could ever hope to match. There is but one course of action available to those who find themselves in the presence of this great Kami: obedience. Anything less invites Gaia's wrath.

Ipchak (Naturae)

Kami Type: Flesh-borne spirit
Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 6
Social: Appearance 2, Manipulation 4, Charisma 2
Mental: Perception 8, Intelligence 4, Wits 4
Talents: Alertness 3, Athletics 4, Dodge 4, Expression 2, Primal-Urge 2, Subterfuge 4
Skills: Animal Ken 2, Etiquette 1, Performance 3, Stealth 4, Survival 4
Knowledges: Enigmas 5, Investigation 2, Linguistics 5, Medicine 2, Occult 3
Gnosis: 9; **Willpower:** 7
Powers: Command the Earth, Curse of Gaia, Great Destiny*, Invulnerability, Mask Presence, Piercing Gaze, Plant Animation, Skinshift, Spirit Awakening, Spirit Gifts (Heightened Senses, Song of the Great Beast), Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties, Step Sideways
***Great Destiny:** Ipchak has an important purpose to fulfill, and he receives some aid from Gaian spirits whenever that purpose is in danger. Minor miracles break out now and again whenever he is in difficulty. Owing to the imprecise nature of this power, it isn't available for general purchase.
Geasa: Question Ban

Image: Ipchak appears to be a frilled lizard. Or, he appears to be an Australian Aboriginal. Mostly, he doesn't appear at all. But when he does show up, there's always something wild and primitive and mystical about him, a secret power no one else seems to understand. Mages fear him, Garou are confused by him, and many of Australia's most powerful places are sustained by him. He radiates power, but no one is sure just what, exactly, he is.

Roleplaying Hints: Ipchak is an enigma. He isn't the least bit interested in people, or Garou, or even other spirits. That very alienness makes him unnerving as hell to others, who don't know how to react to him. He is quite powerful, and knows it. He pursues his task with relentless fanaticism, and ignores all that are not directly related to that task. When the Dreamtime is threatened, however, he pursues those responsible with extreme prejudice. He is the wrath and sorrow of Gaia given form, and he is not to be trifled with.

History: Ipchak has a very specific function in modern Australia: to restore the Dreamtime. Though he seems to be ancient, he has in fact only been in the material world for a very short time. Before his tenure as a flesh-borne spirit, Ipchak was a powerful spirit of some type; a Juggling at least, and perhaps even a minor Incarna. The details are not clear, since Ipchak has not seen fit to speak to anyone about his duties. He is making the Australian Garou nervous, however. They wonder if they shouldn't be heading back to where they came from, and Ipchak seems to be quite content with that state of affairs.

Human Hosts

Though not as rare as animate lands, human hosts tend to be fairly unusual for Kami. While animals have spirits which are extensions of the Umbra, and are thus particularly open to transformation by Gaia, humans have discrete, independent souls, which makes them more prone to resist the notion of becoming tools of Gaia's will. As such, She takes particular care in selecting Her human hosts, and never forces them to do Her bidding against their will.

Humans chosen to serve Gaia are those who very much *want* to serve in some fashion. It is not important that they wish to serve Gaia *per se*, or even recognize Her as we do; service to God or some other ideal is perfectly acceptable to Her, and most identify Gaia's will in whatever way seems most familiar to them. This is to be expected; She typically chooses human hosts because of their ability to easily blend into human society, and it is thus important that they identify and understand Her will in human terms. Their desire to serve aside, however, human hosts tend to be much more independent than most other types of Kami, and hence are more likely than most to form attachments to other supernatural beings. The presence of an independent spirit within them makes them feel less "in tune" with Gaia than other Kami, and they are thus the most likely to put an independent spin on Gaia's instructions. They are also the Kami most likely to travel through and inhabit cities, though even they do so only rarely.

Most human hosts are capable of traveling to the Umbra, and might conceivably meet Garou or Fera in

the process. They tend to remain in human form most of the time, transforming only when they feel the need to escape an unpleasant encounter or when it makes interacting with other spirits a bit easier.

Tika

Kami Type: Human host

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Appearance 2, Manipulation 2, Charisma 4

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Empathy 4, Expression 1, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Animal Ken 5, Etiquette 1, Leadership 1

Knowledges: Computer 1, Investigation 1, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Science 2

Gnosis: 5; **Willpower:** 6

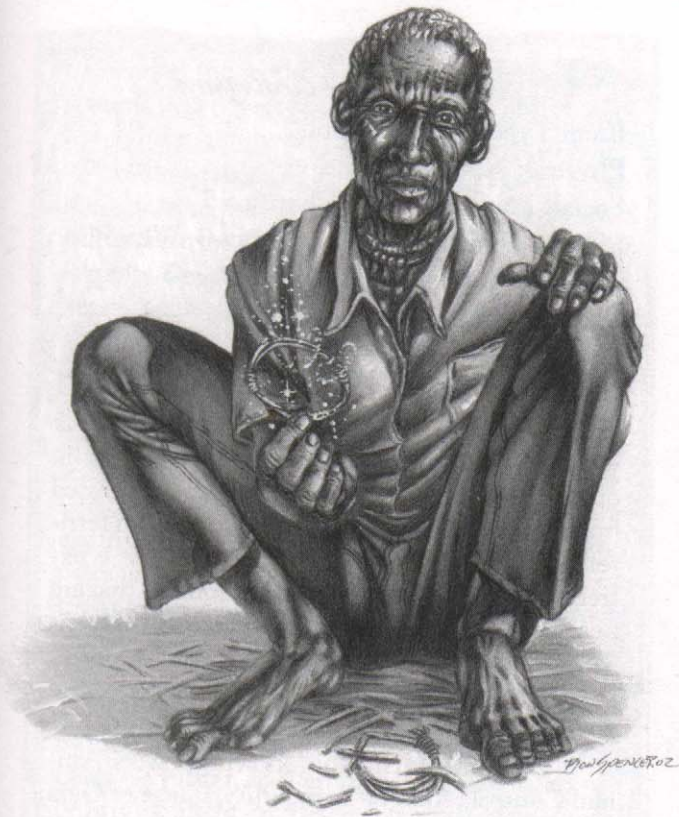
Powers: Animal Control (bears and wolves), Aura of Tranquility, Enchanting Voice, Heart Sense, Season's Blessings (Winter), Skinchanger Kinship (Garou), Spirit Gifts (Beast Speech, Mother's Touch), Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties

Geasa: Question Ban

Image: Tika is a pretty Inuit woman in her mid-forties. She has a cheerful disposition and a pleasant demeanor, but strikes others as a bit strange, and very private. Still, she's usually eager to help others when the opportunity arises, and she does her part to help her community out when she can.

Roleplaying Hints: Tikasmiles a lot. She's friendly, helpful, and occasionally nosy, but she doesn't talk about herself much. Strange people make her nervous, but she identifies friend and foe with uncanny accuracy, and her friends trust her judgment implicitly. Mainly, she just wants her community to be safe and happy. She doesn't care much about fighting the Wym (though she'll do whatever she can to keep it out of her community), but she'll help characters who are interested in doing so. Polar bears like her. Wolves like her too, but she doesn't see them as much. They tell her what's going on in the non-human world, and that's how she keeps up on what Gaia's up to.

History: Tika was born and raised in the suburbs of Anchorage, Alaska, where she resides to this day. She grew up always wanting to help people, and Gaia decided to help her out in the regard when Tika took a liking to veterinary medicine. She works as a technician at a pet clinic, but winds up helping people almost as much as animals. She's happy with her life, but feels at times like she's not living up to her potential. Because of this, she keeps an eye out for supernatural events, and does what she can to help things along when it's within her power to do so.



Ngambe

Kami Type: Human host

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social: Appearance 2, Manipulation 4, Charisma 3

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Empathy 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 3, Crafts 3, Etiquette 2, Leadership 3, Survival 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Law 2, Linguistics 3, Medicine 3, Occult 4, Politics 3, Rituals 3

Gnosis: 5; **Willpower:** 6

Powers: Animal Control, Curse of Gaia, Heart Sense, Piercing Gaze, Season's Blessings (Summer), Spirit Gifts (Beast Speech, Mother's Touch, Thousand Forms), Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties

Geasa: Substance Ban (steel)

Image: Ngambe is an old man, but he's still fairly able. Though he serves as a witch doctor for his tribe, you wouldn't know it by looking at him. He dresses in Western clothes, and carries himself with an air of distinction — which is understandable, given his education. He tends to frown a lot, whether it's appropriate or not.

Roleplaying Hints: Ngambe is a cranky old man, and a fairly bitter one at that. All he sees in

his homeland is divisiveness and conflict, and it's made him extremely cynical. Still, he knows his purpose, and will help others if it results in dead vampires, a stymied drug trade, or most importantly aid to those that are victims of the many conflicts tearing Nigeria apart.

History: Ngambe was born in Lagos, Nigeria in 1923. After growing up under British colonial rule, he was educated in Oxford, England, after which he returned to his homeland to serve as a spiritual leader and, hopefully, a guide toward unity and tolerance. Gaia rewarded his efforts by making him a Kami, enhancing his already significant sphere of influence. Unfortunately, he found that his ability to influence his people wasn't enough to overcome religious and economic difficulties, and Nigeria remains a nation divided. Nowadays Ngambe is extremely bitter, but he still does what he can to help those in need, particularly if they've been preyed upon by Leeches. He's surprisingly open to working with others, and the African Fera take advantage of this fact — on the days they can stand to be around him, that is.

Eva Brownstone

Kami Type: Human host

Physical: Strength 1, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social: Appearance 2, Manipulation 2, Charisma 4

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 4

Talents: Brawl 1, Empathy 4, Expression 3, Primal-Urge 1, Streetwise 1

Skills: Animal Ken 4, Crafts 3, Drive 1, Etiquette 2, Performance 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 1, Law 1, Linguistics 2, Medicine 3

Gnosis: 5; **Willpower:** 4

Powers: Animal Control (reptiles), Aura of Tranquility, Command the Earth, Curse of Gaia, Heart Sense, Peaceful Fighting, Spirit Gifts (Beast Speech, Mother's Touch), Spirit Sense, Spirit Ties

Geasa: Truthspeaker

Image: Eva's a portly black woman in her mid-fifties, who always graces others with a jovial laugh and a ready smile. She dresses simply, lives on a shoestring, and has an upbeat, optimistic demeanor. Everyone who knows her likes her, and all the 'gators and snakes of the bayou seem to like her as well.

Roleplaying Hints: Eva is a simple woman, happy to lend a hand to others when the need arises and thoroughly content running a diner in a small

little town in Louisiana. She smiles a lot, is heavily involved in her community, and doesn't have patience for shifty or disingenuous sorts of people. Characters who encounter her can count on her for help, but it'll take some doing to get her to talk about something other than great eats and local gossip.

History: Eva was born and raised in the same little shack her parents lived in, and seems quite happy with this fact. She'd always had an interest in the people and animals of the bayou, and Gaia smiled upon her one day when she came across a man who seemed near death and desperately needed help the town wasn't equipped to give him. She healed him with a touch (he was thankfully unconscious at the time), and she's been helping people and animals ever since. She's the chatty sort, and nowadays has more interest in talking about the goings on in town than going off on some crusade, but she'll do her part to help out if the characters can convince her of the importance of their actions.

Animate Lands

Often, Gaia will select a place of wilderness and imbue it with part of Her essence, giving it a life and awareness far beyond that normally seen in its flora and fauna. Such places are typically close to the cities of men, but not yet corrupted by their foul touch. This allows Gaia to empower the places most in need of protection, leaving the rest of Her creation safe and untouched by either human or divine forces.

Animate lands are the most powerful of Gaia's Kami, as they are powered by the animals and trees that live on them, and by the water that flows through them, and by the air that nourishes them. They are often home to humans living in the old ways, and sometimes even shapechangers of various sorts, who protect the traditions that gave them life so many years ago. Everything that lives in such a place is part of the Kami; every animal, every plant, every drop of water and every stone is awake, alive, and aware, and all act as one to defend it from interlopers. These beings are not Kami themselves, as they return to their normal state when they leave the confines of the consecrated lands. But they are nonetheless instruments of the Kami's power, and unwelcome intruders are subject to their wrath.

Animate lands are the rarest form of Kami, but they are also the ones most recognizable to our people. Examples of such places abound in the myths and legends of most modern cultures, and some Garou feel it is likely that many of the most pristine Umbral realms began their life as animate lands of some sort. There are so few left now, however, that no one can say for certain.

The Elephant Graveyard

Kami Type: Animate Land

Physical: Not Applicable

Social: Manipulation 3, Charisma 5

Mental: Perception 6, Intelligence 3, Wits 5

Talents: Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 3

Skills: Animal Ken 5

Knowledges: Enigmas 4, Medicine 4, Occult 5

Gnosis: 8; **Willpower:** 8

Powers: The Elephant Graveyard is a pocket space within the Umbra, much like a Bastet's Den- Realm or a Gurahl's Umbral Glade, which can be accessed from various points on Earth situated within territories occupied by elephants. The Gauntlet is extremely thin in these areas when elephants that are near death enter the vicinity. Garou and Fera that can step sideways may cross over into the Graveyard freely during this time. At all other times, the graveyard is inaccessible, even to Garou.

The Graveyard has the following powers: Animal Control, Aura of Tranquility, Curse of Gaia (expulsion), Heart Sense, Lord of the Land, Mask Presence, Silent Speech, Subtle Presence, Season's Blessings (Summer), Spirit Gifts (Beast Speech, Mother's Touch, Song of the Great Beast), Spirit Ties, Step Sideways.

Shapeshifters that visit the Graveyard and conduct themselves with respect for its inhabitants find that they regain Gnosis there at a phenomenal rate. When such individuals leave the graveyard, even after a brief visit, their Gnosis pools are fully restored.

Geasa: Gift Ban

Image: The Elephant Graveyard is a pristine place, a valley set between mountain heights that is home to a bountiful lake, peaceful glens, and rich, lush grass. It is filled with the skeletal remains of elephants, and it is easily the richest source of ivory in the world. Despite this fact, however, it is nonetheless a peaceful place, one that fills visitors with a sense of awe at the power of Gaia's creatures, even in death.

Roleplaying Hints: The Graveyard only acts to protect itself and those within from detection by non-elephants, and defilement of any sort. Those that have seen the Graveyard are forced to wonder if it is truly sentient at all; it clearly acts in the best interests of Gaia, but it seems to be ruled by the spirits of great elephants, not a central mind as is typical in animate lands. In any event, the Graveyard does all it can to remain hidden from

the eyes of the world, be they mundane or supernatural, and it wrecks technology and fouls supernatural senses whenever intruders come near.

History: It's said that in the old days, when humans were primitive beasts and the Garou were still as one tribe, Gaia looked upon the elephant and felt pity for its condition. These wise and noble beasts, appreciated by humans only for their tusks and meat, exhibited a fierce devotion to their friends and family, and they performed the tasks Gaia had set for them admirably. Their ultimate reward for such dedication, however, was to be picked apart by scavengers in death, or to be killed by humans in life. Gaia felt sympathy for the poor beasts, and so She enchanted a portion of their lands such that it was permanently tied to the Umbra. This became a place to which elephants might come to die in peace, among their ancestors, unmolested by the claws and teeth of the mortal world.

The Elephant Graveyard has never been found by mortal man, because it is not any one particular place — rather, it is an idea, one that is known only to elephants and a select few other supernatural beings. Elephants may enter the Graveyard from anywhere on Earth, but only choose to do so when they are alone (or rather, when they think they are alone) or with other elephants. Humans always assume an elephant that has disappeared has merely been consumed by scavengers, and dismiss stories of the graveyard as mere myth.

Those that know of the graveyard wonder if there is not a similar place within the world's oceans, set aside for whales of various sorts. No evidence of such a place has been uncovered, but who can say? Anything is possible.

Hazanko

Kami Type: Animate Land

Physical: Not applicable

Social: Manipulation 6, Charisma 4

Mental: Perception 5, Intelligence 2, Wits 5

Talents: Alertness 4, Empathy 2, Intimidation 4, Primal-Urge 5

Skills: Animal Ken 4

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Medicine 3, Occult 5

Gnosis: 7; **Willpower:** 9

Powers: Animal Control, Aura of Tranquility, Command the Earth, Curse of Gaia, Heart Sense, Lord of the Land, Mother's Touch, Piercing Gaze, Plant Animation, Plant Kinship, Spirit Awakening, Spirit

Sense, Season's Blessings (all), Spirit Gifts (Beast Speech, Mother's Touch, Song of the Great Beast), Spirit Kinship, Spirit Ties

Geasa: Healer

Image: Hazanko is a majestic mountain range, covered with bamboo thickets and teeming with animal life. Streams run through him, the air is sweet and pure, and the grasses soft and green. Wyldling spirits congregate here, and nothing ever seems to die — or, if it does, it is simply transformed instead. The presence of Gaia can be felt all around, and the Gauntlet is so thin that the Umbra and the real world seem to fully intermesh.

Roleplaying Hints: Hazanko is interested in one thing, and one thing only — protecting himself and the life which lives on him. He is one of the purest manifestations of Gaia's beauty and will on Earth, and that must be protected at all costs. Garou are irrelevant. The Wyrms are irrelevant. All that matters is protecting Gaia's beauty, and he couldn't care less about anything else.

History: Hazanko is the last of the great Kami that once dotted the Earth, serving as examples of the beauty and power of Gaia's presence on Earth. As humans spread and developed the land, they transformed this beauty into farmland, cities, and other, less savory things. Hazanko was spared this fate, however, since he could cloak his presence from human eyes and was remote enough that no one noticed the oddities in their maps. Now, he is a place of magic and wonder, for those lucky enough to find him. He worries about the increasingly rapid development of Japan, and wonders how he can survive as humanity continues to progress. Time waits for no one, it seems, and he may soon be forced to prevail upon Gaia to transport him to the Umbra for safe keeping.

The Making of a Beast

With some idea in mind about what Kami are, it is now possible to speak in some detail about how they come to be. The process of building a better Kami, as it were, is not trivial, and it is instructive to learn a bit about how Gaia chooses Her hosts, why they are selected, and what being host to a Kami means for them.

(Un)Natural Selection

Before Gaia can make a Kami, She must first select a suitable host. This is no doubt an exacting and time consuming process, but research suggests that potential hosts must meet three general criteria:

• **Health:** To serve as a host for a Kami, an item must be in the peak of health. For living hosts, this means they must be free of disease and the debilitating effects of age. For spirits, they must be free of corruption. For lands, they must be of pristine quality, undeveloped by humans and untouched by Wyrms toxins. Note that this is a general rule of thumb, nothing more. Gaia can presumably make a Kami out of any host She cares to, but in practice She almost always chooses the fittest individuals as vessels of Her power, so that they have a better chance of surviving to use it.

• **Willingness:** While it is true that non-humans do not have independent souls, this does not mean plants, animals, and lands are simple extensions of Gaia's will. They are discrete entities, and they have lives and thoughts and feelings, even if these things are simplistic by our standards. While most would consider it an honor to become a Kami, others might be frightened at the responsibility it entails. Hence, Gaia usually seeks their permission before infusing them with Her power. In the case of humans, and indeed flesh-borne spirits, Gaia asks them directly, in whatever venue is easiest for the potential host to understand. Of course, Gaia would almost certainly override a host's desires when the situation is dire; in such a case, She would make the host a Kami whether he likes it or not. But such instances of forced transformation are only legend, and rare even in such a form.

• **Utility:** Perhaps the most important criterion of all for Gaia is the issue of the host's ability to effect Her will on the world. If a host is not in a position to influence local events in its area, Gaia will not waste Her power by transforming it. This means the process of creating Kami is often reactionary; Gaia makes them in response to some difficulty in a region, rather than because She feels like it on any given Sunday. The upshot of this is that Kami, all Kami, exist for some specific purpose, though that purpose may be broad or narrow in scope.

Awakening

The actual methods used in awakening a Kami are easily as diverse as are Kami themselves. An insect Kami, for example, might go through a molt or chrysalis to transform itself, while a snake or lizard might simply shed its skin. A human will likely undertake a spiritual journey of some sort, while a tree might simply blossom come spring. Regardless of the specifics of the process, however, all awakenings should involve a transformation of some sort commensurate with the host's type and way of life.

The location chosen for the metamorphosis is as important and relevant as the type of change the host undertakes. Some creatures can simply go dormant and/or hibernate for a time; many animal Kami transform via some variation on this theme. However, some animals

and/or places cannot afford any interruptions whatsoever, and these might be given over to other agents of Gaia for special care while the host transforms. Shapeshifters, for example, might be enlisted for this task, or spirits might simply move the creature or place to an isolated region of the Umbra. The specifics are not terribly important, and vary tremendously from host to host. What is important is the fact that a change does indeed occur, and the fact that some period of time needs to pass before the change can take place.

In all cases, the host is thoroughly aware of what is happening to it, at least in general terms. It knows that it is transforming, and that it is doing this for the greater good of Gaia, even if it isn't quite clear on the details. For some, their spirits are simply being enriched, and they welcome the change. For others, the changes involved are more fundamental, and they are worried or frightened at the changes being wrought in them. Gaia does little to reassure them throughout the process. She is concerned for their welfare, and is careful to verify that they are indeed willing hosts, but the actual process is something which even Gaia cannot fully predict in advance, and so the host must simply have faith and endure the forces that work to reforge its destiny.

Interference

Despite precautions taken to the contrary, agents of the Wyrms (or, sadly, humans) do occasionally interfere with the host's transformation process. When this occurs, the host stands a good chance of dying outright, as Gaia's energies run through him unchecked and he has no way to channel them properly. If the host is a living being and makes a successful Willpower roll (at +2 difficulty), it simply returns to its natural state, drained but otherwise intact. If it fails this roll, it dies outright as those mangling the transformation process corrupt Gaia's will.

In the case of animate lands, if the transformation process is interrupted they either return to their normal state or they wither and die (Storyteller discretion). It is more likely that they will simply return to their normal state, but it is nonetheless possible that Gaia's ties to the land will be permanently severed, destroying it utterly.

Whether the host survives or not, it is unsuitable for use as a host for at least a year (possibly adjusted based on the lifespan of the host; again, Storyteller discretion). If the host remains suitable and willing, Gaia might try to transform the host again the following year.

Gaia's Power Revealed

Given their independence and skittishness around creatures like Garou, it might seem difficult to imagine how the shifter races might come into contact with a Kami, much less form strong associations with it. And yet, this is exactly what happens in some of the greatest myths and legends of our time. It has happened before; it may happen again. Please, do not forget the Kami. They are the living proof that Gaia has not yet fallen, that there is still a chance for us to win.

— Tara Somersby

Running a Kami

It is of course true that all Kami are unique beings, and that few rules can be said to apply to them all. That said, however, it is nonetheless typically the case that Kami exist in the world for very specific reasons, and it is those reasons which will inevitably bring them into association with (and possibly conflict with) the Garou. No one is prepared to speculate on what the original functions of Kami might have been, but in the here and now, with Gaia in the sorry state that She is, most Kami function as protectors of some sort. What they protect, and how they go about doing it, depends on the Kami.

Typically, Kami avoid contact with the outside world. They have their duties, and they take them seriously; all else is unimportant to them. Life is complicated, however, and the situation will inevitably arise in which the Kami finds itself forced to work with allies to accomplish its goals. Some Kami are potentially well-suited to this task. Others will send a Storyteller running for the hills at the very mention of the concept. How and when to incorporate a Kami into one's game, particularly as a player character, is entirely up to the Storyteller, but here's some extra advice to help the process along.

Animal Hosts

Animal hosts tend to protect groups of individuals, be they animals or people. They are primarily sages and guardians, and are rarely proactive in their efforts. As long as they are left to their own devices, they will cause no harm and avoid interfering with the grander designs of the humans and the Garou who live around them. This changes dramatically, however, when some agency threatens their charges. The Kami rarely reacts to such intrusions violently, but he will do his level best to force the intruders out, either via granted powers or some means of intimidation. In these situations, getting intruders to leave is the key — the Kami will only fight under the direst of circumstances. This is typically because the Kami is no match for most supernatural entities, or even for most humans in a physical fight. All they can do is bluff their way out of a fight, so they'll tend to avoid them if possible.

Individuals that invade the Kami's territory but do not seem threatening might arouse the spirit's curiosity. Gaia thrives on change, and Her offspring are no different. Sometimes, a wise individual can help the Kami, usually by helping the animals or people he protects. If he is approached with care, the Kami usually looks for some way to come to an understanding of sorts with those that cross paths with him. Those seeking to find a Kami, however, had best be endowed with prodigious amounts of patience — avoidance is the Kami's first reaction to any situation, and it will take time to earn the being's trust.

Animal Kami make fine characters for player control, but only if handled with some care. Players and Storytellers alike must remember that animal hosts are, for all their enhanced intelligence and awareness, still fundamentally animals. A lizard's idea of a good time is basking in the sun and eating bugs, and he doesn't care much for human pursuits. He just won't fit into human society very well, and will stick out when the group ventures into a city (even if using the Skinshift power). Garou are even worse: all their moos and challenges and talk of honor and glory and such will scare the hell out of him, even if he's used to a more supernatural take on the world. Animal hosts are filled with potential as supporting cast, but players should approach them with an eye toward detail and a willingness to celebrate their animal nature.

Plant Hosts

Unlike animal hosts, to which they are otherwise similar, plant Kami cannot run from their enemies. They are typically charged with guarding a grove of trees, or a stretch of land which is too small (or too large) to be effectively made into an animate land. Plant Kami often act through human or animal agents, most of whom are unaware of the true agendas they serve. The druids of the Britons, for example, are a good example of a people who might have been associated with a Kami of some sort; their designs and motivations were certainly their own, but it's certainly possible that one or more Kami had some influence on their faith and beliefs.

Making contact with a plant Kami might seem easier than with an animal one, but this is actually not the case. While a plant Kami cannot run away from her foes, she can choose to remain still, and simply "be a tree," as it were. A plant is the most patient of all Kami, and she will not speak to those she deems unworthy. Indeed, unless she wills it to be so it is nigh impossible to even determine whether or not a tree is a Kami.

Plant Kami can't move without the Animate Self power, which makes them particularly tricky prospects for players, at least in a long-term chronicle. An animated willow tree — or even rosebush — isn't going to be able to participate in most of the activities

a standard werewolf pack takes for granted. Plant Kami may be better off in the Storyteller's hands, making the occasional Birnham Wood-esque cameo to great effect — unless a player has a *really* great idea.

Flash-Borne Spirits

Of all of Gaia's Kami, those who are flesh-borne hosts are among the most violent. These Kami have a specific function to fulfill, and they are ruthless about achieving it. These are the Kami most likely to fight the corrupting forces of humans or the Wyrms directly, and it is in this capacity that they might come into contact with Garou or other sympathetic supernatural beings. However, they are as independent as any other Kami, and so will not necessarily become allies with those who share a common enemy with them.

Though they fight their foes directly, flesh-borne spirits are not crusaders by any means. It is impossible to sidetrack them from their primary mission, meaning that associations between them and Garou are inevitably be brief affairs at best. Still, they are among the most approachable of the Kami, and willingly make alliances if it helps them further their goals, and in the process hasten their return to the Umbra.

A flesh-borne Kami is a viable player choice for a single story, but likely not for an extended chronicle. The Storyteller must remember that these Kami are notoriously single-minded, and have no desire to remain in the material world for any longer than is absolutely necessary. Thus, if the other characters have a single goal for the story, which exactly (or perhaps even loosely) coincides with the goals of the Kami, a short-term association is possible. The other characters had best be careful not to get in the Kami's way, however; while not excessively violent by nature, these spirits have no compunctions against abandoning or even outright attacking any that stand in their way. Mother Nature can be a bitch, and these Kami demonstrate that fact quite clearly.

Human Hosts

Human hosts are at the same time the most and least accessible of the Kami. They are easier to approach than most, due to the fact that they still have a reasonably human perspective on the world, and hence have values and goals that are similar to those of most of the people that would want to associate with them. The flip side of being human, however, is the fact that they know how to blend into society as well as anyone, and as a result are maddeningly difficult to track down. A human Kami can be anyone, and doesn't necessarily manifest spooky powers or other unusual traits to tip searchers off

to their presence. And since they're Kami, and thus less inclined to associate with supernatural types anyway, they often don't want to be found.

This reclusiveness makes them very good at their appointed tasks, which tend to involve healing Gaia from within. No matter how far they have fallen from Her graces, human beings are still a part of Her, and it falls to the Kami to help restore the rift that has grown between Gaia and Her wayward children. Sometimes, this is as simple in restoring peoples' faith in themselves; other times, it involves acts of sacrifice to show the spirits of the world that humans are willing and able to give of themselves for others. No matter whether they are large or small, though, the acts are always things of wonder.

Human Kami are open to helping Garou and others of Gaia's children, but they are always cautious. Humans don't trust easily, and the same is true of Kami with human hosts. They are, however, reasonably open to discussion on issues of some import, and they don't tend to play the games that animal and land-based Kami do. One does not have to be patient to gain the aid of a human Kami; he simply has to show that his motives are pure and that his actions will help others. The rest is negotiable.

As might be expected, human Kami are the ones most likely to function well with a party of werewolf characters, provided they can be found and convinced to join up. They aren't likely to sign on for extended military campaigns against Pentex, but they might easily be willing to heal or protect the victims of that corporation's activities. Similarly, Garou that focus on healing instead of war (the Children of Gaia, for instance) might conceivably have much in common with these Kami. However, the Storyteller must use caution in introducing the Kami in this fashion, for there will always be a temptation to portray him as a bleeding heart with no brain in his head. Human hosts are interested in healing, yes, but they aren't radical, left-wing hippie nuts. Just as the Children of Gaia are more than a bunch of pot-smoking, peace-loving beatniks, so also are the human-borne Kami.

Animate Lands

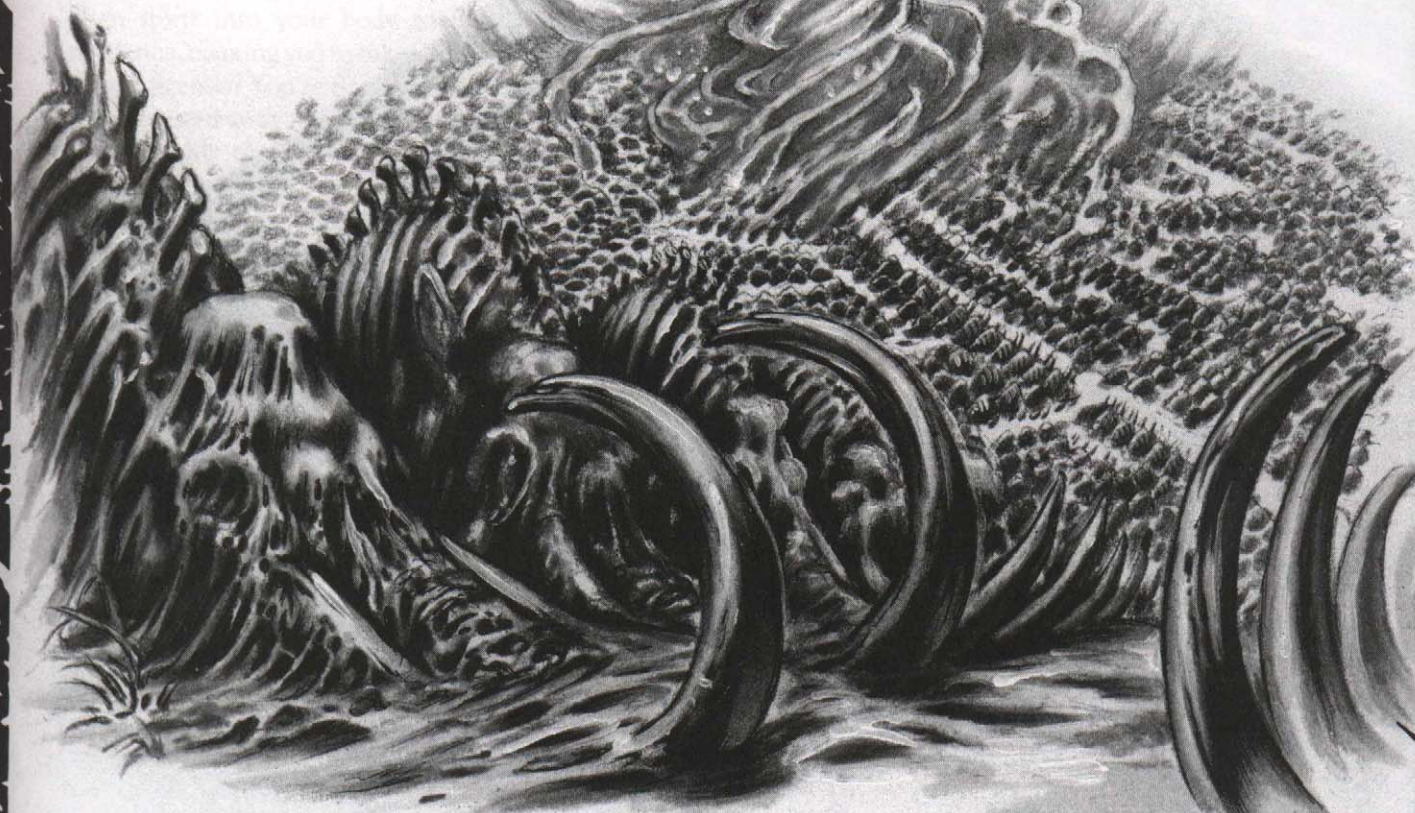
For places that don't move around much, at least by human standards, animate lands can be really hard to track down. This is not so much because they like to hide, however, as the fact that they're not inclined to *do* anything. Their sole purpose in life is to keep themselves pure, and that means they don't act unless they need to defend themselves. A rock is just a rock until it reaches out and smacks you, but if it never does that how will you know it was ever anything other than a rock?

Garou are only likely to learn of animate lands by sheer happenstance; rumors of their existence may abound, but no one ever knows *where* they are. That's part of their mystique, it seems. But then, that's the entire point; to remain pristine, they must remain apart from the world, and that means keeping away from prying eyes. But what happens when they are discovered? Once the Garou learn what they've discovered, their lives become much more complicated: now *they* must protect this land, and keep its location secret at all costs. Few are up to the challenge involved, but who would be so crass as to shirk the duty to protect Gaia's most sacred lands?

Some animate lands have other supernatural entities as primary protectors. The Gurahl seem to be especially adroit at landing in the

middle of such responsibilities, and sometimes even other Kami are recruited to help keep the land safe. The situations thus created are complicated, to say the least.

Like plant-borne Kami, animate lands have little to offer most players. They aren't the types to get involved with other peoples' causes, and hence are even less likely to have any interest whatsoever in what the other characters are doing. Ridding the world of evil is work for others of Gaia's children. Animate lands just want to be left alone, so they can do their thing in peace.



TRAVIS PENCE 1702



Chapter Five: Clothed in Flesh

So you're interested in swapping your soul for power, eh? You don't mind the concept of letting an alien spirit into your body to take up permanent residence, coaxing you to take whatever actions suit its arcane agenda? You're fine with the idea of your body being twisted away from its natural state, reconfigured into a fleshly tool for the strange new tenant in the back of your mind?

Or you're actually kind of freaked out by the prospect, but would like to roleplay it anyway? No problem. We've got you covered.

This chapter provides all of the necessary information to create Kami, gorgons, Drones, or fomori, either as characters for players or as allies or antagonists for the troupe's pack. Included here are rules for Autonomy, several new Backgrounds, and Merits and Flaws appropriate for "possessed" characters, should the Storyteller decide to allow them. This is a very important caveat — Kami and gorgons don't fit seamlessly into most *Werewolf* games, and fomori and Drones are an entirely different kettle of fish. If a possessed character wouldn't fit, the Storyteller is well within his rights to disallow it.

Remember, a possessed character is a roleplaying challenge not only for yourself, but also for your

Storyteller. No other character has quite the same trouble of being pseudo-subservient to a spirit host; even Kami have a bit less free will as we understand it. The Storyteller has to devote an extra touch of attention to your character to properly convey what it is to be one of the spirit-flesh gestalts; be understanding of that, and you'll be doing him a real favor.

Also note that not all possessed are created equal! The Storyteller is well within her rights to create possessed antagonists that aren't balanced within these rules, for whatever reason; the possessing entities aren't always equal in power level, and they don't see the need to play fair. These rules are here to offer a framework for characters roughly balanced with one another for players' use, not to define the way that *all* possessed work. (And, we might add, these rules aren't designed to make possessed characters balanced with Garou. Gaia's Warriors have outclassed the greater part of fomori and their ilk since the beginning, and that's nothing we intend to "rectify.")

Finally, remember that even in the modern world, most possessed are quite rare. Fomori are the most common, and perhaps the easiest to accommodate in large groups. All the others are rare enough that they act fairly independently; there aren't enough Kami to go

around that risking two or more in the same place at the same time is a good idea. When using the possessed, keep in mind just how special and strange most of them are; the game will have a lot more impact that way.

Character Creation

Creating a possessed character works much like creating a werewolf character. The chart in the sidebar gives a quick rundown of the process.

Step One — Concept

Who is the possessed character? Who was she before she was inhabited by a spirit? How much of her

former self remains? This is the stage of character creation that you determine what kind of character you are making: fomor, Drone, gorgon, or Kami. Most likely, the Storyteller will make this decision for you — while a Kami might easily mix with a pack of Garou, a fomor probably shouldn't. If you are using the optional Nature and Demeanor rules from the *Werewolf Players Guide*, you should choose these Traits at this stage as well.

Step Two — Attributes

Standard rules; prioritize Physical, Social, and Mental Attributes. You get 6 points to divide up in the primary group, 4 in the secondary, and 3 in the tertiary (not counting the one automatic dot all characters have in each Attribute).

Step Three — Abilities

Again, this step is much like the system in *Werewolf*. Prioritize Talents, Skills, and Knowledges. You get 11 points in your primary group, 7 in the secondary, 4 in the tertiary. Remember that you can only buy an Ability up to three dots at this stage; scores of 4 or 5 require the use of freebie points (and probably an explanation to the Storyteller).

Step Four — Advantages

You get 5 points in Backgrounds; the new Backgrounds are described below.

All characters get 5 free points in Powers. You may purchase additional Powers for the character by taking an equal number of points in Taints (Drones are excluded from this; they don't have Taints) or by spending Autonomy (Kami are excluded from this, as they do not possess the Autonomy Trait).

Step Five — Finishing Touches

Possessed characters begin with 3 Willpower, 9 permanent and 10 temporary Autonomy (minus any that has been used to purchase Powers). You may spend 21 freebies on the character; freebie point costs are the same for possessed characters as they are for werewolves (although possessed characters may only buy Rage and Gnosis if they have the appropriate Power, and may not buy Gifts). Kami must choose a geas.

Advancement

Possessed characters may gain and spend experience points as usual, using the same costs listed on page 181 of *Werewolf*.

Powers and Taints, however, aren't bought with experience points. A possessed character can develop new powers at any time, subject to Storyteller discretion, of course. The impetus for a new power might be exposure to a powerful source of spiritual energy, appropriate to the type of spirit inhabiting the character, of

Character Creation Chart

- **Step One: Character Concept**
Choose concept, Nature and Demeanor (optional), type (fomor, Drone, Kami, or gorgon).
- **Step Two: Select Attributes**
Prioritize Physical, Social, and Mental Attributes (6/4/3).
- **Step Three: Select Abilities**
Prioritize Talents, Skills, and Knowledges (11/7/4).
- **Step Four: Select Advantages**
Choose Backgrounds (5 dots) and Powers (5 points free, any others must be purchased either by taking Taints or by lowering Autonomy).
- **Step Five: Finishing Touches**
Record Willpower (3), permanent Autonomy (9 - any used to purchase powers), and temporary Autonomy (10 - any used to purchase powers).
Spend freebie points (21) and choose Merits and Flaws (optional). Kami must choose a geas.

Backgrounds

The following Backgrounds are available to the possessed.

- **Allies:** Friends who will come to your aid.
- **Consecrated:** Your soul has been dedicated to a powerful spirit.
- **Contacts:** Sources of information at your disposal.
- **Cult:** Mortal followers who do your bidding.
- **Fetish/Equipment:** A mystical item granted to you by a patron, or perhaps your superiors at Pentex.
- **Mentor:** A more powerful possessed being, or perhaps even a spirit, that guides you.
- **Resources:** Your monetary assets.
- **Symbiosis:** Your ability to call on the spirit inside you for information.

course. A fomori might develop new powers after surviving exposure to Balefire, whereas a Kami might develop new powers while attending a moot at a powerful caern. Or, perhaps the tenant spirit simply decides the character needs an “upgrade” of sorts. Likewise, the character might make a request of the spirit directly.

In any event, any powers the character develops must be immediately balanced with Taints, or by losing Autonomy. This is handled exactly the same way as during character creation, except that if a character asks a spirit for power directly, the spirit will very likely *only* accept a loss of Autonomy in return.

Drones are an exception as far as advancement goes. They may not spend experience on Traits, and advance only at the discretion of their superiors, who bring them in for reweaving as necessary. See Chapter Two for more details.

Unusual Hosts

Playing Animals

Gorgon hosts are never human, and Gaian spirits choose animals or plants as often as not. So how does this affect Traits?

The Storyteller should give it her best guess. Some animals might have above-human Attributes (a lion might end up with a Strength of 6, for example), while others might not even merit one dot (the strongest housecat is still weaker than any healthy human). Consider all characters to have the obligatory first dot in all Attributes, but perhaps allow players to raise the scores above 5, when appropriate. You might also allow such characters to have a “pool” of 13 Attribute points to work with, rather than making them prioritize them into the three groups (after all, the lion might well have Social Attributes of 1, but very high Strength, Dexterity, and Stamina scores). The animal Traits listed in the *Werewolf Storytellers Companion* should give the Storyteller a place to begin.

If the spirit chooses an inanimate object or a plant as its host, the Storyteller has a different sort of problem altogether. Since the host is obviously changed to a large degree simply by gaining self-awareness, all bets are officially off when it comes to Traits. Use the Feat of Strength chart on page 197 of *Werewolf* to get an idea of how strong the host should be, and give it a best guess for the other Attributes (which aren’t as easily quantifiable). A host might turn out to be stronger, smarter, faster, or tougher than it might look because of the spirit’s influence, and that’s fine, too. Animating typically inanimate objects is the purview of the Wyld, and we all know there’s no “one way” to do anything when the Wyld’s involved, right?

Exogenetics & Flash-Borne

Some gorgons and Kami don’t possess actual host bodies; their bodies are created for them, right out of the rawest matter at hand. Soil and leaves and dust and water all coalesce into a body of roughly human or animal proportion, a strange amalgam given life.

If the Storyteller allows exogenetic gorgons or flesh-borne Kami as possible player characters, the simplest thing to assume is that they work roughly like any other character; they have the same distribution of Attributes and Abilities, and all that. They suffer health levels as usual, they have to “eat” (basically, taking compatible material into themselves to recharge their “batteries”), and so on. Of course, such characters will probably need to purchase a power like Skinshift to make them able to function in, well, *any* society at all.

New Traits

Fomori, Drones, and gorgons possess a trait called Autonomy, and all possessed characters have access to new Backgrounds, Merits and Flaws.

Autonomy

“It isn’t so difficult, acquiescence. You just...give...in.”

— Calhoun, *Ravenous*

When a Triatic spirit enters a living being, part of that being’s nature is subsumed by the spirit and forevermore strives towards the spirit’s agenda (and, by extension, the appropriate member of the Triat). The character’s Autonomy score represents how much free will the host maintains. A character has a permanent and temporary Autonomy rating, but unlike Willpower, the temporary Autonomy rating can exceed the permanent rating. Characters begin with a permanent Autonomy rating of nine and a temporary rating of ten; this is as independent as a possessed character can be.

Only Drones, fomori, and some gorgons have Autonomy ratings. Kami, being inhabited by Gaian spirits, are not as driven towards a particular goal and therefore retain a comfortable level of independence. Gorgons using inanimate objects as their hosts likewise do not have Autonomy ratings (as their hosts don’t have agendas or desires of their own). Animal Gorgons do, however, since their instincts may conflict with what the Wyld-spirit would have them do.

Losing Autonomy

Hosts can choose to give up their free will in exchange for power. In game terms, this means that as a character gains more powers, her Autonomy rating drops. Gorgons and fomori may choose to take Taints instead of renouncing their Autonomy (in the case of fomori, the Bane reshapes the host’s body as it sees fit;

in the case of gorgons, the Wyld energies change the host's physical form). Drones may not purchase Taints — the Weaver does not allow such deviance. Only by renouncing Autonomy may a Drone grow stronger.

Likewise, fomori may sacrifice Autonomy to “buy off” Taints. As kind of a Faustian deal with the Bane inside her, a fomor may entice the Wyrmspirit to put her body back the way it was by giving up her free will.

In game terms, losing Autonomy works like this: For every point of Powers the character purchases, she loses two temporary points of Autonomy. This means that 5 “power points” costs one permanent dot of Autonomy. For example, if a gorgon with 7 permanent and 8 temporary Autonomy wished to raise her Stamina by one dot via the Enhanced Attribute power, she would need to sacrifice six points of temporary Autonomy (bringing her to 2 temporary points). If she only had 3 temporary points, she would lose those three points, drop to 6 permanent and 10 temporary Autonomy, and then lose 3 additional temporary points.

Buying off Taints works the same way; every two points of temporary Autonomy lost relieve the fomor of one point of Taints.

Regaining Autonomy

Once the slide towards complete submission has begun, it is nearly impossible to reverse. If the Storyteller allows, however, players may choose to take on Taints in order to regain Autonomy, in much the same way the player may “spend” Autonomy to purchase powers. This “backsliding” should generally only be available to fomori.

For example: A fomor with only one permanent dot of Autonomy remaining rebels and asserts control of himself again. The Bane possessing him punishes him by warping his body's temperature control (the Inner Volcano taint). The fomor gains a second dot of Autonomy, but has a new problem to show for it....

The Storyteller may also rule that possessed characters may purchase Autonomy with experience points. If so, the cost is (current permanent rating x 8).

Please note that allowing characters to regain lost Autonomy is entirely optional, and in fact goes against the theme of possession — once the choice has been made to sacrifice free will for power, perhaps there should be no turning back.

The Effects of Losing Autonomy

Autonomy sounds innocuous enough at first glance — it is simply a measure of how much the spirit's agenda has filtered down into the host's mind. So what stops a player (or a Storyteller, for that matter) from creating a fomor character with no Taints, a permanent Autonomy of 1, and 45 points in Powers?

All In One Place

Since the different character types have differing rules concerning Autonomy, we thought it would be polite to put them all in one easy-to-find sidebar. You're welcome.

Kami: Do not possess Autonomy as a Trait.

Fomori: Can buy new powers with Autonomy and can use it to buy off Taints. If the Storyteller allows it, fomori can also accept new Taints to raise their Autonomy score.

Drones: Can buy new powers with Autonomy.

Gorgons: Can buy new powers with Autonomy. They may not, however, use Autonomy to lose Taints, as their Taints come from exposure to Wyld energies rather than deliberate manipulation.

Well, nothing, technically. However, before you start erasing Autonomy dots willy-nilly, you may want to read this section.

Autonomy is not really a measure of independent action. A possessed character already acts with his tenant's overall agenda in mind — that's just a fact of possession. What changes as Autonomy drops is the *potential* for independent thought and action. As a host's Autonomy drops, he becomes incapable of thinking for himself — all of his thoughts and actions are filtered through the spirit inside him. This isn't always a pitched internal struggle, either. A Drone might find that the Weaver-spirit's agenda is more efficient and sensible, and begin following its lead in all facets of his life. A fomor might grow addicted to the violent acts the Bane urges her to commit and willingly give up her last few moral scruples to be able to perform such acts with more skill. In any case, as Autonomy drops, the character's thoughts and desires grow “in tune” with the spirit's, and the character becomes less human and more a simple pawn of one of the Triat. And the spirits in service to the Triat, as has probably become obvious by reading the chapters on fomori, Drones, and gorgons, are quite alien in their outlook.

A lust-Bane, for example, feels lust — and that's about all. It may have a desire for survival, but survival for a spirit means something very different than survival for a human being. Spirits, for example, don't eat. A fomor possessed by said lust-Bane, therefore, finds himself unable to do anything except act on the Bane's impulses as his Autonomy drops. The human begins to feel lust in *any* situation, no matter how inappropriate — anything that takes a step towards him becomes a possible focus for his lust. He may not feel hungry anymore — or if he does, the odd sensations from his stomach only serve to arouse him. A character with a

low Autonomy is more a spirit with a body than a human possessed by a spirit.

A character with a high Autonomy rating, on the other hand, is still true to herself as a human being (or whatever she was before being possessed). She will keep most of the same foibles and follow the same sorts of agendas. Of course, everything she does and says is now filtered through the spirit inside her (which is why Autonomy tends to drop quickly). The character can still assert herself, still take actions that are meaningful to her personally (and not necessarily to the spirit). However, doing so is an effort, and that effort becomes more difficult as Autonomy drops.

In game terms, every time a fomor, Drone, or gorgon wishes to spend Willpower on a roll to gain an automatic success, she must roll her Autonomy rating. The difficulty varies based on how far off the goals of the spirit the action is. For example, if the above-mentioned fomor possessed by a lust-Bane spends Willpower on a Subterfuge roll meant to seduce someone, the difficulty should only be 4 (as seduction is in tune with the Bane's desires). If that same fomor attempts to spend Willpower on a roll in combat, the difficulty should be 7 or so, since the Bane couldn't care less about fighting; if it's a roll meant to harm a creature the lust-Bane is attracted to, the difficulty might rise to 9. Spirits are very shortsighted — if the action has no *immediate* value to the spirit, the Storyteller should call for the roll. The automatic success rule (*Werewolf*, pages 172-173) applies to this roll — if the character's permanent Autonomy is higher than the difficulty, the player need not make the roll.

Also, the character's will is intrinsically tied to her Autonomy. The character's permanent Willpower score may not be higher than her permanent Autonomy. And since raising permanent Autonomy is a difficult (or impossible) proposition, Autonomy very rapidly becomes the "cap" for a character's strength of will — a good reason to maintain it! If the character loses all of her temporary Willpower, she loses a temporary point of Autonomy, and will lose another one each day until she can regain Willpower.

Finally, if a character's Autonomy score drops below the Willpower rating of the spirit possessing her (the Storyteller will need to decide this rating), the character must make an Autonomy roll whenever she wishes do *anything* that the spirit might see as a waste of time. Depending on how intelligent the spirit is, this might well include eating, bathing, or hiding obvious manifestations of Powers. In short, the character has become a prisoner in her own body — still very much aware of what is happening, but so totally subsumed by the Triat that she can't assert herself, except as an agent of stasis, chaos, or destruction.

If a character loses all of her permanent Autonomy, she becomes a true force of the Triat and disappears from the physical world. Drones become part of the Pattern Web or are put to work building it. Fomori fade into the Umbra and become powerful Banes, or are sometimes allowed to stalk the earth, wreaking as much destruction and misery as possible until destroyed. Gorgons vanish in a whirl of energy and chaos.

"Shadowguiding"

In the game *Wraith: The Oblivion*, wraith characters had to deal with their darker halves, which gained a sort of sentience of their own. This darker half was called the Shadow, and one of the more innovative concepts of the game was that of Shadowguiding. Essentially, rather than have the Storyteller playing every character's Shadow at once (as well as every Storyteller character in the game!), each player acted as Shadowguide to another player, roleplaying the part of the Shadow of that player's character. When done well, this allowed every player to become more involved with the others, took some work off the Storyteller's shoulders, and was frankly quite a bit of fun.

If your group is up for it, you may want to try this approach for possessed characters. The more Symbiosis or less Autonomy a character gets, the more the spirit half becomes a nagging little voice. This approach is particularly appropriate for all-fomori games, where the darker impulses of the Bane start running wild.

Of course, you may want to try this approach only if you trust your group to roleplay this opportunity in the spirit in which it's intended. Shadowguiding isn't meant to be a chance to "screw your fellow players over;" it's meant to give every player the chance to roleplay the tiny voice inside another person's head, if only for a little bit. If you trust your players to enjoy this opportunity without abusing it or spending more time playing other players' "shadows" than they do their own characters, think about giving it a whirl. If not, don't even try it. It's not for everyone.

Backgrounds

Possessed characters have access to several new Backgrounds, and the Fetish Background works a little differently for them. They may purchase Allies, Contacts, Mentor and Resources as usual; they may not purchase Ancestors, Kinfolk, Pure Breed, Rites or Totem. (And no, not even Kami can use shapechanger rites success-

fully; like all non-shapechangers, they were excluded from the Pact.) The new Backgrounds are listed below.

Consecrated

The slaving beasts on his heels, Laslo ducked down and alley and found himself face to face with a brick wall. The Prague streets were confusing, and even though he'd live here for years, it was easy to mistake a dead end for a shortcut to freedom.

The werewolves rounded the corner and advanced. Two of them still wore their human forms, but the others were stalking towards him in the dreaded war-form. One swipe from their claws would tear him in half.

Laslo lifted his head and screamed in Polish, begging for help from his master. As the first werewolf approached, she toppled over backwards with a shriek of pain. The ground around Laslo had changed from gray cobblestone to sharpened silver. All around, the air seemed to shimmer like heat off concrete. The werewolves looked at each uncertainly. One of them whispered, "Great Gaia, it's a Nexus Crawler." Laslo's master had answered.

The character's soul has been bonded to a more powerful spirit or being, either a servant of whichever one of the Triat the character serves or a Gaian spirit (in the case of Kami). The character is expected to serve this being faithfully, more out of reverence and respect than out of abject servitude (although Drones simply look at it as a logical chain of command).

The consecration usually takes place when the spirit bonds with the host, and is initiated by the higher being, not the newly-possessed character. If the possession is initiated by a third party (a fomor cult, for example), that third party may consecrate the character. There are even stories of Kami that were promised from birth to serve Gaia.

Consecration means different things to the four types of possessed characters. Below are explanations of what each type might expect from the Background.

Fomori: Consecrated fomori may be bonded to any number of Wyrms-servitors. Powerful Banes are probably the most common choice, but fomori may also be consecrated to Black Spiral Dancers, other fomori, or even human beings who actively serve the Wyrms (whether they know it or not — sometimes mages have fomori servants). A truly special fomor might even be consecrated to one of the Triatic Wyrms — the Defiler, the Eater-of-Souls, or the Beast-of-War. Consecrated fomori can expect help in the form of information, sudden flashes of insight or power, or even aid in battle (especially if the character's benefactor is a Black Spiral Dancer — which can be great surprise for a pack of Garou who though they were only dealing with a single fomor!).

Drones: Most Drones have at least some rating in this Background. The level depends on how powerful a Weaver-spirit commands the Drone. Nearly any of the spirits listed in the Book of the Weaver would serve



The Rite of Consecration

Each type of possessed character looks at Consecration in a very different way. Therefore, there is no one "Rite of Consecration." A fomor might be bonded to a Black Spiral in a rite performed by the twisted Garou himself, whereas a Drone will simply receive orders from her patron Weaver-spirit. When creating a consecrated character, either for a player to control or as a Storyteller character, consider how the consecration was performed, by whom, and for what purpose. This will help you get a better sense of what kind of benefits the Background will provide.

as patrons for Drones. A consecrated Drone might find that technology works flawlessly for her — cars run smoothly, computers never crash, etc. If the Drone is consecrated to a more martial spirit (such as a Chaos Monitor or a Guardian-spirit), she might receive aid in battle in the form of Materialized Weaver-spirits. Likewise, if the Drone winds up fighting Garou or other Umbra-hopping shapeshifters, her patron might just strengthen the Gauntlet in the Drone's immediate area to help prevent surprise attacks.

Gorgons: It's difficult, of course, to make generalizations about creatures born of chaos and creation, but some gorgons are indeed consecrated. Their patrons include Wyld-spirits such as Unravelers or Gyres (see the **Book of the Wyld** for information on Unravelers and other spirits) and even shapeshifters who serve the Wyld extra-fervently (Ratkin, for example). All gorgons are unique, and as such, there's really no telling what a consecrated gorgon might be gifted with. In general, however, such gorgons can usually expect little bursts of chaos if their surroundings grow too static (of course, some gorgons create such bursts even without help).

Kami: The rarest of the possessed, Kami are earthly avatars of Gaia. As such, they might be consecrated to anything Gaian, which leaves a lot of room for diversity. Nearly any shapeshifter (excluding the Ananasi and, obviously, any shapechanger that has chosen to serve the Wurm) or non-Triatic spirit might choose to patronize a Kami. Doing so is an immense honor among the Changing Breeds, but is, of course, also a great responsibility. By agreeing to become a Kami's benefactor, the shapeshifter is promising to protect a living extension of Gaia. This is likely worth a significant Renown bonus — but if the Kami is killed despite the Changer's best efforts, the accompanying penalty will be all the harsher. What aid a consecrated Kami might expect varies, of course. If a totem avatar watches over the Kami, she might be granted the same Traits that a Garou pack following that totem would be. Likewise, a Kami that has a Garou as a

benefactor will have at least one steadfast guardian that will die to defend her, if necessary.

The more dots a character has in this Background, the more powerful the being she is consecrated to. Each level of Consecrated that the player buys, however, also costs a Triatic character a certain amount of Autonomy (promised servitude to one of the Triat does tend to reduce free will a bit).

- A minor spirit — Scryer Bane; Net-Spider; Spark; Gaian Gaffling. Aid is usually given in the form of information, although the spirit might occasionally use a Charm on the character's behalf. -3 temporary Autonomy.
- A slightly more powerful spirit, or a shapechanger or other appropriate supernatural creature — Hollow Man fomor; Guardian-Spider; Serpentine; rank 1-3 Garou. The patron may gift the character with aid in battle or healing. -5 temporary Autonomy.
- A significant force is at work in the character's life — Nexus Crawler; Wolf-Spider; rank 4 Ratkin; pack totem spirit. The patron will bring its powers to bear on behalf of the character if it is in the same general area, and usually assigns lesser spirits to watch its charge. -1 permanent Autonomy.
- The character is the spiritual child of one of the greatest spirits — Maeljin Incarna; Chaos Monitor; the Nameless; Totem or Planetary Incarna. The character is never far from aid, and if she actually calls for help, the heavens may well rain down fire (or something equally dramatic) in response. Be careful what you ask for... -2 permanent Autonomy.
- Beings so completely promised to their spiritual masters occur once in a century — one of the Triatic Wyrms; Weaver-Spider; the Heart of the Wyld; a Celestine (Luna, Helios, etc.). Characters with this level of consecration don't tend to live long, but while they do live, they can change the world. They are often unaware of exactly what they can accomplish, but they are protected by some of the most powerful beings in the world. -3 permanent Autonomy.

Cult

Michael drove away from the statue in a kind of reverent haze. None of the others who came to pray at its — her — feet had reacted, so he had to believe that they had not seen what he'd seen. Miracles had been reported from the statue in the town's square before, and the stories had been told and retold in tabloids, but he never thought he'd see it!

He knew what he'd seen, though. He had raised his eyes to look at the statue, and her eyes had moved. She looked straight at him, and he'd felt a voice in his mind. It told him



some confusing things, some things he'd never have suspected about the old man who lived above the toy store in town.

Michael pulled into the gas station, filled his truck, and then his spare gas can. He had no idea how many Molotov cocktails it would take for the store to burn, but he wanted to be prepared. He didn't want to disappoint her.

Possessed characters wield powers that normal human beings often have no way to explain. Some humans would interpret these powers as abominations, but others might well fall to their knees in worship. A character with a rating in this Background has found some of the latter.

However, these cultists are not movers and shakers of industry, nor are they politicians or other powerful folks. More likely, they are less-than-intelligent, gullible, and weak. Of course, they have found a source of strength and wisdom — the character. Perhaps she promises them power or guidance; perhaps she simply leads by example. Gorgons and Kami who take the forms of inanimate objects or places might well be declared "holy sites" and develop cult followings that way, whereas fomori are more likely to start literal cults and promise dark rewards to those who serve faithfully.

The more dots a character has in Cult, the more followers she preaches to, and the more capable those followers are. Cultists are not immune to the Delirium nor are they enhanced in any other way (of course, a fomor might use a cult as a recruiting method). They might act as muscle occasionally, but are no more battle-hardened than any other human being.

- Two believers, who will attempt to find others (perhaps too zealously — better keep them under control).
- Four followers, one of whom has a useful skill or resource.
- Six members, one of them might be a capable combatant or independently wealthy.
- Eight supporters. One of them might have some supernatural knowledge, which can be a great help or a dangerous hindrance.
- Your cult boasts ten or more members. One of those is an acknowledged leader and is capable of organizing the rest of the bunch when you are not available.

Fetish/Equipment

Celeste tapped the choker around her neck, as she always did when she was nervous. The delicate bones it was made from would surely have shattered by now, were it not for the spirit bound to them. From behind her, she heard the men kicking down her door. There would be no reasoning with them, she knew, but they were just doing their jobs.

Of course, I could just kill them, she reminded herself. She shook the thought away. The spirit inside her growled, uneasy at having their home invaded. Only natural. Finally, Celeste walked to the balcony, stroked the choker to wake the hare-spirit therein, tensed her body, and jumped. She landed safely on the next rooftop, nearly thirty feet away. She smiled as she ran for the fire escape — “Let’s see them follow that.”

The character possesses a fetish or some other form of specialized, mystical, or unique equipment. For fomori, this may be a Wyrms-fetish or special gear from Pentex. Kami sometimes carry fetishes crafted for them by Garou to help them survive in a hostile world. Drones and gorgons rarely own such things, but it wouldn’t be impossible to find a Drone with a technological marvel or a gorgon with a handful of Glass Mites.

In all other respects, this Background is identical to the one found in the **Werewolf** book. Below are examples of the sort of equipment that might be available at the various levels. Remember that at higher levels, the character need not possess one extremely advanced item. She may instead have several lower-cost items (for example, 4 dots in this Background could be read as one level four fetish, or 2 level two fetishes, or any other combination totaling four levels).

- A minor fetish; a piece of commercially available (if expensive) equipment. Examples: A fetish shirt that, when activated, add 3 to all Sense Wyrms difficulties in the area; a Kevlar vest.
- A useful fetish; equipment usually reserved for military use. Examples: A bone choker that duplicates the Gift: Hare’s Leap; automatic weapon.
- A powerful fetish; highly specialized equipment. Examples: A rattle that temporarily awakens any sleeping spirits in the area; a deadly contact poison (and possibly its antidote).
- A rare or unique fetish; highly illegal weapons or equipment. Examples: A technofetish that allows the user to instantly learn the contents of a disk or hard drive; a cache of white phosphorus grenades.
- A legendary fetish; a unique prototype. Examples: A leather glove that, when activated, stains anything it touches with permanent Wyrms taint; bionic or cybernetic implants augmenting Strength and Stamina, and providing an adrenal boost (2 extra actions) once per scene.

Symbiosis

Carla looked dispassionately at the man dying before her eyes. His life meant little to her, but she needed the information he had concerning the shapeshifters that had attacked her facility. She cut his shirt off to get a better view of the wounds, and shook her head. The wererat’s claws had opened his back deep enough that she could see his spine.

She glanced over in the corner and noticed that Dr. Tyler had stopped breathing. His wound had been much worse. His bag, however, had been thrown clear when the creature stabbed him with its gleaming dagger. Carla walked across the room, ignoring the moans of pain from the man on the floor, picked up the bag, and looked in. Medical instruments — what did she need? Needle and thread? Pain killers?

Sighing, she thought for a moment. Her eyes fluttered back into her head while somewhere, tiny spiders ran throughout the world, gathering the information she needed. A few seconds later, she pulled a syringe from the bag and drew some clear liquid from a bottle.

“Do you know what you’re doing?” gasped the injured man.
“I do now. Don’t distract me.”

Whether possessed by a Bane or merged with a fragment of Gaia herself, a spirit-inhabited character has access to a large amount of information. However, some spirits are more knowledgeable than others, and sometimes the spirits just don’t feel like talking. The Symbiosis Background determines how much information a character can glean from her “tenant.”

In game terms, this Background is similar to Ancestors. The player rolls a number of dice equal to the character’s Symbiosis rating. The difficulty is equal to the character’s Autonomy rating for Triatic symbiotes (although Drones receive a -1 to this difficulty). For Kami, this difficulty is normally 6, but the Storyteller may modify it if the spirit in question would have particular knowledge of the subject (asking a Dove-spirit for advice on using a gun, for example, is probably an exercise in futility). For each success on the roll, the character gains a dot in an appropriate Ability for the remainder of the scene. If the roll botches, the spirit grows frustrated with the character’s bumbling and asserts itself, taking greater control of the character’s mind. This costs the character 2 points of temporary Autonomy.

- You can count on a hint now and then.
- Your spirit often grants you useful knowledge.
- You may never have touched a gun before, but after a few seconds of concentration, you’re dangerous.
- You have access to a vast amount of knowledge — sometimes it’s hard to sift through it all.
- A veritable font of information — sometimes the spirit initiates the Symbiosis before you do.

Geasa

Geasa are special taboos levied on Kami as a spiritual price to be paid for their gifts. Each Kami begins play with one geas, a prohibition from specific activity that they must abide by no matter what. The geas is partly a show of devotion to Gaia, and partly the

cost paid for manifesting spirit powers on the physical world. Kami might not even know why they have the geasa they do; all they know is that it's very important that they obey these prohibitions without fail.

Violating a geas always brings down a curse on the Kami. Such an unfortunate creature might lose many of its powers, have a category of Attributes reduced to 1, lose Gnosis or Rage or Willpower, or even be stripped of supernatural power and become an ordinary mortal, animal or plant once more. The Storyteller adjudicates the punishment, taking into account the nature of the violation and the circumstances under which the geas was broken (there are very few extenuating circumstances, mind; breaking a geas is always bad, but breaking one casually is unforgivable). The curse is likely permanent unless the Kami manages to perform a remarkable quest of atonement, and even then it must likely accept another geas before the curse is lifted. Bear in mind that the Storyteller is *obligated* to tempt your character to violate the ban at some point; it's not a weakness if it never comes into play.

There are many colorful instances of geasa and taboos throughout mythology, and the enterprising Storyteller can gather several ideas from old myths, the bans levied by Werewolf totem spirits, or even superstition. The following are just a few ideas for potential geasa.

- **Barefoot:** Only Kami with human hosts or the need to spend much time in human form may take this geas. The Kami must never wear shoes or any other sort of foot covering.

- **Color Ban:** The Kami may not wear clothing, ornamentation or decoration of a particular color — this applies not only to humans, but also to animals and even trees and animate lands (graffiti of the appropriate color violates the ban).

- **Gender Ban:** The Kami may not speak directly to any member of a specific gender; any such communication must take place through an intermediary.

- **Gift Ban:** The Kami cannot refuse a gift freely offered. This ban can sometimes cause trouble with treacherous gift-givers, or when paired with the substance ban.

- **Healer:** The Kami cannot refuse to heal anyone who asks for his assistance.

- **Indirect Movement:** The Kami may not move in a straight line, but must always take an indirect path to its goal. Kami with plant hosts and animate lands cannot take this ban.

- **Question Ban:** The Kami may never answer a direct question.

- **Rover:** The Kami may not call any single place home; they may not sleep in the same "bed" or even spend the night in the exact same spot two nights in a

row. The Kami must have a naturally ambulatory host to take this geas.

- **Silence:** The Kami may not speak while performing its appointed task, but must make its wishes known through other means.

- **Substance Ban:** The Kami may not come into contact with a particular substance without violating this geas. Sample substances include plastic, steel, wood, silver, water, blood, and so on.

- **Thankless:** The Kami may neither accept thanks for its assistance nor give thanks to anyone who aids it. It may not even explain its seeming ungratefulness without violating the taboo.

- **Truthspeaker:** The Kami cannot deliberately tell a lie, although it can still pass on misinformation that it believes to be true.

- **Whisper-Bound:** The Kami may never raise its voice above a whisper, even to call for help.

Merits and Flaws

Many of the Merits and Flaws listed in the **Werewolf Player's Guide** are applicable to possessed characters as well. Listed below are some that are especially appropriate for — or unique to — such characters.

Spirit's Mark

(2 point Merit OR 2 point Flaw)

The spirit riding you bleeds over into the physical world a bit. You aren't physically any different (not as a result of this Trait, anyway) but you exude a certain aura. What exactly that aura feels like depends on a) whether Spirit's Mark is a Merit or a Flaw and b) what kind of spirit possesses you. An attractive fomor might reek of pure lust, granting a -2 on all Seduction-related difficulties. A Kami possessed by a predator-spirit might engender a feeling similar to the Curse in humans (+1 to Social difficulties not related to Intimidation). The Storyteller should work with the player to decide what kind of feeling the character gives off and how it translates into game play. Generally, it should be worth a difficulty adjustment of 1 or 2, depending on how specific the feeling is.

Hidden Power (2 point Merit)

All of your powers and Taints are concealable. Whether you're a fomor with slimy tentacles or a Kami with needle-sharp teeth, you can concentrate for a moment and retract, cover, or otherwise hide any of the modifications the spirit inside you has made.

True Symbiote (4 point Merit)

Possessed? Maybe, but by sharing your mind and body with a spirit, you've discovered your place in life. You have been very accommodating to the spirit inside

Appendix: Powers and Taints

The powers here should not be taken as the absolute last word in what's available to possessed characters. Powers (and Taints) that appear in other supplements but that have been excluded for purposes of space and playability are not suddenly "illegal." If the Storyteller is interested in allowing characters to purchase powers and Taints from other supplements (such as **Freak Legion** or the **Werewolf Storytellers Handbook**), all that really remains is to assign a point cost. (And if the character in question is a Storyteller-controlled one intended to be stronger or weaker than the players' characters, even that might not be necessary.) As always, take whatever seems suitable and ignore what doesn't.

The numeric cost (or bonus in the case of Taints) is in "power points"; each character begins with five points of powers, and can earn more points by burning Autonomy. See Chapter Five for more details.

Powers

- **Animal Control (2)** — Fomori, Kami and gorgons may take this power. The character can summon and control animals that are within range when the power is used. The character's control over animals extends only to making animals do things largely within the range of their normal behavior. A dog or wolf might bite, crows might follow a specific person and keep him in sight; but a rat won't act like a carrier pigeon, and a bear won't try to pry open a car trunk.

System: The player spends one Willpower and rolls Manipulation + Animal Ken; Kami gain two additional dice to this roll. If successful, the character can cause one animal per success anywhere within 120 yards to carry out one specific task. The effect lasts for one scene.

- **Animate Self (1-5)** — Gorgons and Kami bound into inanimate objects such as trees or statues may take this power, which allows them to animate their host body. Without this power, a character with a plant or mineral host is immobile.

System: The character spends one Gnosis, and may move as he pleases for the duration of the scene. The number of points spent on this power limits the character's Dexterity; the character cannot act with a higher Dexterity than the cost of this power. For obvious reasons, this power should be mandatory for any player's character with an otherwise inanimate host, although Storyteller characters may not need to purchase the power.

- **Armored Hide (2)** — Fomori, Kami and gorgons may take this power. The host's skin is obviously changed, granting added resilience against attacks. It may be obviously scaly or heavy, rhino-like hide, or perhaps even glistening with slime that causes attacks to slide away without making heavy contact.

System: This power grants the host three additional soak dice; further, he may soak all damage at difficulty 6, just as werewolves do.

- **Aura of Tranquility (5)** — Kami and Drones may purchase this power. The character radiates an aura of either peacefulness (in the case of Kami) or harmony (in the case of Drones) that calms anyone within the area.

System: This power is almost always active, although the character may turn it off at will. While the aura is in effect, nobody in the character's immediate vicinity (about 30 yards or so) may act in a violent fashion. Shapeshifters may not use Rage, vampires may not frenzy, and so on. In order to commit a violent action of any sort in the character's

presence, a person must make a Willpower check opposed by the character's Charisma + Empathy. Success allows the would-be marauder to act as violently as he pleases for a turn.

- **Berserker (3)** — Fomori, Kami, and gorgons may take this power. The host is infused with Rage just like a werewolf's, with all the attendant advantages and disadvantages.

System: Buying this power grants the character three points of permanent Rage. Additional Rage points may be purchased for one freebie point each. The character may use Rage to take extra actions, ignore stuns or ignore wound penalties (although not, of course, to shapeshift). However, the host is also capable of entering frenzy in the same manner as a Garou. The character does not regain Rage by moon phase, although he may regain it in other ways (frustration, between stories, and so on).

- **Bestial Mutation (5)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this power. The host body is no longer recognizable as human or animal; it has distended and warped into a rough parody of its former shape, wholly unable to pass as anything other than a supernatural monster.

System: Each of the character's Physical Attributes is raised by 2 (to a maximum of 8); however, the character's Appearance falls to 0.

- **Blending (1)** — Any possessed character may take this power. The character is able to shift its coloration for purposes of stealth; although it cannot duplicate specific patterns or textures, it can create general patterns sufficient to break up its outline.

System: The character gains four extra dice on any Stealth rolls to keep from being visually detected.

- **Body Expansion (2 or 4)** — This power may be taken by fomori and gorgons. The character is capable of increasing her size up to three times her normal height for a short period of time. While expanded, she gains the various advantages of great size: covering ground in huge strides, picking up opponents more readily, and so on. However, she also suffers minor disadvantages while expanded: Her internal organs do not grow to match, which may make her light-headed from too little blood, and her Strength is not proportionately increased. Her bones also become brittle due to the attenuation, which can lead to dangerous injuries.

System: The character spends a Willpower point to reach her expanded size. Hand-to-hand attacks increase their damage to Strength +3, and the character may increase her speed by 10 yards per turn. However, if the character botches a soak roll, her bones break, causing an additional unsoakable health level of lethal damage. Gorgons with plant or mineral forms are immune to the problems of brittle bones, but must pay the increased cost (4 points) for the power.

- **Brain Eating (6):** This power is unique to fomori. The fomor can absorb a target's mental faculties with a touch, and use them to learn. Note that this power cannot be used to inflict physical damage on a target, nor does it allow the fomor to steal memories or specific knowledge.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Intelligence + Occult (difficulty 6) in an opposed



check against the target's Willpower (also difficulty 6). If the fomor wins the test, the target loses a dot of a Mental Attribute (fomor's choice), while the fomor gains one point of experience (if the fomor is a Storyteller controlled character, the Storyteller may decide on a game effect — perhaps the fomor gains a dot of an Ability). This power may only be attempted against a target once per scene.

- **Bulky (3)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may purchase this power. The character's host body is unusually large and solid, offering an extra measure of durability.

System: The character gains three additional health levels, two at the OK level and one at the -1 level.

- **Chaos/Stasis Engine (2 or 4/6 points)** — This potent power is most commonly seen in the Puddlefoot breed of gorgons, for whom it is as familiar as drawing breath. A gorgon with this ability is a walking mouthpiece for chaos, pure and simple. His very presence brings disorder and change to the objects and events at work around him. Bolts unhinge, electrical systems brown out, and nearby containers spring leaks or cracks.

The "reverse" of this power, Stasis Engine, produces similar effects in an attempt to bring order to a drone's environment. Axes re-align, objects secure in place, and things that seem out of synch are brought into harmony with their environs. Only gorgons and Drones are permitted (or would desire) to take this power.

System: In gorgons, the point variance for this power is determined by whether or not the Chaos Engine is "uncontrollable." For two points, the power is almost like a Taint in and of itself, as the gorgon has little control over when and/or how the power will "go off." In fact, only by spending a Willpower point may the gorgon voluntarily alter his environs in the name of chaos. For four points, however, the gorgon's control is a bit sturdier, and he suffers none of the usual deleterious effects of having an "unstable" ability. For Drones there is only one point cost (6), as their Stasis Engine is always under their control.

In the case of voluntary activation, the user need only concentrate for a moment and then roll Wits plus an Ability appropriate to the situation. (Thus, if a gorgon were trying to "convince" a PC monitor to shut down, he would roll Wits + Computer). The difficulty is always the character's Autonomy rating + 2, although certain effects may require additional successes at the Storyteller's discretion.

The limitations of this power are as follows: First, only small changes to the user's environment are possible; while larger shifts may occur, they are only temporary in nature, as the objects/events in question will revert to their prior status upon the creature's departing their vicinity. Second, only one alteration to the user's environment is possible at any given time, though a group of related effects can be considered a single alteration for these purposes. The exception to this last involves involuntary chaos, which often produces a number of effects at once, none of which are under the control of the possessor. Whatever greater design these occurrences may follow or serve is ultimately up to the Storyteller.

- **Command the Earth (3)** — Gorgons and Kami may take this power. The character is able to compel the very earth to obey it, sculpting new formations, sucking down enemies into morasses of quicksand, and so on.

System: The character spends one or more points of Willpower. One point will create minor effects such as a small sandstorm in a desert or a minor rockfall; two or more points create progressively greater effects, up to powerful localized earthquakes and sudden overwhelming landslides for three points of Willpower. This power functions only on natural earth; a character could compel the earth in a ballpark, but not the concrete of a parking lot.

- **Computer Link (1)** — Drones may take this power. The Drone becomes capable of controlling computers by touch alone. The computer must be currently active, and cannot do anything that it isn't already set up to handle; a beaten-up TRS-80 can't run Excel spreadsheets, and a computer with no modem can't go online.

System: The Drone can open any file and crack any password with a simple Intelligence + Computer roll; even simpler tasks, such as composing an email or running an anti-virus program, are automatic. Any machine controlled by a computer can be operated in this way, although the Drone must be in contact with the piece of hardware that contains the actual computer, if the computer is separate from the machine.

- **Curse of Gaia (5)** — Only Kami may purchase this power, and even then only if they have the power Spirit Ties. The Kami may levy the curse of Gaia Herself against an offender, punishing those who disrupt Her will or the balance of the natural world. Minor curses may manifest as runs of bad luck, bouts of depression or embarrassing physical conditions (such as hair loss or extreme stench); major curses might turn an offender to stone, inflict him with a wasting disease or even compel the earth to swallow him up.

System: During character creation, the player chooses one minor curse effect and one major curse effect that the Kami with this power is capable of inflicting (subject to Storyteller approval). To levy the power, the Kami must spend 3 Gnosis points. If the target is a shapeshifter, they may resist the effect in a contested Gnosis roll; otherwise, the curse's effects are automatic. If the Curse of Gaia is leveled against an innocent, the Kami loses all her Gnosis and cannot use any of her powers until she has completed a major task of atonement (such as a visionquest in the Umbra).

- **Cybersenses (2)** — Only Drones may purchase this power, which allows the user to replace his own senses with that of a machine — radar, infrared scanning, or the like.

System: As the Glass Walker Gift (*Werewolf*, pg. 149), save that the Drone spends Willpower rather than Gnosis.

- **Darksight (1)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character is capable of seeing in the dark just as well as he might in daylight.

System: Once purchased, this power's effects are automatic.

- **Devour (4)** — Fomori and gorgons may purchase this power. The character is able to distend its mouth and swallow



objects as large as a medium-sized dog or a small person. Anyone so devoured is digested as food, with only truly indigestible materials being eliminated (such as bones, shoes or glasses).

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Athletics; the target must be within its grasp, of course. Success allows the character to swallow its victim whole. If the target is still alive, he is treated as suffocating (*Werewolf*, pg. 188). A target with natural weaponry or a knife may try to cut himself free. All such attacks are at difficulty 7; the possessed may soak as normal, but if it loses half its health levels, the victim has cut a hole in its stomach large enough to escape.

• **Dispersion (4/6)** — All four character types may purchase this power. This power, one of the most overt changes a spirit can make, allows its host to break up his body into a number of smaller wholes, each one fully alive and possessed of its “owner’s” sentience. The make-up of these individual parts is up to the player and the Storyteller to decide; most resemble small animals such as rodents or snakes, though some particularly unusual gorgons have been known to suddenly disperse into a number of different entities at once. This Power is most commonly found among the Hollow Men breed of fomori.

System: This Power costs four points for gorgons and fomori, while Drones and Kami must spend six points in order to acquire the unusual ability. When the character wishes to disperse, he must concentrate (taking no other action for the round) and spend a Willpower point. At the end of the round, he will break up into his “component parts,” which may then scatter as desired. At this time, the only way to be fully rid of the character is to find and destroy every individual part — a difficult prospect, indeed. However, unless the character also possesses the Regeneration Power, he will suffer terribly if he attempts to reform without all his “pieces.”

As a general rule, you can evenly divide the character’s total body mass by his health levels. Thus, if a character with eight health levels attempts to reform with only 75 percent of himself intact, he will reform having suffered two levels of non-soakable aggravated damage. The character can heal this damage more quickly by consuming more matter, typically that of his component creatures (i.e., if a Hollow Man disperses into a nest of vipers, half of which are subsequently killed, he may seek out and consume vipers once he has reformed in order to heal more efficiently). Note that every individual part has a constant and unerring sense of where the others are at all times, and reforming costs no Willpower, though it does take a full round of uninterrupted concentration.

• **Ectoplasmic Extrusion (3)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character is able to generate up to four semi-solid tentacles or arms that can stretch out up to five yards, manipulating objects or even striking blows. The limbs may be true ectoplasm, quasi-solid shadow, preternaturally thick mist, or whatever seems suitable for the character type in question.

System: The character spends one Willpower point and rolls Stamina + Occult to generate the tentacles. The character may add 3 to her Strength for purposes of lifting

heavy objects only. The tentacles do not grant extra attacks; to attack with multiple pseudopodia requires the splitting of dice pools (or expenditure of Rage) as usual. A blow from an extrusion inflicts Strength +1 bashing damage, and the maneuver is handled with Dexterity + Brawl, difficulty 8.

- **Electrical Field (3)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character may generate a powerful electrical field that shocks anyone in contact with his body. The current can be AC or DC in nature, with appropriate effects (blowing the target away from the character, or locking their muscles in place).

System: The electrical charge can be generated at will, and inflicts bashing damage equal to the character's Stamina +3. The damage can be made aggravated with the expenditure of a Willpower point.

- **Elemental Resistance (1 per dot)** — All possessed characters have access to this Power. The host's resistance to a certain type of energy form is augmented to supernatural degrees. The chosen source can be mundane, such as fire or lightning, or may even come from more mystical sources such as balefire. Regardless of the source, it cannot be changed once it has been decided upon without further expenditure (i.e., buying the Power again).

System: For every point spent on this power, the character gains an extra die for the purposes of resisting injury from the specified energy source, providing him in a sense with a "soak before the soak." If, for some reason, the attack form is one that ordinarily allows no soak or resisted roll, this power provides a number of dice equal to its rating for protection. This power is especially useful to fomori, many of whom were normal mortals before being possessed, and thus cannot soak any form of attack that inflicts aggravated damage.

- **Enchanting Voice (3)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character may enthrall listeners with its song (or in the case of Drones, with its wonderfully soothing speech).

System: As long as the character sings, anyone within the area must make a Willpower roll (resisted by the character's Charisma + Performance) to take any action other than listen to the song. If the listeners are aware of some form of impending or even present danger, they receive three additional dice on the roll. If they are wounded while listening to the song, the effect of the character's voice is broken. The possessed character's voice has no power to influence listeners in other ways (barring other powers of similar nature, such as Spirit Gift: Roll Over).

- **Enhanced Attribute (2 per dot)** — All four character types may purchase this power. The host's natural capabilities are magnified to superhuman levels. This power isn't restricted to Physical Attributes — a Wyld-possessed being might boast Enhanced Wits, while a fomor might well develop unearthly Appearance, the better to lure victims.

System: For every two points spent on this power, the character's chosen Attribute is raised by one dot. The player can choose to raise an Attribute rating over 5, but no higher

than eight. This power can be purchased more than once, to affect multiple Attributes.

- **Entropic Touch (4)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this power. With a touch, the character can temporarily weaken the physical structure of an object, or even of a living being.

System: The character must touch the target; the player then spends one Willpower point and rolls Perception + Medicine if the target is organic, or Perception + Crafts if the target is inorganic (difficulty 8 for either roll). Success weakens the target's tensile strength for one turn; in that time, all rolls to damage the target (whether through attacks or feats of strength) gain five extra dice.

- **Extensible Limb (1 per limb)** — Fomori and gorgons may purchase this power. One or more of the character's limbs — arms, legs, tails, even tongues — can stretch out to manipulate objects or strike an opponent at range. This power commonly manifests in fomori as a powerful froglike tongue, giving its owner strangely slurred speech (and sometimes a taste for insects).

System: The character may extend her limb with a reflexive Dexterity + Athletics roll, out to one yard plus one yard per success. She may use her full Strength with the limb or limbs in question.

- **Extra Limbs (2)** — Fomori and gorgons may purchase this power. The character permanently sprouts a number of extra limbs, be they extra arms, tentacles or even extended, prehensile tongues or intestines. The limbs may be attached in weird places, or even concealed in fleshy pockets until needed.

System: The character gains three additional dice in grapple attempts, in addition to the minor benefits of extra limbs (such as the ability to hold a flashlight while reloading a shotgun and digging for one's car keys simultaneously). The character gains no multiple actions, and must split dice pools (or spend Rage) as usual to perform different actions with different limbs in the same turn.

- **Eyes of the Wyrn (3)** — Only fomori may purchase this power. The fomor's eyes are somehow unusual. They may be compound eyes like an insect's, or possess strangely shifting pupils and irises, or even swim with ripples of iridescent, unclean color. Those who meet the fomor's gaze see a more dreadful pattern hidden within — glimpses of the maddening damnation of the Wyrn.

System: Anyone who looks into the character's eyes must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 8) or be frozen in horror for (five turns minus Wits rating, minimum one turn). The fomor may not move, attack or otherwise take an action to break eye contact without freeing the victim. His companions may attack with no such restriction; the victim remains frozen as long as the fomor keeps still and maintains the power.

- **Flight (3/5)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may take this power. The character is able to fly, either through wings (of any description) or some other form of propulsion (such as wind-riding for a storm-aspected Kami). She may hover, glide, soar or dive, as the player chooses. Kami and gorgons with ordinary winged animals as hosts need not purchase

this power, although more radical forms (such as a sentient swarm of insects) are required to do so.

System: For three points, the character may fly at up to normal human jogging speed (14 yards per turn); for five, she may cover 20 yards per turn. Characters with wings can push themselves farther by adding their Dexterity to their movement rate for short bursts.

• **Foot Pads (1)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may take this power. The character's feet are padded like an animal's, granting him an extra measure of stealth.

System: The character subtracts 2 from the difficulty of any Stealth roll made to move quietly.

• **Fungal Touch (4/6)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this power. The character has been partly subsumed by a strange fungoid substance, which it can pass on with a virulent touch.

System: The character must touch the target; the target must succeed at a Stamina roll (difficulty 7) or begin losing one point from all Physical Attributes, as well as Appearance, per day as the fungus begins to coat him and eat away at his flesh. The infection may be cured only by supernatural means (the Gift: Resist Toxin, healing fetishes and the like). Only fomori may purchase the six-point version of this power; at this strength, the fungus emanates clouds of revolting-smelling spores, which subtract two dice from the dice pools of anyone attacking the fomori in hand-to-hand combat.

• **Gaseous Form (5)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may purchase this power. The character can dissolve her body into a gaseous state, be it mist, smoke or a foul miasma.

System: The player must spend a point of Willpower to become gaseous and another to become solid again. While in gaseous form, the character can glide through the air at her normal walking speed, and cannot be harmed by physical attacks such as fists, claws or bullets. Energy attacks such as fire or radiation affect her as usual, as do most psychic or mind-based powers (save those requiring eye contact). She may not attack while gaseous, although the Storyteller may rule that certain offensive powers still work in gaseous form (such as Mind Blast). The gaseous form holds together in most winds, although powerful winds such as those summoned by the Wendigo Gift: Cutting Wind inflict damage on the character.

• **Hazardous Breath (varies)** — Fomori, gorgons or Kami can take this power. The character can vent some sort of dangerous substance on command — fire, poison breath, acidic spittle or the like. The attack need not actually be a breath weapon; any sort of long-range attack will do.

System: The player rolls Dexterity + Brawl to hit the target; the damage is one health level of lethal damage for every 2 points invested in the power. For an additional point, the damage is aggravated. For an extra three points, the damage is caustic, inflicting damage each turn until the hazardous substance is washed off or neutralized or until the target dies.

The character can use this attack a number of times equal to his Stamina each scene. Range is the Storyteller's discretion, depending on the attack type. If the hazard could potentially hurt more than one target at a time, assume that

each success above the first on the attack roll allows an additional victim to be hurt if he is within range of the attack (roughly two yards or less from the initial target).

• **Heart Sense (3)** — Only Kami may purchase this power. The Kami can see into the very heart of an individual, determining her general spiritual allegiance (Wyrms, Wyld, Weaver, Gaia or other), her innocence or guilt, her true form (if she is wearing another shape), even her most secret dreams and desires or her connections to the past.

System: The character must possess the Spirit Ties power to purchase Heart Sense. The player spends 1 Gnosis and rolls Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7). Each success grants the Kami one bit of information from the list above.

• **Homogeneity (varies)** — This power is available to all possessed characters. The character can counteract all supernatural powers within five yards of her, or focus on one opponent and prevent him from using such powers for considerably longer. Homogeneity does not work on "innate" powers; therefore, while it will counteract a Garou's Gifts, it will not stop them from shapeshifting.

System: This power costs 6 points for fomori and Kami, 5 for gorgons, and 4 for Drones. The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7 for an area effect, or the Willpower of a single target). Success cancels, but does not remove, any non-innate supernatural powers used within five yards; for instance, a werewolf protected by Blur of the Milky Eye would suddenly be revealed, but he could activate the Gift again on his next action. If used on a specific target, that target's powers are nullified for a number of turns equal to the number of successes rolled. This power will cancel Gifts (but not regeneration, Rage expenditure or shapeshifting), vampiric Disciplines (but not vitae-empowered increases to Attributes), and mage Spheres. If a target knows what the possessed character is trying to do, she may resist with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7, and must exceed the possessed character's successes).

• **Horror (1/2/7)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may take this power. The character's presence is so disturbing that it evokes the same supernatural panic in mortals as witnessing a Garou in Crinos form. More powerful characters can even inflict terror and disbelief on the supernatural. This power almost always manifests in characters with truly bestial, animalistic or outright monstrous forms.

System: For 1 point, the character causes the full effects of the Delirium in all mortal onlookers, as described on page 192 of the *Werewolf* rulebook. For an additional point, she may opt to turn this power on or off at will. The seven-point version of this Power allows the character to inflict the Delirium even on other Awakened beings (at this level, the character may also choose to use the power at will, rather than it being a constant effect). Note that fomori do not have to be physically disfigured or otherwise visibly monstrous to have this power, as the terror spread by its use is innately spiritual.

• **Immunity to the Delirium (1)** — Gorgons and Drones are considered automatically immune to the Delirium; fomori and Kami may purchase this power to gain similar immunity.

System: The character is not subject to any of the Delirium's effects. Note that although a fomor or Kami might be immune to the supernatural fear buried in its human host's racial memory, not all will react to the sight of a nine-foot, super-strong monster with icy calm.

• **Infectious Bite/Touch (5)** — Fomori or gorgons may purchase this power. The character is able to spread a vicious infection by bite or touch (player's choice, but the character may use only one method). If the host manages to infect a target, the target becomes feverish and sickly, and will be mildly contagious until the infection heals.

System: The host must bite or touch the target. The player then rolls Willpower (difficulty 7) in an opposed roll against the target's Stamina (also difficulty 7). If the host scores more successes than the target, the target takes health levels of damage equal to the difference between the two rolls. This damage is considered aggravated and heals at the rate of one level per week (barring supernatural healing methods). Until the damage heals, the victim is mildly contagious (anyone coming into direct contact with the afflicted individual must roll Stamina, difficulty 4, or receive 2 levels of damage exactly as if she had been infected by the fomor directly).

• **Invisibility (5)** — Any possessed character may take this power. The character disappears from sight. She leaves no footprints, but still makes noise and still gives off scent, and will still register to Gifts such as Sense Wyrms (if applicable). Making an attack or any other obvious action will cancel the power's effects; otherwise, the power lasts until canceled.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Wits + Stealth (difficulty 6). Anyone specifically searching for the character rolls Perception + Alertness (or Primal-Urge, if in a form where detecting by scent is possible) in an opposed check against the character's original Wits + Stealth roll. If the searcher rolls more successes than the invisible character, she can target the character as normal (although she still cannot actually see him, and therefore might not be able to identify him). The power lasts for a scene or until canceled.

• **Invulnerability (3-7)** — Kami and Drones may take this power. The character's body is supernaturally strengthened with no obvious outward effect.

System: The character gains one to five additional soak dice and may soak lethal and aggravated damage at no penalty; the cost is equal to the number of soak dice gained +2. A Kami cannot possess both this power and Armored Hide.

• **Liquid Form (5)** — Kami, gorgons and fomori may take this power. The character can liquefy its body, dissolving into a thick liquid (mud, blood or the like) that can move about as it likes. The liquid-form character can flow through small openings without difficulty, although it has difficulty moving uphill.

System: The player must spend a point of Willpower to become liquid and another to become solid again. While in liquid form, the character can flow along level or downhill surfaces at its normal walking speed, and cannot be harmed by physical attacks such as fists, claws or bullets. Energy attacks such as fire or radiation damage it as usual, as do most

psychic or mind-based powers (save those requiring eye contact). The character may not attack while liquid, although the Storyteller may rule that certain offensive powers still work in liquid form (such as Mind Blast).

• **Longevity (1+)** — Only Kami may take this power; fomori are too touched by the Destroyer, gorgons are too bound to the forces of change, and all Drones are already effectively unaging. The Storyteller may allow a fomor to take this power only if they also take the Taint: Unaging; the fomor staves off the effects of old age only as long as it indulges in its addiction.

System: The Kami's lifespan is extended by a factor of ten; a human-host Kami would live for around 700 years with the assistance of this power. The character may purchase this power more than once, and each additional purchase adds an extra extension. (A human-form Kami who took this power twice would have a lifespan of 1400 years, not 7000.) If the Kami purchases this power five times, he is effectively ageless.

• **Lord of the Land (2-5)** — Kami and Drones may take this power. The character is incredibly attuned to her territory, remaining constantly aware of anything that happens within the boundaries she's claimed as her own. This power is common only to immobile Kami (plants, mountains, rivers, animate lands) and Drones with a specific monitor purpose.

System: The character can automatically sense anywhere within her territory. This is not the same thing as a danger sense; the character may have to make Perception + Alertness rolls to note threats or stealthy intruders. The character can attune herself to a territory roughly the size of a large building for 2 points, a city block for 3 points, and a square mile or so for 4 points. Only Kami may purchase the 5-point version, which can extend their territory as far as the Storyteller is willing to allow (the length of a small river, for instance). However, if the character leaves her territory for any reason, this power is disrupted, and cannot be reactivated until she spends 24 hours meditating (or lost in the OneSong) within her territory to reattune herself.

• **Magnetokinesis (6)** — Only Drones may purchase this power. The Drone may generate and control localized magnetic fields, allowing him to move or manipulate ferrous objects or damage electronic equipment.

System: The Drone can move ferrous objects as if using Strength equal to the Drone's Willpower and Dexterity equal to the Drone's Wits, at a range of twenty meters. He may also generate electromagnetic pulses, wrecking computers or electronic devices not shielded against such.

• **Malleate (6)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this power. The character is capable of injecting a strange venom that makes the victim's body malleable, making bones and muscle groups as yielding as clay. This power may affect even unliving flesh and plant tissue.

System: The character damages the target with an attack that could inject the poison (a bite, sting or the like) and spend one Willpower point. (The bite of a fomor without Natural Weaponry inflicts Strength -1 lethal damage.) The victim suffers one health level of unsoakable aggravated damage each turn for one turn per success on the attack's damage roll. The more levels

of damage inflicted, the more malleable the victim becomes (wound penalties from this poison represent loss of cohesion, not pain, and cannot be ignored by frenzy or Resist Pain). If reduced below Incapacitated by this venom, the victim can still crawl but loses all fine motor control. The victim loses one soak die from his pool for each level of Malleate damage currently active. Malleate damage can be healed like any other form of aggravated damage, and the Gifts: Resist Toxin, Thousand Forms and Adaptation allow Garou to resist the venom's effects.

- **Mask Presence (4)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character is able to obscure his presence from any observers. Although his image still appears on cameras, anyone in his immediate vicinity is hard-pressed to notice him at all.

System: The character spends a Willpower point and rolls Wits + Stealth. Anyone in the area must make a Willpower check (difficulty 5 + the number of the character's successes, maximum 10) to notice the character. This power lasts for the duration of the scene, or until the character takes some blatantly overt action such as attacking or moving large objects.

- **Matter Weave (4)** — Drones and gorgons may take this power. The character is capable of reshaping matter into new forms and functions. Drones commonly use this power to repair damage to structures or patch up imperfections; gorgons use it almost at their whim, remolding objects into bizarre new configurations to weaken the Weaver's hold on an area.

System: This power works like the Homid Gift: Reshape Object (*Werewolf*, pg. 134), save that the player spends Willpower rather than Gnosis.

- **Memory Caress (1)** — Any possessed character may take this power. The character's spirit half interferes with the minds of ordinary people in order to keep the character's activities secret. Onlookers react to the character in whatever way they normally would, but their memories of the character fade once the character has left. This power certainly has its drawbacks — it's hard to hold down a day job if your boss forgets you exist whenever you leave the room — but for many possessed, anonymity is the ultimate defense.

System: The character inspires a form of Delirium (*Werewolf*, pg. 192) in human onlookers, but only for the purposes of determining whether or not they remember the character. Those immune to the Delirium for whatever reason are also immune to this power.

- **Mind Blast (5)** — Fomori and Drones may take this power. The character can immobilize a target with a bolt of psychic energy. The victim collapses to the ground, writhing in pain, at the mercy of his assailant.

System: Spend one Willpower point and roll Wits + Intimidation (difficulty 6). The target must roll Willpower (difficulty 7) to resist. For every success by which the attacker's roll exceeds the target's, the target spends one turn immobilized by wracking pain. Shapeshifters with Rage may spend one Rage point per turn to take limited action — crawling, speaking, etc. — but any full actions have their dice pools halved.

- **Mind Rape (6)** — Only fomori possess this power. The fomor may invade a target's mind and forcibly wrench information from it. While this does no actual damage, the victim tends to feel naked and violated for several days afterwards (and often has a splitting headache to boot).

System: Spend one Willpower point and roll Manipulation + Intimidation (difficulty of the target's Willpower). The targets may resist with a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). If the fomor manages more successes, she gains information based on the number of successes in excess of her target's. With one success, the fomor is privy only to surface thoughts and emotions. With three successes, the fomor may view thoughts the target thinks of as "secret." With five or more successes, the fomor discovers things about the victim that even the victim didn't know.

- **Natural Weaponry (special)** — Fomori, Kami, and gorgons may take this power. The character manifests natural weaponry in the form of claws, fangs, horns, or just sharp bony protrusions. These weapons are not normally retractable; if the character purchases the Hidden Power Merit or spends one additional point on the weaponry, she can retract it.

System: Each form of weaponry costs 2 points per die of damage inflicted. For example, for a fomor character to have fangs (+1 damage die) and bony protrusions on each elbow (+1 damage die per elbow), it would cost 6 power points. The damage inflicted is aggravated.

- **Nightmare Command (3)** — Only fomori may take this power. The fomor may cause a target to suffer from horrifying nightmares, depriving the victim of restful sleep. The fomor may choose to influence the content of the dreams, or simply let the victim's subconscious do the dirty work. This power requires complete concentration for as long as the fomor wishes the dream to continue — if the fomor is distracted, the power is disrupted and cannot be used on that target for 24 hours.

System: Roll Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty 7). If successful, the target is plunged into a series of nightmares and regains no Willpower for sleeping that night. If this power is used over the course of several nights, keep track of the successes as though making an extended check. When the successes exceed the target's permanent Willpower score, the target loses a dot of Willpower. This loss can be "healed" by one week of peaceful rest, or by certain Gifts (*Dreamspeak*, *Head Games*, *Fabric of the Mind*, etc.).

Note, however, that while a fomor is using this power, he isn't sleeping either. The effect won't be as pronounced on the fomor as on the victim, but over time, the fomor will begin to feel the effects of sleep deprivation (difficulties should increase, attention span lags, etc.)

- **Peaceful Fighting (1)** — Drones and Kami may purchase this power. The character is able to fight with her full strength without permanently damaging her opponents. Kami use this power out of mercy; Drones out of a desire to avoid any major disruptions.

System: This power can be activated or deactivated at will. The character fights normally, but any health levels of



damage she inflicts will last only for the remainder of the scene. Her target heals completely when the scene is over. If the character deals a number of health levels of damage in one blow equal to her opponent's Stamina, her target falls unconscious and awakens at the end of the scene (or if actively awoken by an ally).

- **Piercing Gaze (1)** — Kami may purchase this power. The Kami is able to make anyone it looks at feel uncomfortable and ill at ease, as if the Kami is staring directly into her soul. This power is usually used to drive away trespassers, although it can serve as an excellent aid to interrogation.

System: The player rolls Perception + Intimidation, difficulty of the target's Willpower. The target suffers a +2 difficulty to all Willpower rolls for one turn for each of the Kami's successes.

- **Plant Animation (3)** — Gorgons and Kami may take this power. The character is able to animate plants, causing trees, vines, shrubs and the like to move in ways normally denied them. A tree can strike or even constrict opponents with its branches, vines can entangle and even grasses can catch at a foe's feet.

System: The cost of activating this power varies; animating a set of bushes costs 1 Gnosis, a small tree is 2 Gnosis, and a large tree (or stand of smaller trees, or large swath of scrub or other vegetation) costs 3 Gnosis. Characters without Gnosis may substitute Willpower, but the cost rises by an extra point. Plants possess one to three points of Dexterity and one to 10 points of Strength depending on their size and

flexibility; a patch of grass would have only Strength 1, while a large tree would have Strength 8-10.

- **Plant Kinship (1)** — Kami may purchase this power. This power allows the Kami to communicate with plant life, albeit very little information can be gleaned from the average plant.

System: This power's effects are automatic. Note that plants will be unable to relate any information other than things that directly affected them within a day or so (such as "animal under me when sun still out"). However, if a plant's spirit has been awakened (with the appropriate rite or power) the plant has the perceptive abilities and pseudo-sentience of any Gaffling, making it a much more reliable witness.

- **Pliant Bones (2)** — Fomori, Kami, and gorgons may take this power. The character's bones can become soft and malleable, allowing her to squeeze through small openings like a rat. The character can also wriggle free of bonds and restraints, given time.

System: Roll Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 6). Success allows the character to squeeze through openings as small as 1/20th the circumference of her body (meaning a human being could fit through a quarter-sized hole) or to squeeze out of handcuffs, ropes, and the like. Failure means the power fails to operate for a variable amount of time (Storyteller's discretion). A botch means the character is stuck and must make additional rolls to dislodge herself (at +2 difficulty).

• **Poison (3)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may purchase this power. The character is capable of injecting poison into a foe, whether through venom glands or poisonous body fluids such as saliva.

System: The character must inflict at least one health level of damage on a successful attack of the appropriate nature and spend a Willpower point. The venom inflicts an additional number of health levels of aggravated damage equal to the attacker's Stamina + 2; this venom is soaked separately, if the target is capable of soaking aggravated damage. The Gift: Resist Toxin negates this damage. The poison cannot affect the undead or non-animal targets.

• **Poison Tumors (3)** — Fomori may purchase this power. The fomor's body is covered with odd tumors filled with caustic pus, usually of some repugnant color and smell.

System: Whenever the fomor is struck with a sharp weapon such as claws or blades, the pus from the tumors splatters the attacker, burning him. The attacker must immediately soak three dice of aggravated damage (if capable of soaking aggravated damage, of course); if the attacker actually bites the fomor, the damage increases to five dice. If the attack came from a melee weapon, the attacker may make a reflexive Dexterity roll to avoid the flying pus and suffer no damage. Ranged weapons splatter the attacker only if standing within six feet, in which case he is entitled to the same reflexive Dexterity roll. At the Storyteller's discretion, anyone in close combat with the fomor (particularly grappling him) may run the risk of being splattered with the pus.

• **Reassuring Presence (3)** — Fomori and Drones may take this power. The character may change his appearance to match whatever person the greatest number of onlookers at any given time would respect and listen to. At the scene of a traffic accident, the character would take the form of a traffic cop; in the halls of a corporation, the character seems to be a simple employee. Although this power may seem weak, a clever fomor or Drone can use it to go almost anywhere and obtain limited cooperation from almost anyone.

System: The player rolls Manipulation + Leadership, difficulty 7 (9 if the majority of onlookers are supernatural, such as at a caern). Success indicates that the character's appearance shifts to that of the most appropriate authority figure or peer that onlookers would expect. The shift is a subtle one, and as long as the character doesn't shapeshift while several people are looking directly at him, onlookers react to the change as if they just noticed the "arrival" of the character in his new form. The character cannot take any specific form ("a policeman" is possible, but "Officer Susan Delmonte" is not), and cannot select the "most appropriate" form (the Storyteller decides what is appropriate). Once selected, the form cannot be changed for the duration of the scene; fomori with this power may revert to their original form at will, but Drones retain the form for the full scene's duration.

• **Regeneration (5/7)** — Any character may take this power, except Drones, who naturally possess a similar ability. The character regenerates damage almost immediately, in the

same manner as a werewolf. However, unless the character is also gifted with Rage, she can only heal while at rest.

System: Regeneration costs 5 points for Kami and gorgons and 7 for fomori. The character heals level of one bashing or lethal damage per turn of rest. If the character also possesses the Berserker power, she can roll Stamina (difficulty 8) to regenerate in combat, just as Garou do.

• **Sanity Rending (4)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this power. The character is capable of bending the minds of those that meet its gaze — bending them to the breaking point.

System: The character spends a Willpower point and rolls Charisma + Intimidation, resisted by the target's Willpower. Success inflicts a mental disorder of some sort on the target (see the Taint: Derangement for a few ideas). The disorder lasts for one day per success if the victim is Garou or another supernatural; if the victim is human, the disorder is permanent unless cured.

If the character also possesses the Horror power, he may use Sanity Rending as a reflexive action on anyone affected by the Delirium he broadcasts. There is no Willpower cost to use Sanity Rending in this fashion; however, the character can use Sanity Rending only once on any given target.

• **Season's Blessings (1)** — Only Kami may take this power. The Kami can bring the effects of a particular season to an area: leaves may fall from trees if Autumn's Blessings are invoked, while a Kami attuned to winter may call a snowfall.

System: To invoke the effects of a season, the player must roll Charisma + Primal-Urge, difficulty 7; the more successes, the more dramatic the effects of the season can be. Five successes allow the Kami to induce dangerous effects such as heatstroke (summer) and frostbite (winter) in intruders. The Kami is also particularly attuned to people who are in a stage of life spiritually tied to the appropriate season, and can detect them with a Perception + Enigmas roll; spring Kami can detect children, winter Kami can detect those near the end of their life cycle, and so on. This power can be bought more than once, to allow the Kami to project the blessings of multiple seasons.

• **Self-Immolation (5)** — Fomori and Kami (those tied to fire elementals) may take this power. The character can immolate herself, becoming a walking bonfire. The flames do not harm the character, but damage everything the character touches, with all the attendant risks (exploding ammunition, burning buildings, and the like).

System: The player spends one Willpower and rolls Stamina + Occult, difficulty 7. The flames inflict three health levels of fire damage on anything they contact (difficulty 9 to soak, presuming the victim is able to soak fire damage). The effect lasts for one turn per success.

• **Sense Gaia (2)** — Fomori and Kami may take this power. The character can sense manifestations of Gaia in the nearby area — Gaian shapeshifters, spirits and the like.

System: This power requires active concentration and a Perception + Occult roll. The difficulty depends on the strength and concentration of the "scent;" a werewolf would be difficulty 6, while a powerful Kami would be difficulty 4.

- **Shadowplay (4)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may purchase this power. The character can manipulate local shadows, drawing them together into an area of darkness. The character can always see in his own shadows.

System: The player rolls Wits + Stealth; the effects last for one turn per success, although the expenditure of a Willpower point will extend the duration for the entire scene. The total radius of effect cannot exceed 15 yards. Use of this power may grant significant bonuses to Intimidation and Stealth rolls, at the Storyteller's discretion.

- **Silent Speech (2)** — Drones and Kami may take this power. The character is able to communicate without speech, speaking to individuals mind-to-mind. This power bypasses all language barriers, although the character cannot communicate in this fashion with creatures without language unless using another power to do so (such as Spirit Gift: Beast Speech).

System: This power's effects are automatic, although the character must win a contested Willpower roll to speak to anyone who doesn't want to listen. This power does not allow the character to read another person's thoughts; the communication is two-way only if the other person is actively trying to make her thoughts heard. Each person involved in a Silent Speech conversation hears the character speak in the language most familiar to the listener.

- **Size (4/6)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may take this power. While the Bulky power represents a particularly massive specimen of the host body type, this represents dramatic and permanent shifts in a character's size.

System: Each size level adds or subtracts one health level to the amount of damage the character can withstand, as well as adding or subtracting one point each of Strength and Stamina. Characters with two levels of size add or subtract one from their opponent's difficulties to spot or hit them (larger targets are easier, of course); characters with three levels add or subtract two. The Storyteller may require characters with unusually large or small host bodies (such as a gorgon rhino or Kami hawk) to purchase this power.

Cost	Effect
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- | | |
|---|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 4 | Noticeably larger (horse, tiger) or smaller (poodle, housecat, barracuda) than human. |
| 6 | Considerably larger (rhino, great white shark, small tree) or smaller (mouse, pigeon) than human. |

- **Skinchanger Kinship (1)** — Only Kami may take this power, although Storytellers may allow a fomori to possess Black Spiral Dancer Kinship. This power represents a great spiritual connection to and friendship with one of the Changing Breeds. The most common version of this power is Garou Kinship (since the other Breeds have fallen into decline), but a Kami may possess Kinship to any shapechanger race, even Ratkin or Ananasi.

System: The Kami effectively has a Pure Breed of 3 where the relevant Changing Breed is concerned.

- **Skinshift (4)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may purchase this power. The possessed character may alter the appear-



ance of his flesh, quickly and fluidly taking on the features and body shape of an entirely different creature within moments.

System: The character may change its appearance at any time merely by concentrating for a turn and spending a point of Willpower. When trying to duplicate the features of a specific individual, the player must roll Wits + Expression (with variable difficulty, depending upon the degree of shift and other factors as determined by the Storyteller) to succeed. However, the change is always slightly imperfect; a Kami with a lion host might retain his lion's tail in human form, while a plant-host gorgon might retain bark-like skin or hair like willow branches. Each change lasts until the next Skinshift.

- **Spirit Awakening (1)** — Only Kami may purchase this power. The Kami is able to awaken the spirits of animals, plants or inanimate objects by singing or playing music for them.

System: This power works much as the Rite of Spirit Awakening (*Werewolf*, pg. 161), save that the Kami rolls Charisma + Performance, and can awaken the spirit in a number of turns equal to 10 - the Kami's successes.

- **Spirit Gift (Gift level +1)** — All possessed characters may take this power. With Storyteller permission, the character can learn any appropriate Gift presented in *Werewolf* and develop it as his own power. The Gift must have something to do directly with the character's purpose; for instance, a Drone couldn't take Create Element under any circumstances, but Sense Prey might be appropriate for a gorgon with a predator host.

System: The cost is equal to the level of the Gift +1. The system works as described for the individual Gift

purchased. This power does not negate the need for Rage or Gnosis if a Gift calls for either. For instance, a gorgon cannot use Breath of the Wyld (which requires a Gnosis roll) unless the gorgon has also purchased the Spirit Ties power (giving a possessed character a Gnosis score).

Common Gift choices include:

Fomori: Curse of Hatred, Foaming Fury, Odious Aroma, Toxic Claws, Visceral Agony

Drones: Control Simple Machine, Diagnostics, Persuasion

Gorgons: Adaptation, Beastmind, Breath of the Wyld, Camouflage

Kami: Beast Life, Beast Speech, King of the Beasts, Mother's Touch

- **Spirit Kinship (3)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character has powerful ties to the spirits of his kind, and may even call on them in times of danger. Fomori are tied to Banes, Drones call on Weaver-spirits, gorgons may invoke Wyldlings and Kami usually summon elementals.

System: The player spends a Gnosis point and rolls Manipulation + Expression, difficulty of the character's Autonomy + 1. Each success summons one Gaffling of the appropriate type, which will arrive on the following turn. The spirits will attempt to assist the possessed character as they see fit, which might work at cross-purposes with the character's actual desires — Banes may strike to torture and kill rather than capture, for instance.

- **Spirit Rending (6)** — Only fomori may take this power. The fomor must have the powers Berserker and Spirit Sense. Fomori with this power can use their Rage to strike out against spirits across the Gauntlet and feed on their energies. Of course, a fomor who misjudges her quarry might be in for a fatal surprise.

System: The fomor must first "peek" across the Gauntlet with Spirit Sense to find prey. Once a spirit is sighted, the fomor rolls Rage against the Gauntlet rating, resisted at the same difficulty by the attacked spirit's Willpower. Any successes rolled by the fomor in excess of the spirit's roll subtract Essence from the spirit on a one-for-one basis. Every two points of Essence bled from a spirit restore one point of temporary Willpower or Gnosis (if the fomor has Spirit Ties) to the fomor, up to her usual limit (although the fomor may continue attacking the spirit even after her pool is full). A fomor may use Spirit Rending as many times in a given scene as he has dots of Rage. Only true spirits may be attacked with this Power; shapechangers and other half-spirit creatures wandering the Umbra are immune.

- **Spirit Sense (2)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character is able to see across the Gauntlet, watching the occurrences in the local Penumbra. Fomori with this power often have their eyes strangely altered, and many slowly go mad from all they see.

System: The player spends one Willpower and rolls Perception against the local Gauntlet rating to see into the Penumbra. The character can also spend one Willpower to be able to identify werewolves and other shapeshifters for

the duration of a scene; any such creature appears with its Crinos form overlaid like an afterimage. Fomori who possess this power can also automatically sense Wyrmservants.

- **Spirit Static (3)** — Only Drones may purchase this power, which works much like the spirit Charm of the same name. The Drone may temporarily increase the Gauntlet in his immediate vicinity, limiting the powers of the Weaver's enemies.

System: The player expends one point of Willpower to raise the Gauntlet by one; the effects last for a scene. The raised Gauntlet doesn't necessarily affect Weaver-granted powers (such as the Drone variation on the Step Sideways power).

- **Spirit Ties (varies)** — Any character may take this power. The character has an innate connection to the spirit world and may use fetishes and talens.

System: Cost for this power is 1 for Kami, 2 for gorgons, 3 for fomori and 4 for Drones. The character begins with one dot of Gnosis and may purchase more for two freebies each. This power does *not* confer the ability to enter the Umbra, however (see the Power: Step Sideways).

- **Stasis Cocoon (5)** — Fomori, Drones, and Kami may take this power. The character cocoons herself in a hardened shell while her metabolism slows to a state of suspended animation. Cocooned characters do not age and can remain alive without food, water, or even air almost indefinitely.

System: Creating a cocoon requires at least ten minutes of undisturbed concentration, one point of permanent Willpower, and a successful Stamina + Survival roll (difficulty 6). Each success gives the finished chrysalis one soak die against bashing or lethal damage and one health level (if the character has the Power: Armored Hide, these dice are also added to the cocoon's soak pool). Unless the character specifies a time limit for his cocoon, it only releases him from suspended animation if it is breached (i.e. all health levels lost). If a cocoon has a predetermined lifespan, it hatches open and awakens its creator once this duration has expired. Each month spent in a Stasis Cocoon automatically restores one point of temporary Willpower and heals a level of damage (normal or aggravated).

- **Stasis Touch (4)** — With a single touch, the character can rob his opponents of the ability to shift their form. This power is most common among Drones, as the manifestation of their ultimate ties to order and conformity. However, at the Storyteller's discretion, fomori or Kami might possess this power as well (although obviously with a less Weaverish bent). Gorgons may never purchase this power.

System: The character must first touch his target; the player then makes a Willpower roll opposed by his target's Gnosis (in the case of shapechanging creatures without Gnosis, such as vampires, substitute Willpower - 3). Each success over and above the target's successes removes the target's shapechanging powers for two turns.

- **Step Sideways (5)** — The character (who may be of any of the four types) must have the Spirit Ties power in order to purchase this power. The character gains the ability to step into the Umbra, much as Garou do. Possessed characters with this power may not lead others into the Umbra, however.

System: The ability to step sideways is permanent. Roll Gnosis (difficulty of the local Gauntlet) to step into the Umbra. Drones are the exception; they can step sideways more easily in areas where the Gauntlet is strongest (as the Weaver-spirit inhabiting them parts the webs of the Gauntlet). Simply “reverse” the chart on page 225 of *Werewolf*, i.e., a science lab would be difficulty 2, whereas a drone trying to step sideways at a caern would have a hard time of it (difficulty 7 or higher).

• **Succubus’ Veil (6)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this power; it is the signature power of the Enticers, and very appropriate to Nereids. The character can appear as a target’s ideal mate, and with a gesture, beckon him to her side. Successful use of this power indicates that the target is so completely enthralled by the character that he will do anything reasonable to please her. (No matter how completely an Enticer entrances a Garou, she cannot force him to attack his packmates. She can, however, make two Garou jealous enough to start fighting over her, but this requires manipulation, not further application of this power.) Alternately, the character may activate this power to entrance anyone who lays eyes on her, although this “blanket entrancement” is much less potent.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Appearance + Subterfuge (difficulty of the target’s Willpower, or 6 if using the “blanket entrancement”). The target must find the character at least moderately sexually attractive; a male Enticer won’t be able to seduce a purely heterosexual male with this power, for instance. If the roll succeeds, the target falls in love with the character and will obey any reasonable commands she gives. If the roll fails, the target simply finds the character extremely attractive (all difficulties to use Sense Wyrn or similar Gifts on the character go up by 1). If the roll botches, the target senses something very wrong with the character, and the character may not attempt to entrance that target again for one day. When using Succubus’ Veil on a single target, the character can choose to make an extended roll, rolling once per scene. If the character’s total successes reach (target’s Willpower x 2), the target is completely subservient to the character and will fulfill any request, even if it involves attacking another pack member or something equally heinous.

Succubus’ Veil lasts for one scene unless the character maintains it.

• **Taint Suppression (2 per die)** — Fomori, Kami, and gorgons may take this power. The fomor can briefly negate the effects of any of his Taints. Suppressed physical deformities heal back to unmarred flesh in seconds; derangements vanish in a burst of perfect clarity, etc. Use of this power is extremely addictive, especially for once-beautiful fomori.

System: The player must spend one Willpower point and roll one die for every two points spent for this power; the difficulty is the point cost of the targeted Taint + 2 (minimum difficulty of 4). Success completely suppresses the Taint for the remainder of the scene. A botch on this roll can make the targeted Taint immune to further suppression attempts or cause the fomor to develop a completely new

Taint (Storyteller’s discretion). A fomor may suppress multiple Taints simultaneously, but the Taint costs are added together to determine the difficulty of using this power.

• **Tar Baby (3)** — Fomori may take this power, as may gorgons or Kami with appropriate host bodies. The character’s skin or “flesh” is made of a thick, sticky substance like molasses or tar. Anything that comes into forceful contact with the skin sticks to it like a fly on flypaper; slow, deliberate contact such as donning clothes doesn’t activate the adhesive qualities.

System: This power is always active. Anyone striking the character in brawling combat gets stuck to the character, as if successfully grappled. The opponent may not use whatever limb is stuck to the character unless he makes a resisted Strength roll versus the character’s Stamina +3 to escape. If the character is hit by a melee weapon, he may make a reflexive resisted Strength roll to wrest the now-stuck weapon from the attacker’s hands.

• **Thick-Skinned (4)** — All possessed characters may take this Power. The character has an additional outer layer or layers of covering that provides supernatural protection against injury. The style of protection varies with the individual possessed; Drones simply experience an imperceptible hardening of the skin, while gorgons often manifest this Power in a number of different ways, ranging from highly dense flesh to a layer of scales.

System: Upon acquisition of this power, the character gains an additional Bruised health level which may be added to the player’s character sheet (simply draw in another box next to the one already listed). The listed cost for this Power assumes that this extra protection is not outwardly manifest; i.e., the character may still pass for normal in public. With Storyteller permission, this cost may be reduced by two if the player opts to make his thick skin (or shell, or hide, or what have you) outwardly apparent. This Power may be taken a number of times equal to the character’s unmodified Stamina rating.

• **Transformation (3/5)** — Only Kami may take this power. The Kami is capable of limited but flawless shapeshifting.

System: The three-point version of this power allows the Kami to take one specific alternate form (a red-tailed hawk, a granite boulder, a willow tree); the five-point version allows the Kami to change to any member of a select group (humans, felines, trees, spiders). This power may be taken multiple times, to allow shapeshifting into unrelated forms. Shifting forms takes a full turn, but no roll is necessary.

• **Triatic Scent (2)** — Fomori, Drones and gorgons may take this power. The character is capable of masking its “true scent” by drawing on the power of a rival Triatic entity.

System: The player selects a “dummy scent” and rolls Manipulation + Occult, difficulty 8. Each success adds one to the difficulty of detecting the character with the relevant Gift; a fomor becomes harder to spot with Sense Wyrn, and so on. Glass Walkers may pierce a Weaver-aspected dummy scent with normal difficulty, Red Talons may pierce a false Wylde-scent similarly, and Black Spiral Dancers can penetrate a false Wyrn-stink in the same way. Otherwise, the character detects as an entity of the appropriate dummy allegiance.

• **Triatic Sense (2)** — All possessed characters may take this Power. The character has an ability to sense the relative strength of any of the Triat in her immediate vicinity.

System: This power operates much like the metis Gift Sense Wyrm, but can be applied to any or all Triatic energies at the user's discretion. The player rolls Perception + Occult; the difficulty depends upon the strength and concentration of Triatic influence in the area. At the Storyteller's discretion, additional successes could mean more concrete information imparted through use of this tower.

• **Universal Tongue (4)** — Only Kami may take this power. The character can speak with and understand any living creature.

System: The effects are permanent.

• **Unnatural Strength (6)** — Any character can take this power. The character's muscles ripple with unnatural development, making the character seem almost the product of heavy steroid use.

System: This power adds four dots to the character's Strength. This power cannot be taken in addition to Enhanced Attribute: Strength.

• **Veil Breach (5)** — Fomori and gorgons can take this power. Characters with this Power can reach into a human's mind and tear out the slivers of consciousness susceptible to the Delirium. Such invasive "psychic surgery" predisposes its victims to madness, but makes otherwise normal humans capable of interacting with (or even fighting) Garou without succumbing to immediate panic. Use of this power requires direct eye contact with the subject.

System: The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Manipulation + Empathy (difficulty of the target's Willpower). Each success immunizes the target from the deleterious effects of the Delirium for one turn. If the player rolls five or more successes, the immunity lasts for a full day, although many individuals who receive such "blessings" go mad.

• **Voice of Reason (3)** — Only Drones may purchase this power. The character's voice becomes a strange, seductive monotone, lulling listeners into a state of hypnotic calm.

System: Those listening to the Drone must make Willpower or Rage rolls (whichever they prefer), difficulty of the Drone's Manipulation + Expression, or be lulled into a state of quiet acquiescence. The hypnotic state is instantly broken if the target is harmed, but the subject is otherwise quite susceptible to suggestion. This power can be used to calm a target out of frenzy; the Drone must win a Manipulation + Expression roll contested by the target's Willpower to end a frenzy.

• **Voice of the Wyrm (4)** — Only fomori may take this power. The fomor's tongue has been altered into a strange form: possibly thick and slug-like, possibly long and forked, possibly even transmuted into a mass of tendrils. The fomor may speak as normal, and may also speak in the Wyrm's own language.

System: When the fomor chants a section of the Dark Litany, all those in hearing range must make successful Willpower rolls, difficulty 8, or lose half their Gnosis (fig-

ured from the permanent rating). Wyrm-servants are immune to this effect, and the power can affect any given victim only once per scene, whether successful or not. The fomor also gains an obscene lick attack, inflicting two dice of unsoakable aggravated damage.

• **Wall Walking (4)** — Any possessed character may purchase this power. The character can run up sheer surfaces like a spider, as easily as if he were on level ground.

System: No roll is normally required. The Storyteller may require a Dexterity + Athletics roll in more strenuous circumstances: combat, icy or slippery surfaces, and so on. Near-frictionless surfaces such as wet ice cannot be climbed at all.

• **Webbing (5)** — Any character may purchase this power, which allows for the creation of webs to bind fallen foes, seal off openings or even lower oneself from a great height. The power may take many forms according to the character. Fomori might spin gouts of foul-smelling adhesive from unclean glands, while Kami and gorgons might produce more "natural" silken webbing, and Drones weave plastic-like, artificial-seeming strands to bind their foes.

System: The webbing is extremely sticky and strong, with six soak dice (and may soak all forms of damage) and three health levels. Those caught by the webbing's adhesive coating must succeed at a resisted Strength roll against the web's Strength of 8 to escape. The webbing is translucent enough to be difficult to see in shadowy or dark areas (Perception + Alertness roll to spot at a distance, difficulty 7).

Taints

Fomori, gorgons, and Kami may balance powers with Taints. Taints are tolls that the spirit takes on the host's body, but they vary widely between the three types of possessed. Fomori, for example, receive Taints as a result of the Banes inside them reshaping their bodies, whether out of spite, or just to make the Banes feel more at home. Gorgons develop Taints as a result of the Wyld energies that course through them, while Kami look at their infirmities less as "Taints" and more as "responsibilities to Gaia" — the spirits inside them don't curse them with such things to be cruel.

Unless otherwise noted, each other following Taints may be taken by fomori, gorgons or Kami (sometimes at a different point value). Note that Drones cannot take Taints under any circumstance.

• **Addiction (1-5)** — Any character may purchase this Taint. The character a need he must fulfill, whether physical (heroin), mental (random violence) or mystical (sacrifice to a given entity). How often he must feed this habit determines how many points he receives for the Taint.

System: Choose a cycle from the chart below. The character must indulge his Addiction at least once during that time period, or else he is wracked by pain and suffers a one-die penalty to all actions. For each cycle that passes

without feeding the habit, the penalty increases by one die. If the penalty ever exceeds the character's Stamina, he dies.

Points Cycle

- 1 Once per month
- 2 Once every two weeks (some mystically-oriented characters may clock this by moon phase)
- 3 Once per week
- 4 Once per day
- 5 Once per hour

• **Bane Attractor (3)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may all take this Taint. Banes hate the character and come to see him about it.

System: The character always draws the attention of local Banes, and they are always offended by his presence. Unless occupied with something considerably more important, the Banes abandon their tasks to come harass the character. They cannot possess the character, but may interfere or even attack in whatever other way possible. Garou may also be drawn to characters with this Taint, coming to see what the fuss is about.

• **Derangement (3/2/1)** — This Taint is more appropriate to fomori and gorgons, although Kami may take it as well. The character is insane. This can be true insanity, or simply a way of looking at things so alien that it impedes her function in the world (which is usually the case with gorgons and Kami who exhibit this Taint). Some possibilities are listed below:

Amnesia: Your life before possession is a blur. This makes it harder to hold on to Autonomy, as you don't have many memories anchoring you to your humanity.

Delusions of Grandeur: You are important. Why else would you have been given this honor? Anyone challenging your "chosen" status (which they can do by refusing to follow your orders) is met with harsh words at best.

Hallucinations: Maybe you're actually seeing spirits, maybe the visions are just fabrications of your tortured mind, but whatever the truth, you see things that others cannot. The Storyteller may require Willpower rolls to see if you can tell the difference, and even when a hallucination is obviously not real, it's still distracting as hell.

Homicidal: Nothing is quite so satisfying as feeling life end beneath your claws. You do not take prisoners in combat, even if ordered to, and you show no mercy to foes.

Manic: You go after everything you want with everything you have. Temperance is a meaningless concept to you. You must spend Willpower on any roll with a difficulty higher than six. If you lose all of your temporary Willpower (which in itself carries risks to your Autonomy), you "burn out" and suffer a +2 to all difficulties until you can sleep or otherwise regain Willpower.

Multiple Personalities: Although only one spirit can possess a body at once, you have several voices inside you. Perhaps the possessed part of you is separate from the original

part, maybe your personality has just fragmented into pieces. Either way, each persona has the same statistics, powers, Taints, and Autonomy; they simply have different personalities, histories, and outlooks (which the player should detail).

Obsession: Something haunts you. You must pursue it. It might be an enemy that you want to destroy, an artifact you want to find, or nearly anything else.

Paranoia: They're out to get you. You know it. If you could just identify them, you could get them first....

Sadism/Masochism: You either love to inflict pain on others or suffer pain yourself.

System: The first Derangement a character purchases is worth 3 points. The second is worth 2, the third only one. The character can clear his head somewhat by spending Willpower, but only for a turn.

• **Fading (5)** — The character grows more out of touch with physical reality with each passing day. She is tied to some greater spiritual entity (making this a very appropriate Taint for characters with the Consecrated Background) and will someday merge with it. Most possessed beings instinctively know this. Kami find it reassuring that they will someday join the ranks of their spiritual patron. Fomori are often terrified at the prospect.

System: Once per day, roll Autonomy (difficulty 6). Success means the character's mind remains intact (or as intact as it was). Failure means the character loses a point of temporary Autonomy and a point of temporary Willpower. If the roll botches, the character loses a dot of permanent Willpower.

• **Harsh Tenant (3/4)** — Your tenant doesn't like to lose — ever. Whenever you fail spectacularly, it makes its displeasure known by afflicting you with wracking pain and terrible wounds.

System: Every time you botch a roll, the character suffers one health level of unsoakable lethal damage. With the 4-point version of this Taint, the damage is considered aggravated. Although injuries caused by this taint are often gruesomely visible (spontaneous lacerations, bleeding from the eyes, etc.), the wounds can occasionally manifest internally as ruptured organs or fractured bones.

• **Infested (3/4/5)** — The character is infested with insects or worms. The character might view herself as their protector or mother, or might be repulsed by the living things crawling through her body, but the end result is the same. The creatures must eat, and if they aren't fed, they will feed on the character's body. In some cases, there isn't a way to feed them, and so they must be purged daily.

System: The player should decide what the nasty little creatures look like, as they will occasionally worm their way to the surface and crawl out of the character's skin. The character must "eat for two", consuming twice as much food daily as she would normally. If she does not, she suffers an unsoakable level of damage daily until she does. This damage is considered lethal for purposes of healing. (This effect alone is worth 3 points.) If the

creatures eat something typically inedible to the character (wood or chunks of bone, perhaps), the character must eat at least eight ounces of that material every day or suffer the consequences (4 points). If the infestation feeds only on the character's own body, she must purge the creatures daily so that they don't multiply enough to eat her to death. This normally requires self-induced vomiting (this version of the Taint is worth 5 points).

• **Spirit Reflection (4)** — Fomori and gorgons can take this Taint. Whenever you look into a reflective surface, you see your tenant leering back at you. It might look like a monster gripping your back or maddening burst of chaos and light, but regardless of its form, the sight of your spirit half fills you with terror. You can always close your eyes or avert your gaze, but it's difficult to know when the next shiny object will plunge you a step closer to madness.

System: Upon so much as glimpsing his reflection, a character with this Taint must roll Willpower (difficulty 7) or lose a point of temporary Willpower. A botch leaves the character catatonic for 5 turns minus his Wits rating (minimum of 1 turn). In cases of extended viewing, the possessed character should re-roll each turn he spends looking into a mirror.

• **Teledementia (5)** — Only fomori may purchase this Taint. The character receives telepathic input from everyone within several miles. This includes animals, children, ghosts — basically anything within any degree of sentience. However, Teledementia confers no useful information. The character is simply bombarded by a never-ending barrage of negative emotion — pain, fear, doubt, anger, etc. Such fomori tend to believe that the world is a twisted, horrible place and have no compunctions about putting people “out of their misery.”

System: This Taint has several effects. For one thing, the character is easily distracted. His initiative rating is always lowered by two. Second, the character receives a +2 difficulty to *all* Social interaction; he is so preoccupied by the negative impulses he gets from people that he comes off as angry and insane (which probably isn't untrue). Finally, the difficulty for any extended roll is raised by 2; the fomori just can't concentrate.

• **Twisted Healing (3)** — Only fomori can purchase this Taint. Whenever the character heals serious injuries, her flesh grows back hideously corrupted in some way. It can be covered in gnarled scar tissue or hardened into a patch of blackened exoskeleton, but the net effect is the same: each regenerated wound brings her one step closer to looking and acting like the monster she truly is.

System: Anytime the character heals lethal or aggravated damage, she gains a monstrous feature at the site of the injury. Every three monstrous features thus acquired permanently reduce one of her Social Attributes by one.

• **Uncontrollable Power (varies)** — Fomori and gorgons may take this Taint. One (or more) of the character's powers isn't completely under her control. It “goes off” randomly — or perhaps the spirit inside her has its reasons.

System: This Taint is tied to one of the character's powers, and is worth a number of points equal to the cost of the power -1. Once per day, the power simply activates. The Storyteller (who can disallow this Taint from being paired with powers that aren't sufficiently inconveniencing) chooses any specifics. The character has no control over when this occurs (although she might be able to postpone it by giving up some Autonomy). This Taint may not be paired with the Taint Suppression power.

• **Urges (3)** — Fomori, gorgons and Kami may take this Taint. The character suffers from one or more uncontrollable desires which fall outside the realm of normal wants and needs. These are not Derangements *per se*, nor are they proper addictions, as most are simply the manifestations of an accompanying spirit's personal ambitions. A completely sane character may still suffer from urges, and therein lies the difference.

System: This Taint is often found in gorgons with a particular “assignment,” but it is equally common among fomori, many of whom are merely slaves to the hunger of their Banes. Kami urges often manifest themselves as more powerful geasa, or other behavioral demands. When this Taint is purchased, the player must decide (with Storyteller approval) what sort of urges his spirit will instill in him. From then on, the character must roll Willpower (difficulty equal to 12 minus his Autonomy rating) each time an opportunity to indulge his urges presents itself, or else drop whatever he is doing and immediately attempt to satisfy his spirit's desires. A Willpower point may be spent to halt this blind acquiescence, but only for a moment. The urge will quickly reassert itself unless the character can extricate himself from the area of the temptation.

• **Vulnerability to the Delirium (1)** — Only gorgons and Kami may take this Taint. For some reason, the spirit/host hybrid is affected by the racial memories of humanity, and is vulnerable to the Delirium just as ordinary humans are.

System: The character cannot take this Taint if her Willpower is 7 or higher. If her Willpower rises to 7 or higher with the expenditure of experience points, she must exchange this Taint for another Taint of equal or greater value.

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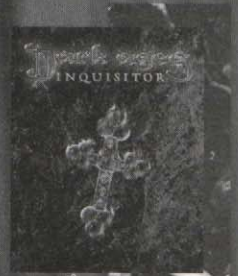
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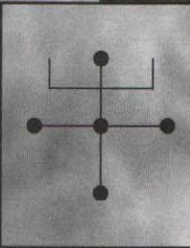
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from the dark side... to the light

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Name:
Player:
Chronicle:

Type:
Breed:
Host:

Nature:
Demeanor:
Concept:

Attributes

<i>Physical</i>		<i>Social</i>		<i>Mental</i>	
Strength	●○○○○	Charisma	●○○○○	Perception	●○○○○
Dexterity	●○○○○	Manipulation	●○○○○	Intelligence	●○○○○
Stamina	●○○○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●○○○○

Abilities

<i>Talents</i>		<i>Skills</i>		<i>Knowledges</i>	
Alertness	○○○○○	Animal Ken	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Crafts	○○○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Law	○○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Primal-Urge	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Rituals	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Survival	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

<i>Backgrounds</i>	<i>Powers</i>	<i>Talents</i>
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____
○○○○○	_____	_____

Rage

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Autonomy

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Health

Bruised
Hurt -1
Injured -1
Wounded -2
Mauled -2
Crippled -5
Incapacitated

Consciousness

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Willpower

○○○○○○○○○○○○
□□□□□□□□□□

Experience

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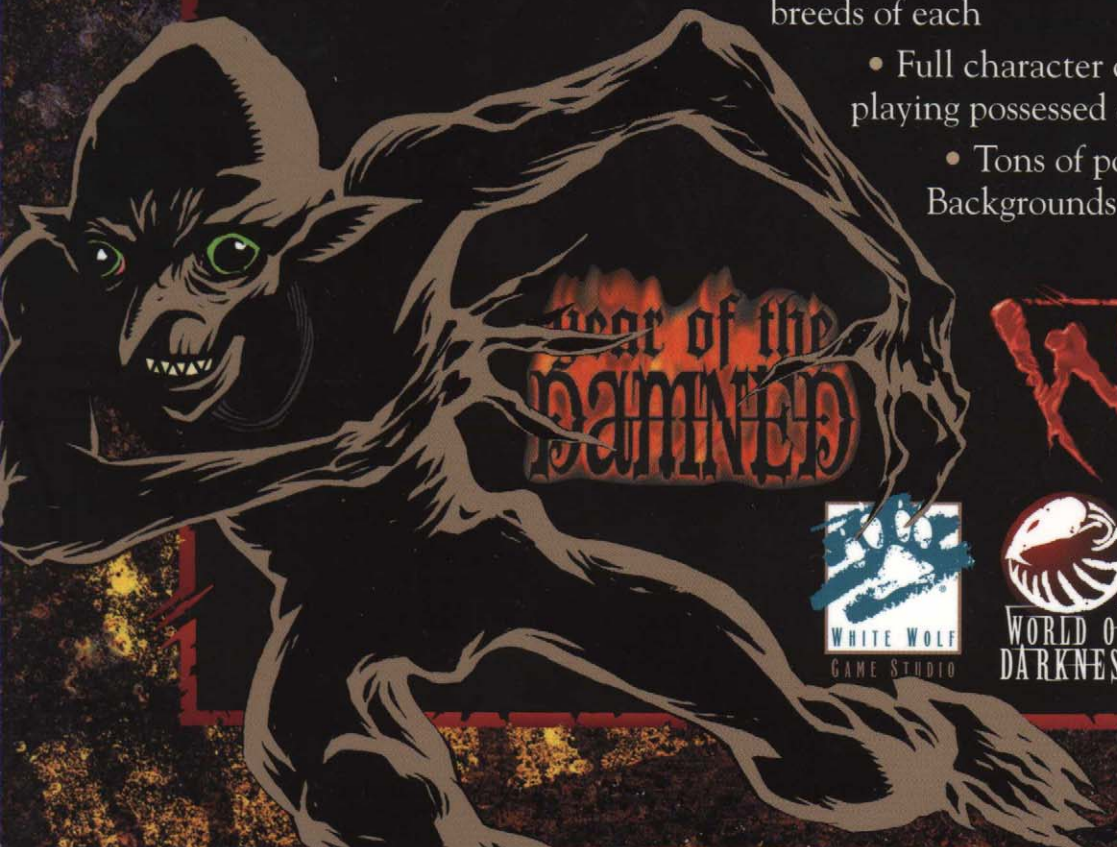
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