MEDIUMS

SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

A Sourcebook About Mortals Who Know Too Much for Wraith: The Oblivion™

YEAR OF THE ALLY

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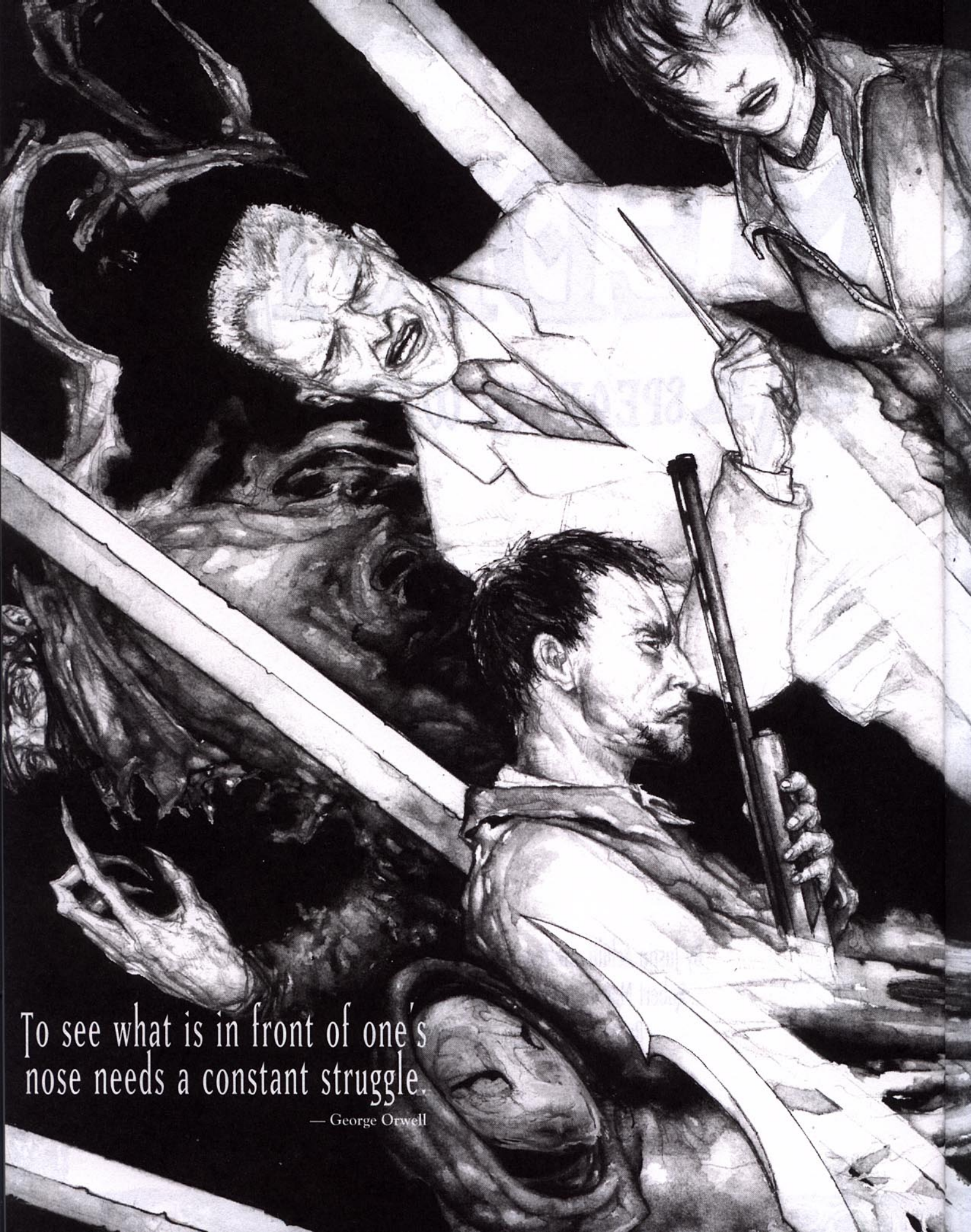
SPEAKERS WITH THE DEAD

By Justin Achilli, Andrew Bates, Roger Gaudreau, Ed Hall, Robert Martin, James A. Moore, Ronni Radner, Tracy Rysavy, Lisa & John Daigle and Fred Yelk


To see what is in front of one's nose needs a constant struggle.
— George Orwell

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Ghost Story: The Sound of Silent Echoes

By James A. Moore

The first thing you need to understand is that I never meant to cause anyone any harm. When I started working the Boardwalk (Atlantic City; you can hear the capital "B," can't you?) as a medium, I was aiming to make a few bucks and pass out some good advice at the same time. I'm good with advice; it's a talent. I've never steered anyone the wrong way as long as I've been alive. It was a good racket, and it paid enough for me to get a shop between the Fun City Amusement Pier and Costanzo's Famous Salt Water Taffy. The customers just came streaming in then, even though a few were kind of disappointed that I wasn't a little old lady in a shawl or some gorgeous babe with smoldering eyes and a plunging neckline.

Some people asked me what they should do about certain situations, like a cheating girlfriend or a husband a little too eager to use his fists as a means of persuasion. I'd tell 'em what they should do and I'd throw in a "The spirits have heard you, and they think..." just to make sure they would pay attention. After all, no one wants *my* advice, but when the same stuff comes from the *spirits*, all of a sudden it's gospel. You'd think they'd know better, you'd think they really would.

Now and then I'd get some poor old lady who really tore into her old man when he was alive. After he'd died, she'd suddenly realize that maybe she could have been nicer in her time. Kinder to the man she'd promised to love, honor and cherish. When that happened, I'd just do a little mind-picking and find out what her old man was like, then I'd give the proper answer to let her sleep easier at night.

Mind-picking...it's sort of hard to describe, but I'll give it my best shot. Whenever I concentrated, I could listen in on other people's thoughts. Nothing like in the movies, you understand, but enough to make educated guesses about certain things. For instance, if a woman was talking to me about her late husband, I could sort of hear him talking through her memories. It wasn't an exact science or anything, but it was something I could do, and I knew how to use it.

So this little old lady named Gladace came in, worrying that her dear departed Frank couldn't forgive her for the things she said just before his heart gave out, right? Well, I just listened to Gladace's thoughts, and I mimicked the sort of thing he would have said (if he hadn't dropped dead) when they finished an argument. For the cost of my $20 fee, Gladace gets to sleep better at night and I get beer money. Hey, I figure a shrink would have cost her five grand to tell her the same thing. My way? Faster and cheaper, and just about as honest.

But thought-picking isn't what I can do now, not any more. Mind you, using my other talent wouldn't be a real bright idea right about now, but even so, it's the sort of thing you should know about. Just for protection's sake, really. Honest.

You ever watch any of those shows about dying and coming back? Well, if you have then you know all about the people who come back from the "other side" with miraculous powers and the ability to talk to the dead. I'm not one of 'em. For me all it took was three weeks with a fever of a hundred and two. Take my word for it, the Polar Bear Club isn't worth the risks to your health. By jumping into a goddamned freezing lake, I managed to turn a simple flu into rheumatic fever, and every joint in my body was swollen and aching. Every breath I took felt like someone was pouring hot ashes into my lungs. I spent three weeks babbling like a bagman in a room full of Feds, and I had a good dozen conversations with my dead Uncle Willie. I even saw him once. He looked good, for a dead guy.

Eventually the fever broke and I went home. That, you'd think, should have been that. Hah.

A few days after that, the Dead started talking to me. They already knew who I was, because when you work as a medium, a lot of them come to see if you're the real thing. I wasn't before then, but things changed while I was sick. I was the real deal when I woke up, and they knew it. Once they knew I could hear them, my life as a sane human being was over.

I had me a long talk with my dead Uncle Willie, once he cut through all the other bozos yammering at me. I heard all sorts of stuff. And I learned that a few of the dead folk I'd impersonated over the years weren't exactly thrilled with me. Some of them were even a little pissed off. Oh, most were grateful I'd been kind to their relatives, but a few were a little angry about the lies. A stiff named Pete Wilkins was mighty sore about me sleeping with his widow, too. Hey, it was her idea, not mine. She didn't have enough money to pay me and we...negotiated. For what it's worth, I'm still dating her. It ain't like I was a jerk about it or anything. There was about three weeks when every other time I saw her, I had to pass on messages from her dead husband. Finally, she just told him to go to hell, and I haven't heard from him since.

Anyhow, from then on, things changed. I couldn't mind-pick people anymore, but I could talk to the Dead. And let me tell you, some of them dead folks have a lot to say, whether you want to hear it or not. Still, even that was cool for a while. Listen, the Dead have things they left unresolved. Sometimes they need to pass on a message, and sometimes they want to answer a question for someone they cared about when they were alive. Either way, when they learn about somebody who can actually hear what they have to say, you've got a crowd on your hands. Most of the time they're sort of quiet about it, but once in a while all hell breaks loose and they all start screaming at once. They told me they have to come to me when the "Hierarchy" isn't around, because talking to living people is against the rules. But they manage to say a lot anyway.

I gave up the Boardwalk not long after that, and I started doing seances. People pay a lot more when you're willing to make house calls. From time to time someone would try to set me up, but I didn't use any gimmicks, so that made it harder for them. If a dead person couldn't be contacted, I told the people as much and I left it alone. I know I said the Dead like to talk, but a lot of them are either really shy, or they aren't

hanging around with the ones I talk to the most, or they're just gone. Not everyone becomes a ghost, I guess. The Dead don't like to talk about the details of the "other side." I get the idea that's against the rules too, but I couldn't confirm it.

Life got downright cushy for a while. I was rolling in money, and I didn't have to look for people to hire me, they came looking for me. I even got a few interviews on the local TV news and in the papers. Especially around Halloween; that was a real good time for me. I made some deals with the Dead so that I'd help them in exchange for some slack time, and the arrangement seemed to work out. I'd talk to them when I was on duty, and they left me alone the rest of the time. Now and then I'd even find someone for a few of my ghostly pals and pass along a message. Hey, they helped me make my living, it was the least I could do.

Contrary to what Hollywood likes to portray, I never had any ghosts climbing into my body and talking through me. Instead, I just listened to what they said, and I gave my living customers the answers their dearly departed gave me. I never spoke to Elvis or even to Jim Morrison. I just talked to regular people.

I claimed I never saw any ghosts. That's not quite true. I did see a few, and that's what got me out of the medium business. I was up in Manhattan, dealing with a group of people who'd just lost their old, rich auntie, and they couldn't find her last will and testament. They were greedy, so I gladly milked them for a little extra. Ramona Willowsby, the recently dead relative in question, liked that. She cackled like I'd made a great joke. "You take those vultures for everything you can, Jerry! Bleed them dry," she cried, "just like they did me!"

I'd been answering their questions for about an hour, and Ramona was having a great time playing coy about the will's location. Her nephew, Herbert Owens-Forsythe Willowsby III, was doing most of the questioning. "Can Auntie Ramona tell us where the will is, Mister Walker?" He didn't ask questions, he sniffed them, as if being in the same room with me caused his sinuses to go nuts.

Ramona spoke to me again, her voice cracking with laughter. "You tell 'em I put it someplace close to my heart, Jerry! You tell 'em I hid it where they'd never look, 'cause they were only after my money!" Ramona couldn't just speak, she had to scream in my ear, and she had a set of lungs on her. Looking at the dignified, well-crafted portrait of her that hung over the fireplace, I could almost see her speaking. She looked a little crazy, though the artist had apparently tried to downplay that aspect of her personality.

I gotta tell you, these dummies were thick. Everything she'd said told me the will was hidden in the frame of her oversized portrait, but they wouldn't get the hints and I wasn't gonna make it easy for 'em. Ramona was having too good a time, and I was being paid by the hour. "Ramona says she kept it someplace close to her heart, where she knew you'd have an easy time finding it."

"Oh, for God's sake!" That was Tiffany, a very attractive woman with a very ugly mind. I didn't need to look beyond the contempt in her almond eyes to know that she thought I was about as pleasant as a roach. "Why is she being so difficult? It's a simple enough question, even Ramona should be able to figure it out!" Tiffany lit another cigarette, which she puffed on angrily. She left a blood-red trail of lipstick on the filter.

I was looking beyond Tiffany, staring at the mirror, when I saw the figure for the first time. No one else seemed to notice the new addition to the crowd, but I couldn't miss it. I say *it* 'cause I'm still not certain if the figure was a woman or a man. It wore a three-piece suit, charcoal gray with light pinstripes. The suit was about 40 years out of style, but it still looked sharp. The figure stood very still, and looked at me from beneath a perfectly smooth brow. Even as I watched, dark, heavy eyebrows grew in, and the brown eyes that stared at me shifted to a cold, dangerous shade of blue.

It lifted one long, delicate finger to thin, harsh lips, and made a gesture for me to be silent.

"You keep sucking those things down, you harpy!" Ramona screamed in my ear as I looked around the room. The figure I'd seen reflected in the mirror wasn't visible anywhere. "You'll be dead in six months the way you're going! You've got a tumor the size of grape in your skull, and it's only getting bigger!"

I turned to look at Tiffany. Something in my expression must have caught her eye, because she looked at me with genuine concern. "Whatever is the matter, Mister Walker?"

"Your aunt wanted me to tell you that you've got to get to a doctor as soon as possible. She says you've got a brain tumor."

I heard Ramona's gasp of disbelief more clearly than I heard anyone else's. "Damn it, Jerry, that was supposed to be a secret!"

"Ramona," I sighed. "You can't keep that sort of thing a secret. People should be warned when their health is involved."

I heard a grating noise, and I looked toward the mirror again. The thing in the suit was back, shaking its head and looking at me with green eyes that promised retribution. If I'd known what it wanted I'd have gladly complied. It scared me. Even as I watched, its fingers reached out toward me, through the mirrored surface. Where each finger touched the glass, I saw frost grow on the reflective surface.

Ramona hissed in my ear. "You don't understand!" Her voice was urgent, almost frantic. "They don't want that sort of knowledge passed on! If you tell the living what's coming their way, they might change things. I was just talking out loud, you can't say that sort of stuff to the Quick! It'll cost me my existence if they find out!"

I was vaguely aware that everyone in the room was looking toward me, but I was still watching the figure in the mirror. Once again, it pressed long fingers to its lips and shook its head. I got the message: silence. It wanted me to be quiet.

"If who finds out, Ramona?"

"The Hierarchy! Damn your eyes, Jerry, the Hierarchy! Even talking to you is against the rules, but they're willing to overlook certain indiscretions. Now you're pushing the limits!" I couldn't see Ramona, but I could imagine the look on her face, her eyes wild and staring, her tight bun of silvery hair disheveled and her brow greasy with fear-sweat.

"Ramona, you're already dead. What could they possibly do to you?"

When Ramona spoke again, her voice was soft, almost a whisper. "You don't ever want to find out, Jerry. Believe me, you can't begin to imagine."

"Do you want to stop now, Ramona?" All around the room, her "beloved" kin raised their voices in protest. At the same time, I saw the frost lines on the mirror grow into jagged lightning bolt patterns. Even as I tried to sort out what my clients were saying, the massive, antique looking glass shattered, raining silvery blades through the air. For just an instant, I thought I saw a figure move into the room. A figure in a gray pinstripe suit.

Knives of glass flew through the air and landed in a perfect circle around the chair where I was seated. Ramona screamed in my ear, more frightened than I'd have thought possible: "Run Jerry! He'll want you dead! I—No! Wait, I'll keep my silence! I'm sorry I'm so very sor—"

That was the last I heard of Ramona. There were no screams of anguish, but I knew that she was gone. I sensed it.

In the mirrored shards around my feet, I saw that face again, reflected and broken, but still obviously the same strange creature. I opened my mouth to speak, though I've no idea what I would have said. It lifted that one, long finger again, and placed it before thin, angry lips.

It wanted silence, and this time I knew better than to argue.

When I complied, perfect, even teeth showed themselves, framed by a full, sensual mouth. "I'm going to say this only once," the creature said in a voice as warm and friendly as a viper. "You have offended the wrong people."

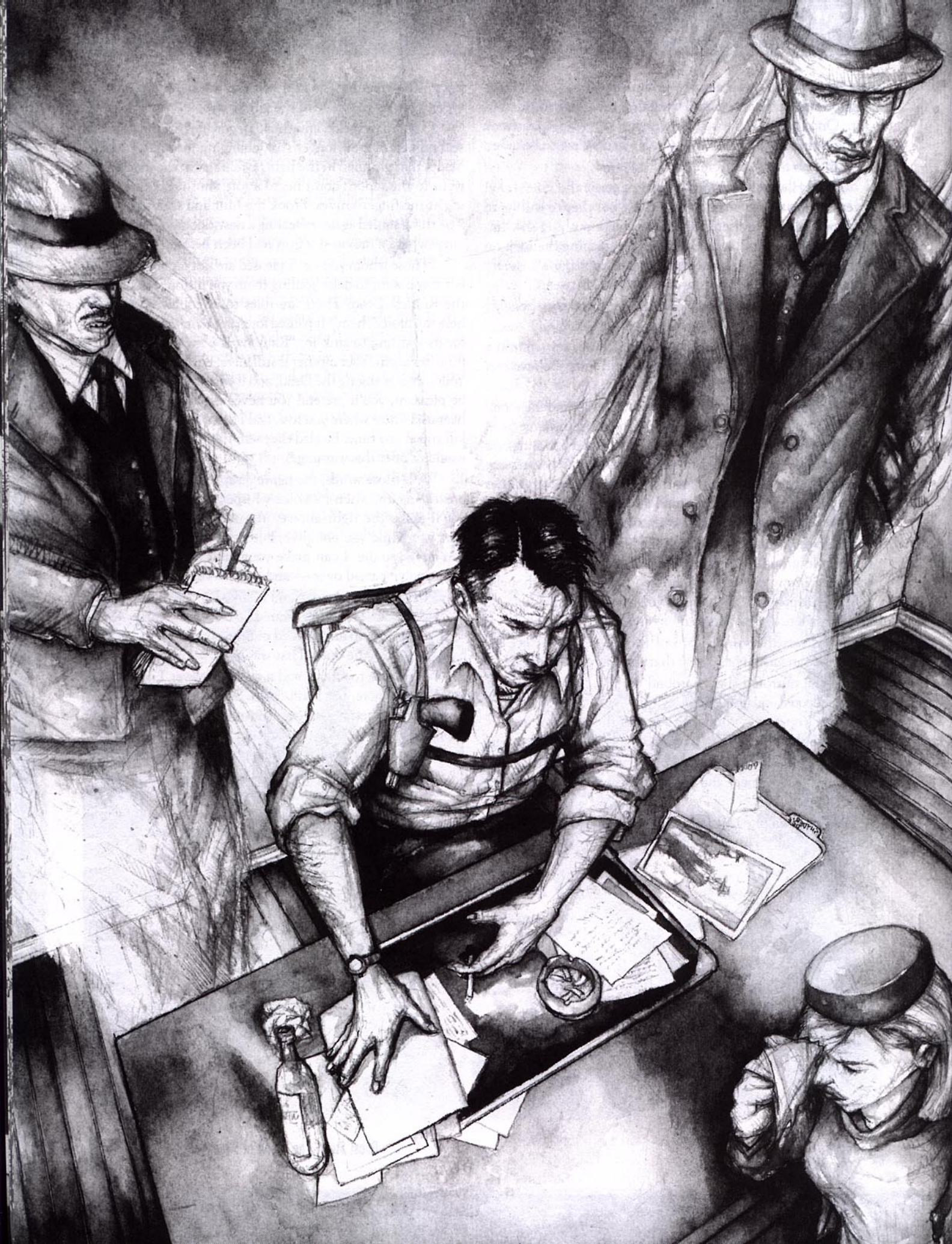
I started to speak, and the long graceful fingers I'd seen a second before grew longer still, changing into nasty-looking blades that gleamed in the light. Once again, the index finger went to the mouth and I heard a soft, shushing noise. Looking at the finger-knives, I took the hint and shut the hell up. The thing smiled again, revealing a nasty looking row of jagged fangs where a movie-star grin had been before.

"Those whom you've displeased are not among the living, but if you want to delay joining them you'll stop speaking with the Restless Dead. There are rules to be followed, and I am here to enforce them." It paused for a moment, just long enough for its warning to sink in. "Ramona is gone. You won't hear from her again. Your mother is still alive, but I can change that. Your father is among the Dead, and if you want his existence to be pleasant, you'll pretend you never could speak with us or hear us. I know where you live, and I know where you go. I can kill you at any time. Be glad they sent me; there are others who wouldn't offer this warning."

With those words, the figure disappeared. I was about to breathe again, when its voice whispered in my ear. "I know you'll make the right choice. You see, I can scare you and hurt you while you are alive, but I can do so much more to you after you die. I can make your suffering last an eternity once you've passed over — and that's a very long time."

The voice faded away, and I looked at the people around me and shook. The others stared at me expectantly. After a minute, I stood up and walked out of the room. I didn't even bother to close the door. That was my last job as a medium.

I went back to school, and now I'm a lawyer. I don't talk to the dead anymore, but I still listen. Sometimes they call me a coward, and sometimes they call me other things. I'd like to help them, but I'm just a little too addicted to breathing to do that. I don't know what the hell that thing was, but I've taken its warning to heart. I've got a nasty feeling that it can be anyone it wants to be, and that keeps me on the straight and narrow. I've got just one thing to say to the Dead these days: you talk, I'll listen. But whatever you say goes no further than me.



Chapter One: Introduction

The word "medium" has many definitions, but one of the most important in the World of Darkness is "a means of communication," for that is really what human mediums are: a means of communication between the living and the Dead, a pipeline of information between two worlds. While the Dead have no trouble seeing and hearing what the living do, it's more difficult for the Quick to hear the whispers and demands of the Restless. Despite all of their power, the ghosts who haunt our world need a bit of an assist getting their point across when the Shroud's in the way.

They need mediums.

Which is not to say that more arrogant wraiths don't resent the need for assistance from mortals — particularly mortals who, because of their interactions with the Dead, tend to end up a little off-kilter. It galls wraithly pride to have to rely on others, and more than one wraith's Shadow has taken advantage of that dependency. It leads to all sorts of problems, and mediums take more than their share of abuse from the very souls they're often forced to help. And that's just wraiths — there are plenty of Spectres who make mediums their own personal projects.

Being a medium, then, isn't necessarily the safest, or the easiest job around.

How to Use This Book

ediums: Speakers with the Dead is intended as a resource for both players and Storytellers. Included in this chapter are a brief overview of who mediums are, what sort of wraiths interact with them, and how to build a medium character. The rest of the book is source material on what sorts of people are talking to the Dead, and in some cases which specific individuals or groups are messing about with the Restless. The focus of the book is to allow you to generate good characters and stories from that information.

Chapter Two offers information on so-called boardwalk mediums, archetypal card readers and tellers of fortunes. It also has information on using tarot in your **Wraith** game, both as a game mechanic and as a storytelling aid.

Chapter Three focuses on people who perhaps shouldn't be mucking about with the Underworld. Included are academic researchers into the afterlife, people who make their livings off the Dead, and false mediums (not to mention the wraiths who deal with them). Suggested uses of Arcanoi for teaching these dilettantes a lesson are included as well.

Chapter Four hearkens back to **The Quick and the Dead** and gives a quick update on what some of the more energetic ghosthunting societies are up to these days. The Benandanti, the Paranormal Research Wing and the Orphic Circle all get more in-depth treatment. Plus, the question of what the Benandanti do with all the bodies finally gets answered.

In Chapter Five, things take a supernatural twist. Up front is an explanation of the connection between wraiths and televangelists. Deeper in is information on the Giovanni, and more on how they actually make use of wraiths. Closing things out is a section on the care and feeding of a Spectre cult, including the gory details of what spending too much time in the proximity of a Spectre can do to you and how the Shadow-eaten can pass on some of their powers to their favorite servants.

Chapter Six ventures into the world of Native American mediums. It presents an overview of how mediums deal with the living and Dead across North America.

New templates fill Chapter Seven. As always, they're there to be used, modified or adapted as you see fit.

To See or Not To See?

The advantages and disadvantages of voluntary versus involuntary mediumhood just about balance. The involuntary medium doesn't have to spend any Willpower to speak to a ghost; indeed, she doesn't even have to make a roll. However, this ability means she sees all of the ghosts in a given vicinity, and unless those wraiths are exceedingly stupid, they'll realize it rapidly. What follows is chaos, as practical jokers, sadists and "normal" wraiths desperate to get word across the Shroud descend on the hapless medium. The result can be anywhere from low comedy to tragedy, particularly if the wraiths bring their Arcanoi (or Shadows) into play.

On the other hand, a medium who must work to see ghosts has his own problems. While his existence is relatively normal most of the time (in other words, not disrupted by assorted disembodied dead people floating through his living room and demanding that he pay attention), he has to work hard, focus his will and usually spend some sort of mental energy in order to make contact with the other side. This limitation means he can't listen to the Dead all that often, as doing so would take too much out of him. It also means that he doesn't necessarily hear his ghostly friends when they want — or need — to get in contact with him. If an emergency situation occurs and the medium's not listening, things can get hairy quickly.

Who Are They?

here's no simple definition of who's a medium and who isn't. Indeed, the definition of what a medium is has become fluid in this age of skeptical spirituality. Boardwalk palm readers and scientists trying to tap the energy of the Dead, charlatans employing ghosts to shake down customers and revivalists who speak with wraiths, little old ladies in their tea circles and ghosthunting *Dannati* — all of them can see, and speak with, the Dead. All are mediums in some respect or another.

Generally, though, the term "medium" refers to a mortal human who can see and hear ghosts without any extra expenditure of energy or will on the ghost's part. Variables such as whether the mortal must spend energy to see and hear ghosts or to block out her ghostly visions follow no set pattern. There are mediums who must work hard to get spirits to speak with them, and ones who require all their will just to block out the spectral voices in their heads.

Breakdowns

Trying to create a demographic chart of mediums is an exercise in futility, if not dementia. They come from all walks of life and attribute their visions to different sources. The point is that the "gift" of seeing the Dead is something bestowed randomly, and neither genetic

factors nor societal ones can explain who gets picked by fate to see the Restless.

So when the question, "Who can be a medium?" arises, the simple answer is, "Anyone." There are scientists peering across the Shroud; lone searchers after eldritch, tenebrous horror who peer into haunted houses; boardwalk tarot readers on the run from wraiths they've displeased; young girls surrounded by maelstroms of poltergeist activity; and entrepreneurs whose income derives from granting ghosts peace by freeing them of their Fetters. It's an open field: Anyone can be struck with the bug, and wraiths talk to anyone who can listen (as long as the Hierarchy isn't watching).

But that still begs the question, what is an average medium like? Most of them have some knowledge of existence beyond the Shroud, though their information is likely to be incomplete or tainted by the medium's own preconceptions. Some are even deliberately misled, for whatever reason, by their ghostly contacts. In any case, it is likely that a medium has only part of the picture.

A majority of mediums actively work with their gifts as well, either for personal or professional reasons. An unused ability to see ghosts can fade with time. Then again, most mediums find dealing with the facts of their reality (specifically, the dead folks flitting around) easier than trying to block them out. The compromise they settle on is to determine conditions under which they will and won't work with the Restless. Mediums often establish Contracts (see p. 51) with one or two wraiths who serve as brokers on the other side. This arrangement keeps the burden on mediums manageable, while also making sure that their postmortem operations are low-key enough to avoid prosecution for *Dictum Mortuum* violations.

Not every medium deals with ghosts per se. Many are involved in fortunetelling, and use their connections to wraiths merely as a means to that end. Others are looking for answers from New-Agey spirits (or old-time devils) and just happen to get wraiths instead.

Look Who's Talking

The wraiths who talk to mediums are almost uniformly Renegades or, less frequently, Heretics. Most good Hierarchy citizens avoid talking to mediums, as doing so breaks Charon's Law. Of course, talking to a medium *once* in a while can't hurt. Can it? (*Only if you get caught*, the Shadow whispers — and so the illicit trade goes on.)

Wraiths who cut deals with a particular medium are in high demand on the outskirts of Necropoli, where they barter access to "their" medium in exchange for Pathos, services and goods. Competition for access to reliable mediums is fierce, and a wraith who tries to cut in on another wraith's business is liable to get himself pummeled into a Harrowing.

Several of the Guilds do heavy business with mediums, in particular the Puppeteers, Proctors and Oracles. The Pup-

peteers have a vested interest in seeing and being seen by the mortal population, but in controlled doses. Oracles (and, to a lesser extent, Monitors) often wind up linked with boardwalk-style mediums, who make excellent use of these wraiths' fortune-telling capabilities in exchange for access to the mediums' highly emotional clients.

One might expect the Haunters to do a booming (and crashing and thudding) trade with mediums, but it's simply not the case. Haunters aren't much for communication or the open exchange of ideas. They'd rather just send everyone screaming into the night, regardless of who "should" or "shouldn't" see them. Most cases of poltergeist activity involve Haunters, as newly receptive mediums make prime Haunter targets. However, no Haunter worth his salt takes the time to talk to his victim in such a case, except perhaps to spew obscenities in her direction.

Finally, there's the question of Spectres. As mediums, by virtue of their spectacular auras, stand out even to a Shadow-

Numina-Based Mediums

Step One: Character Concept: Who are you?

- *Choose* Nature, Demeanor, Membership
- *Determine* Concept, Motivation, Catalyst

Step Two: Select Attributes

- *Prioritize your three categories*: Primary 6, Secondary 4, Tertiary 3
- *Choose* Physical Traits: Strength, Stamina and Dexterity
- *Choose* Social Traits: Charisma, Manipulation and Appearance
- *Choose* Mental Traits: Perception, Intelligence and Wits

Step Three: Select Abilities (11, 7, 4)

- *Prioritize your three categories*: Talents, Skills and Knowledges
- *Choose* Talents: What can you do naturally?
- *Choose* Skills: What are you trained to do?
- *Choose* Knowledges: What have you studied?

Step Four: Select your Advantages

- *Choose* Background Traits (5)

Step Five: Finishing Touches

- *Record* Base Willpower (3)
- *Spend* Freebie Points (21) on Numina, optional Merits and Flaws (in **Wraith Players Guide**), or to increase Attributes, Abilities, Willpower or Backgrounds.
- *Record* Personalia: Appearance, Home, Talismans, etc.

For more information on Numina, Talismans, etc., see chapter 3 of **The Quick and the Dead**.

eaten's dimmed sight, they are easy targets for harassment from the other side. A Spectre who comes across an established medium — one who knows what she's doing — is likely to go on the offensive and do his damnedest to drive the medium insane. There's plenty of Angst to be had in such pursuits, not to mention the frustration and panic inflicted on the local wraiths by an assault against the local medium. On the other hand, brand-spanking-new mediums are the perfect seeds for a Spectre cult, as these naive or greedy individuals can often be turned to Spectral service.

Character Creation

There are two options for creating a medium character. The first involves following the template for character creation found in **The Quick and the Dead**, which postulates that mediums' powers are, in fact, a sort of Numina — hedge magic, in effect. This method is a perfectly good way to create a medium character, and allows for a great deal of versatility in the sorts of interaction with the Dead the medium character has.

On the other hand, some players don't want to deal with hedge magic systems, and prefer a more straightforward approach to a medium's abilities. For these players, an alternate system follows, based on Merits and Flaws. Neither system is "better"; they are simply alternative routes to the same goal.

Opposite is the chart for creating a Numina-based medium character. Rules follow for building a medium with Merits and Flaws.

Merit-Based Mediums

Merit-based mediums' powers come from a variety of supernatural sources. You can mix and match the Merits and Flaws below to create the appropriate combination of powers for your medium character. Otherwise, character creation for this sort of medium is identical to that for a "normal" medium.

Creepy Feelings (1 Point Merit)

While a mortal with this Merit can't actually see ghosts, he gets a shiver up and down his spine whenever a wraith is nearby. By succeeding on a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 6), the mortal gets a weird feeling every time a wraith is in the same room as he is. Many Benandanti have this Merit.

Wanted (1 Point Flaw)

The Hierarchy has heard about the medium and wants to put her out of business. Odds are the local Legionnaires concentrate on the ghostly side of things — discouraging clients and so on — but there's always a slim chance that an overzealous Centurion might decide to go to the root of the problem.

Extremely Depressing (2 Point Flaw)

Extremely Depressing mortals are so tied up in gloom and doom (perhaps because they can see, right there in front of them, the walking, talking evidence that existence *is* futile) that they actually radiate Angst. Any wraith dealing with an Extremely Depressing person automatically soaks up a point of Temporary Angst.

Dead Connection (2 Point Merit)

A Dead Connection is a single wraith with whom the medium has extensive and friendly relations, and who serves as a liaison with the Underworld for the character. The Connection helps conceal the medium's activities from the Hierarchy, arranges ghostly clients and basically keeps the medium from being overwhelmed.

A medium must be able to see ghosts before taking a Dead Connection, and this Merit does not cancel out the effects of Mobbed.

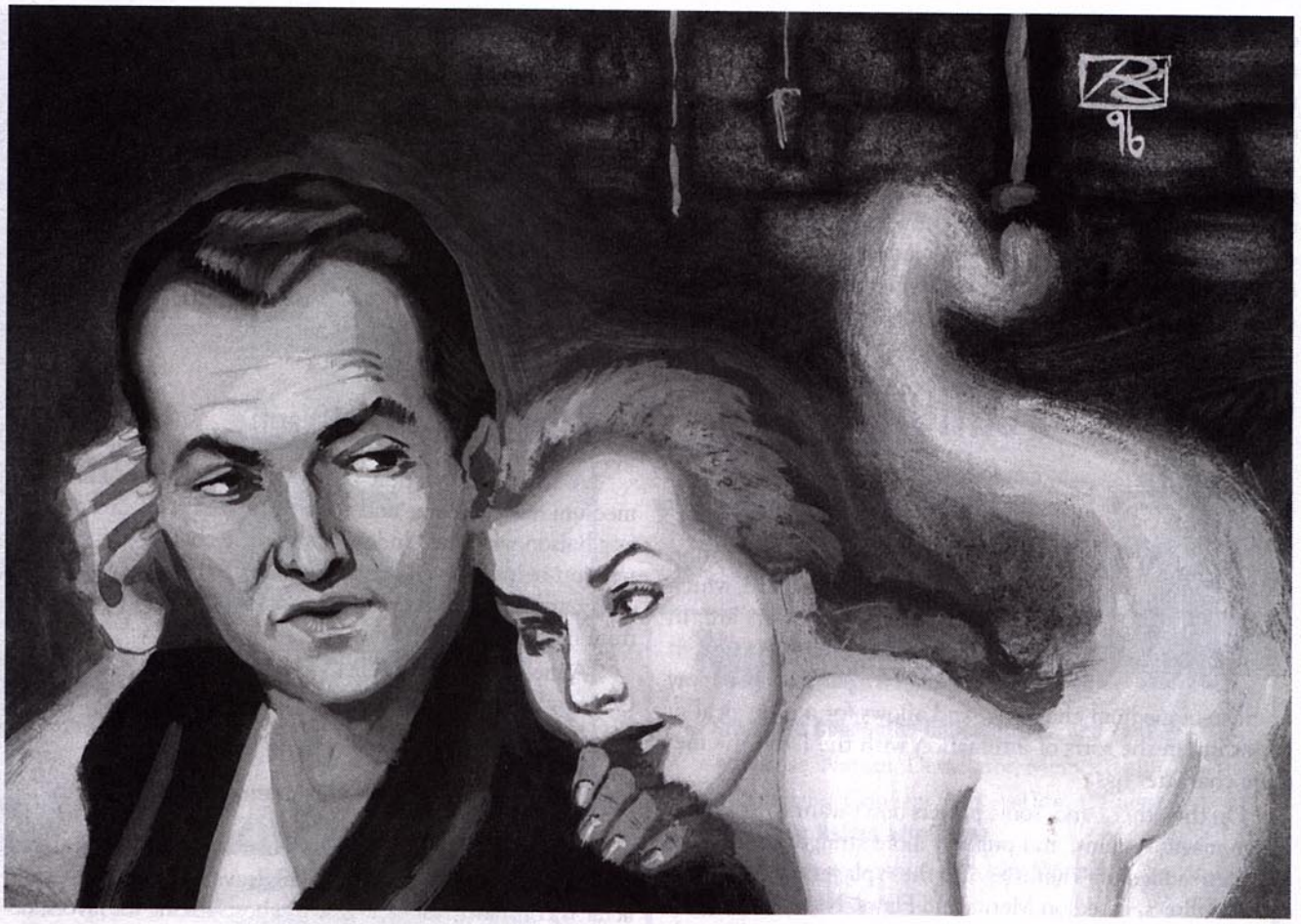
Mobbed (3 Point Flaw)

A Mobbed medium is very popular with the Restless Dead. Too popular, in fact — wraiths won't leave her alone. The character is constantly inundated with ghosts asking for favors, demanding attention or just wanting to spend a little quality time. This can be annoying, embarrassing or even potentially dangerous: Consider what happens if a particularly attentive wraith's Shadow takes over just as the Mobbed medium is trying to negotiate a particularly difficult curve in the rain....

Freebie Points

Freebie Points may be used to purchase Numina, Merits, or to increase Attributes, Abilities, Backgrounds and Willpower. Flaws may be chosen to add Freebie Points, up to a maximum of five. See Wraith Players Guide for a full listing of Merits and Flaws.

Trait	Cost
Attributes	5 per dot
Abilities	2 per dot
Backgrounds	1 per dot
First Numina Type	7 per dot
Second Numina Type	4 per dot
Extra rituals	3 per dot
Willpower	2 per dot



Note: This Flaw also lends itself to the sort of low comedy wherein one character attempts to carry on simultaneous conversations with a ghost and a mortal (who, of course, can't see the ghost and wants to know who the hell the medium is talking to).

Poltergeist Party (3 Point Flaw)

A medium with this Flaw has attracted the attention of a Circle of Haunters and/or Spooks, who've decided to have a little fun. This Flaw automatically grants the medium the ability to see and hear only the wraiths who are tormenting her. More to the point, the Guildwraiths in question do their best to make the medium's life a living hell. Often, the goal is to drive the medium insane — or to kill her.

Small Gift (3 Point Merit)

With an effort, you can see wraiths. Your vision even occasionally extends across the Shroud and into the Shadowlands, but only when you work at it. This effect is achieved by rolling Perception + Awareness (difficulty 7); the number of successes indicates the number of minutes for which the medium can converse with and see the other side. Wraiths cannot counteract their newfound visibility (except with • Argos: Enshroud).

Spectre Meat (3 Point Flaw)

The medium stands out not only to wraiths but also to Spectres. As a matter of fact, he stands out from the crowd *especially* well to Spectres. This, as you might expect, is not a Good Thing. Any Spectres in the area, if given a choice of whom to harass, will head immediately for the character.

Easy Consort (4 Point Merit)

The medium, while not necessarily able to see across the Shroud, is an easily accessible host for a Puppeteer. All mediums with this Merit are considered to be Attuned, and the

difficulty of all Puppetry rolls involving them is decreased by 2. Furthermore, the medium maintains full awareness while the wraith is in possession of her body. This condition can lead to particularly benign Puppeteers allowing "time-share" at seances.

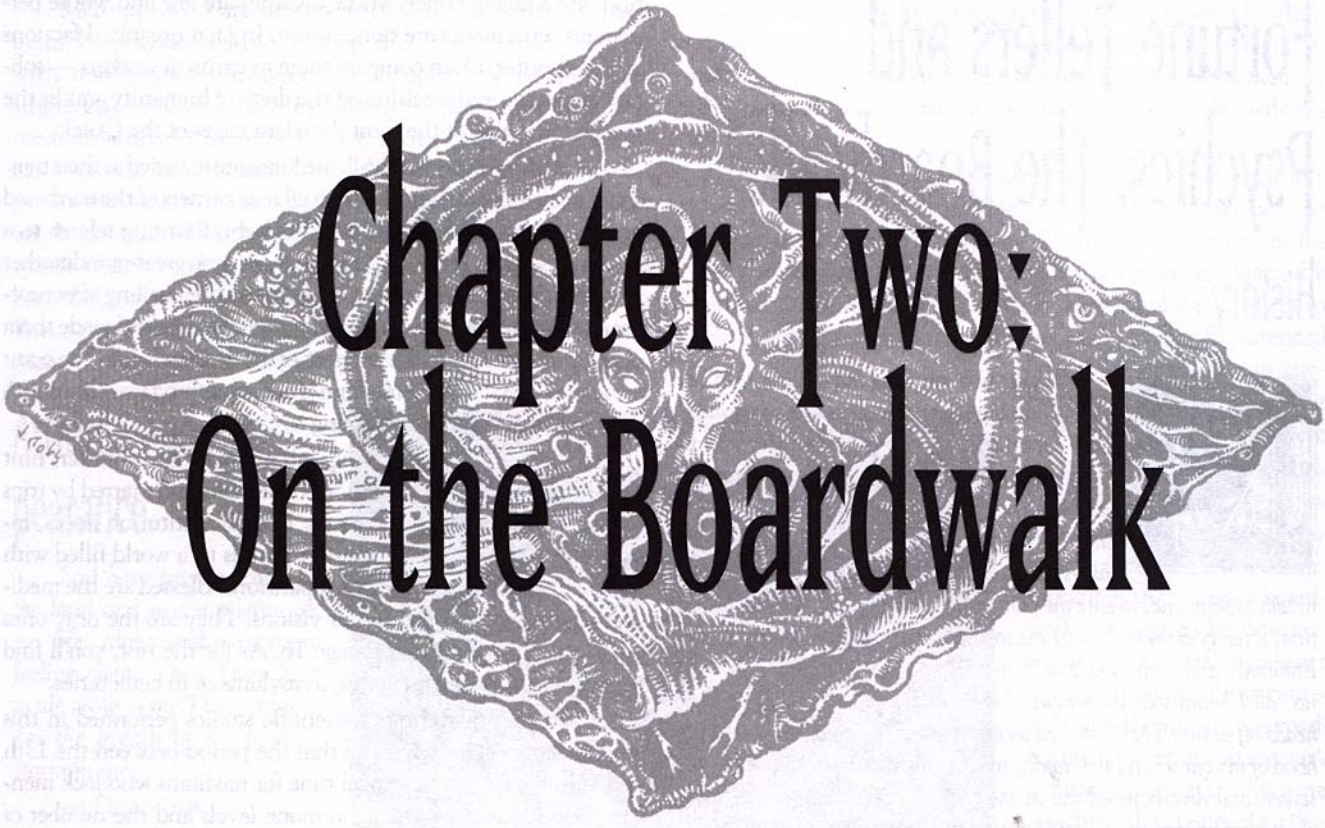
This Merit has its downside as well, making the medium easy prey for less scrupulous wraiths — and Spectres.

Deathsight (4 Point Flaw)

This Flaw often comes in conjunction with Speaker with the Dead. When cursed with Deathsight, a medium sees the world as a wraith does: as a blasted, decaying morass of rot and desolation. Living humans appear diseased and distorted, plants appear blighted and buildings seem to be on the verge of collapse. Seeing the world through grave-colored glasses naturally wears on the medium's nerves, and most mortals with this Flaw are edgy, depressed and always on the lookout for incipient disaster.

Speaker with the Dead (5 Point Merit)

A Speaker with the Dead can, without additional effort, see and hear wraiths and can even see, dimly, across the Shroud into the Shadowlands. This vision cannot be controlled except through the use of Normalcy (see p. 23). A true Speaker with the Dead is never free from her visions of ghosts, and either learns to reconcile her existence in dual realities or goes mad.



Chapter Two: On the Boardwalk

For I would walk alone
Under the quiet stars, and at that time
Have felt whate'er there is of power in sound . . .
And I would stand,
In the night blackened with the coming storm,
Beneath some rock, listening to notes that are
The ghostly language of the ancient earth,
Or make their dim abode in distant winds.
Thence I did drink the visionary power.
— William Wordsworth, "The Prelude"

Fortune Tellers and Psychics: The Boardwalk

History

My 16th year was anything but sweet. As if my raging hormones and the consequent fact that I bore a marked resemblance to Chaucer's Summoner weren't enough to deal with, that was when the voices I'd heard ever since I was a little girl got worse. Starting then, they were always there, always asking me to find someone, to talk to someone, to ease the pain that life-after-death gave them. At first, it really depressed me. I mean, isn't death supposed to be better? Rainbows and harps and that "lions sleeping next to lambs" shit? But no, all I heard was the sound of a thousand ghosts screaming their heads off at me. Then I started seeing them. They crawled all over the hood of my car when I was taking my driving test. They flew out of the screen and dive-bombed me at the movies. I was unprotected, my chakras so wide open you could drive a small tank through them. Next, my romantic life went to hell after my first and only date; at my junior prom Seth grew another head that projectile-vomited Purple Passion Punch all over the new Jessica McClintock dress I'd worn for the occasion. After that, every guy I thought was cute would suddenly appear to have maggots crawling in and out of his facial orifices. It wasn't exactly conducive to a blossoming relationship. I guess I was just meant to be alone. Just me and the voices of the damned.

After a while, I got a nagging feeling that if I didn't do something soon, I was going to end up like my Aunt Lula, who's been in mental hospitals since she was my age. So, on a hunch, I started meditating, reading books at the New Age store with all the crystals sparkling in the windows. And I bought a pack of tarot cards. The pictures were pretty. Anyway, having them in front of me gave me some focus. It was like magic; I'd choose a card, and then I'd hear only one voice. I eventually learned to isolate and even block the voices without the cards when I needed to. I did it. I controlled the ghosts on my own, quieting the cacophony inside my head. I made them start coming forth as individuals, and they would share bits and pieces of their former lives. They tell me that I help them. They tell me I'm their chosen one. So I wander from city to city in search of actual fragments of their lives here on Earth. I make connections for them, find the objects of their desires. They need me. It's better than being with people who think I'm a freak, you know?

As motley a crew as there ever was, boardwalk mediums almost defy categorization. Almost. These loners and wanderers, who associate themselves with no particular group or organization, are a ragtag bunch whose loyalties are few and whose permanent settlements are nonexistent. In fact, organized factions of ghosthunters often compare them to carnival workers — solitary, nomadic, and leeching off the dregs of humanity amidst the intoxicating glitz of the most decadent cities of the Quick.

The histories of boardwalk mediums are as varied as their transitory settlements. They hail from all four corners of the earth and from all walks of life. Some owe their ghosthunting talents to a trickle of Romani genes or to a Latin-American great-grandmother versed in the arts of Santeria. Others found their calling after near-death experiences penetrated their protective Fog and made them open up unwittingly to the denizens of the Shadowlands. The point is, however, that being a medium is not something you choose; it's what you *are*. There's no escaping it, either.

Whatever their beginnings, all nomadic ghosthunters hint at childhoods haunted by visions of demons and marred by trips in and out of mental institutions. Behind institution doors, innocuous ink-blots became sinister portals to a world filled with maniacal shadows and twisted apparitions. Blessed are the mediums who learn to control their visions. They are the only ones you'll see on the streets past age 16. As for the rest, you'll find them sleeping on steam grates, in asylums or in cemeteries.

From the smattering of scientific studies performed in this field, researchers have learned that the period between the 13th and 16th birthdays is a critical time for mediums who lack mentors. Due to rapidly shifting hormone levels and the number of physiological and emotional changes that whipsaw the average adolescent, puberty leaves a natural medium extremely susceptible to the encroachment of Underworld denizens. In this case, natural selection comes into play, as the medium must defend herself or succumb to the maddening cries of the Shadowlands' residents — or to the whims of Spectres who may choose her as their plaything. The strongest mediums learn, through self-teaching and meditation, to ward off the unfriendly wraiths and control their own channeling abilities. The weak…well, there are those who say that the insane have seen the face of God. In actuality, many have simply gazed on the hideous visage of one Haunter (or Spectre) too many.

Following their 16th year, mediums who are fortunate enough to avoid becoming mental patients — or worse — spend the rest of their youth honing their protective skills, learning to control the voices and visions dancing in their heads. Individuals who are willing to discuss the particulars of their spiritual growth say that visualizing themselves surrounded by a wall of white or gold light is usually enough to quiet the Restless and block out the presence of all but the strongest and most persistent wraiths. Many natural mediums become so adept at shutting out the Dead that they do so permanently, preferring "normal," sedate lives to those of their unsettled sisters and brothers (normal and sedate, that is, until someone comes calling who is powerful enough to break down their defenses).

Mediums who are driven instead to capitalize on their metaphysical skills strike out on their own, experimenting with makeshift techniques to call upon the Restless and single out voices until they hear something useful. These mediums travel from city to city, turning various urban areas into year-round carnivals of the supernatural as they reply to the voices inside their heads and follow where they are beckoned. Wraiths tend to beckon to them in places where the Shroud is thin and the crowd is just right — the French Quarter in New Orleans, the artist colonies of New York, the boardwalks along the Jersey shore — hence the name "boardwalk mediums."

Attitude and Appearance

So I have traveled through the land and was a pilgrim all my life, alone and a stranger feeling alien. Then Thou hast made grow in me Thine art under the breath of the terrible storm in me.

— Paracelsus

Boardwalk mediums often act like stereotypical Scorpios, though they may have been born under any sign of the zodiac. Mysterious and brooding, they shun the company of nonclients and are often extremely self-centered in demeanor. Since most boardwalk mediums grow up with no mentor to guide them down a metaphysical path and with no peers who understand their particular trials and tribulations, they are very much aware of being "different." In fact, after that pivotal 16th year, the emotional growth of most mediums appears to cease. They often look, dress and act like errant teenagers well into middle age and beyond — a valuable asset that regularly causes anyone who would harass boardwalk mediums to underestimate them. They are the kind whose parents send them to Catholic colleges, where they join the handful of students who dye their hair magenta and have one body-piercing too many to blend in with their khaki-trousered schoolmates. Their own clothes may be bright and gaudy or dark and somber, but boardwalk mediums always stand out.

Paradoxically, these nomads generally can be found only when they wish to make themselves known. Whether because of their need to escape unhappy clients or because of run-ins with the religious right, wandering mediums quickly learn the value of virtual invisibility, and they share the ability to adapt to their surroundings in the most minute ways possible. Experienced boardwalk mediums can analyze the dress, walk, and accent of the locals and imitate them to perfection, blending in with a crowd in a matter of seconds.

Perhaps it is this uncanny knack of melding with her surroundings that causes a boardwalk medium to become extremely territorial wherever she sets up shop. While camaraderie is the rule on the road, if a medium sets down roots it's a different matter. Anyone poaching the clients of an "established" medium is just asking for trouble. The medium may hurl curses — complete with voodoo doll and pins — at the hapless competitor who dares to invade her temporary camp, or she may begin a campaign to discredit the other medium and exaggerate her own skills. The most powerful (and least scrupulous) mediums may even summon a trusted Companion wraith to torment the interloper through the use of various Arcanoi. After a few of these supernatural battles, most mediums soon learn to avoid others like themselves intuitively, all in the interest of self-preservation.

If a medium ever opens up about the genesis of her career, she invariably says that she was "chosen" — either by a Supreme Being or by the spirit world — to commune with the

New Talent: Normalcy

You have learned how to shut out the voices and visions of the Restless Dead through sheer force of mental effort. By visualizing a wall or other protective shield for yourself, you can ward off unwanted ghostly visions. On the other hand, ghosts may take offense at your refusal to listen to them and could resort to more drastic methods to get your attention.

- • Novice: You can slow the onslaught.
- •• Competent: You can drown out the murmurs.
- ••• Practiced: Spectres find you a tough nut to crack.
- •••• Expert: I hear you knockin' but you can't come in!
- ••••• Master: Heck, I can't even hear you knock.

Wraiths can attempt to break down a medium's resistance to their presence by making a contested roll: a wraith's Wits + Intimidation against the medium's Wits + Normalcy. If the medium scores more successes, she successfully blocks out the wraith's presence for a scene. If the wraith produces more successes, the medium's attempt fails. However, with the expenditure of a Willpower point, the medium can duplicate the effects of a success. By the same token, a wraith can use Willpower to knock down a medium's defenses. Occasionally a medium and wraith get into a duel of wills, with each trying to out-stubborn the other.

A medium can also create a "standing defense" for one scene by rolling Intelligence + Normalcy (difficulty 7) at the beginning of a scene; a wraith must equal the medium's number of successes on a Wits + Intimidation roll (difficulty is the local Shroud rating) to be seen by the target.

Note: A successful Normalcy roll even allows the medium to ignore the effects of Embody • (Whispers) but not any more potent uses of that Arcanos.

Normalcy may be learned only by a medium character, one who has taken the Merit: Speaker with the Dead. Normal characters who try to learn Normalcy develop splitting headaches and absolutely no ability whatsoever to lock out ghosts.

Restless. The spiritual and philosophical bases for the rest of their beliefs are as varied as world religions. Interestingly enough, most have little or no knowledge of the real workings of the Shadowlands, the Hierarchy or Oblivion, as they prefer to see the Underworld through rose-colored crystal balls. No matter what their reasons for hawking their talents — whether financial, altruistic or commercial — these ghosthunters do have at least a vague notion that their communion with the spirit world helps bring "peace" to the Restless.

Natural mediums tend to believe that their peaceweaving gifts elevate them slightly above the rest of the human race — a presumption that often includes other mediums. Having no tolerance for naively optimistic New Age prattle about how "everyone is psychic," they instead choose to revel in their own uniqueness. As a cynical channeler from L.A. told one crystal-bedecked client, "Comparing my psychic abilities to the meager talents inhabiting the rest of this Darwinian cesspool of a planet is like comparing the finest Chardonnay to a jug of Boone's Farm." This arrogance doesn't usually carry over to dealings with the Restless, though. It's just mere mortals and wannabes who earn mediums' contempt.

Such mediums also have a strong tendency to wax poetic when excited. Some resort to impromptu rhyming of couplets when they feel they have something of particular significance to impart to a client. These mediums feel that rhyme adds to the credibility of what they're saying. Others infuse their speech with archaic or foreign phrases to add weight to their words. Boardwalk mediums also revel in being cryptic and metaphorical, leaving bewildered clients to chew on lyrical, convoluted phrases. An example might be, "I see a stallion! Proud is the beast that throws his rider in the shadows," meaning that the client is going to wrap his new Mustang around a telephone pole tonight.

Regular patrons of boardwalk mediums say that the more frivolous one's question, the more quixotic the medium's reply. This behavior is hardly surprising, considering the low tolerance most mediums have for the rest of the species, but it does encourage clients to phrase their questions properly. Satisfied patrons allege that one must present a significant, interesting problem to get a successful consultation with a medium. A prosaic question such as, "Who am I going to marry?" merely catapults the medium and her companion wraiths into boredom and perhaps a lackadaisical use of Fatalism. Such questions often lead the medium to compose riddles rivaling that of the Sphinx as revenge for this "insult" to her considerable talents. More interesting questions, however, produce genuine effort on the medium's part and often clearer answers as well.

Modus Operandi

Meditation plays a large role in a medium's method of operations. When listening to the voices of the Dead, a medium almost always uses a prop of some sort to focus her thoughts. Props may range from the ubiquitous crystal ball to tarot cards to

tea leaves, runes, dominoes, or even toothpicks. When a medium is just beginning to learn control over her ghosthunting abilities, these props are often the tools of her momentary salvation. Having an object to concentrate on allows her to isolate the voice of one spirit or to block such voices altogether. Most mediums choose a favorite prop and work with it to the exclusion of all others. In fact, during a medium's fledgling stage, traveling too far away from one's chosen tool is an open invitation to a loss of control and subsequent madness.

Most mediums instinctively understand that their gifts are not necessarily their own. They may invent a prayer or chant to the spirits before casting their runes or dealing their tarot cards. Some even feel themselves fall into a light trance when they are communing with the Dead — a trance that lends awareness of being Skinridden. These mediums often tell their clients that they are channels or transmitters for "higher beings" who deign to guide the living through a problem by poking and prodding cards and stones into their predestined spots.

A daring medium may willingly open herself up as a consort to Puppeteers and allow these skilled wraiths to use her voices and bodies to interact with the living. Of course, this behavior is a risky one, exposing a medium to the dangers of perpetual torment or even the destruction of her soul by the summoned Puppeteer. However, individuals who'll take the risks necessary to utter platitudes in eerie, blended voices or to achieve other special effects have a better chance of winning over skeptics and gaining prestige or fortune, if such are their goals.

Certain mediums are fortunate — or unfortunate — enough to be able to summon one particular wraith on a regular basis. These summoned ghosts can become a channeler's trusted Companions and form a symbiotic relationship in which the medium's calls are always answered, and the wraith's needs — to be near her Fetters, to "speak" with loved ones left behind, etc. — are fulfilled to the best of the mortal counterpart's abilities. Mediums who have a Companion often introduce the spirit to clients by name before beginning a consultation. However, it is almost impossible for the channeler to tell whether or not her Companion is what she seems or not. Doppelgangers, in particular, enjoy standing in for trusted Companions....

The Diary of Cecile Prejean

Tactics is knowing what to do when there is something to do. Strategy is knowing what to do when there is nothing to do.

— Savielly Tartakover, Polish Chess Grand Master

Although boardwalk mediums are not part of a coherent organization, they do follow certain rules (mediums with a conscience do, anyway) much like the medieval code of honor among knights. Where these rules come from, and why so many boardwalk mediums follow them in the absence of a solid network are something of a mystery, especially since most books on the subject are written by nonmediums or fledglings with little sense of self-preservation. However, most mediums trace the genesis of the fortuneteller code of honor to the unpublished diary of 19th century debutante Cecile Prejean.

In March of 1828, in the middle of the New Orleans French Quarter, Cecile Prejean and her twin sister, Colette, ran over a small gray cat with their carriage. Against the advice of their driver, the two young women immediately went looking for the cat's owner to offer their apologies and make what reparations they could. Unfortunately, the cat belonged to one Celestine Laveau, second cousin to Marie Laveau, the celebrated voodoo queen of New Orleans. According to Cecile, Celestine was as well versed in the voodoo arts as her cousin, and she "cursed and spat and carried on so, I thought Colette would surely perish of fright."

Shortly after their encounter with Celestine Laveau, Cecile and her sister began to hear the voices of the Restless calling to them across the Shroud. By far the more intrepid of the two, Cecile searched every cheap tavern and seedy brothel in New Orleans for Celestine Laveau to beg her to break the curse. By then, though, the woman had disappeared.

Cecile did find the voodoo queen herself, however. Eager to undo the damage her cousin had done, Marie Laveau gave Cecile the choice of dispelling the spirits altogether or learning to harness her gifts. For reasons irretrievably lost with several pages of her diary, Cecile chose the latter. She recorded Marie Laveau's teachings in several parts of her journal for Colette's benefit.

Unfortunately, all of Cecile's efforts to save her sister were in vain. Colette refused to have anything to do with voodoo, which she considered evil and "an affront to God." She ran about the Prejean plantation in nothing but a nightgown, tearing at her hair and terrorizing the servants and slaves with her ramblings. Colette ultimately disappeared into the Atchafalaya swamps, hounded by the voices that had driven her to the point of self-destruction.

In her grief, Cecile Prejean disappeared as well, though she resurfaced from time to time in various cities and towns throughout the country. Her powers as a medium became legendary, and the mere hint of her presence could cause riots and stampedes of the credulous. It is said that whenever she found another natural medium in the same predicament she and her sister had confronted, Cecile would tear out a page or two from her journal and leave them behind so as to share the teachings of Marie Laveau. Although rare, several pages of her diary still exist. The lucky medium who finds one of these treasures gains control and peace beyond her imaginings.

One page that has been widely distributed in duplicate form is Madame Prejean's Code of Conduct for Mediums and Seers. Cecile seemed to consider it paramount that all mediums conduct themselves in what she felt was a "professional and dignified manner," and so she created and distributed her personal set of rules. As Cecile Prejean has achieved cult status amongst modern-day mediums, her Code of Conduct — the only part of her diary that is still widely extant — is still followed today.

Madame Prejean's Code of Conduct for Mediums and Seers

In order to share the wisdom imparted to me by Marie Laveau, the celebrated seer, I have put in writing the six questions most often asked by beginning mediums for their personal edification. It is my hope that all fortunetellers will conduct themselves honestly and ethically, with the best interests of the querent foremost in their minds.

1 — What if I see tragedy ahead for my client?

Never impart news of impending tragedy to your clients, particularly predictions of a querent's own death or that of a loved one. Though death and pain are inevitable, one must not spend one's life in constant fear and anxiety. If you feel that you absolutely cannot direct the querent to a different path — one which she could follow and thus avoid a terrible episode — perform a Cold Reading so as not to prolong her misery by foretelling what cannot be avoided. Should you feel an obligation, religious or otherwise, to be truthful to a particular individual, hide your meaning in metaphors.

2 — What do I do when the spirits are not answering my call?

If the medium is confident that no harm to her person or reputation will result, she is obliged to return any payment made prior to the reading and confess that communication with the spirit world is currently impossible.

However, a Cold Reading may be performed in the most dire of circumstances. For example, if a powerful, well-connected querent were to become belligerent over her reading — or lack thereof — you may perform a Cold Reading to prevent bodily harm.

3 — How do I perform a Cold Reading?

Everyone has a bad day on the job, and we are not excepted. There are times when you may be unable to call a single spirit or when your tarot cards do not fall into any sensible order. If the circumstances demand it, in these cases you may need to perform a Cold Reading. To do this, you observe your client, reading what you can from her attire, speech and gestures, and then you try to fabricate satisfactory answers to her questions. You may ask a few leading questions as well. Do so with the utmost confidence and all will be well. A talent for "bodyreading" is very useful when your companion ghosts take a hiatus from the supernatural circuit. If you regularly channel spirits, you may have to draw upon latent acting talents to fake possession. In addition, use any basic knowledge of your chosen prop — your tarot cards, runes, &c. — to piece together whatever messages you can.

4 — What should I do if another medium is seeing clients very close to where I have settled?

Inexperienced mediums soon learn not to infringe on the territory of an already established channeler. If you notice another practitioner already in session with clients, move your own camp a safe distance away. What constitutes a "safe" distance differs from location to location. On Jackson Square in New Orleans' Vieux Carré, a few feet may suffice. In a small midwestern village, however, the town may not be big enough for two spirit channelers.

5 — Why do you travel from city to city? Is wanderlust necessary to be a successful fortuneteller?

The transitory nature of our profession, more of a practice than an actual rule, plays a large part of defining us as a group. Wandering fortunetellers were around long before I started my practice. I myself find it comforting to change my locale whenever the whim strikes, although I do often return to favored locales. Most mediums of my acquaintance rarely remain in one place for more than a few days. Two weeks seems to be the longest time we spend in one location, though there are rare occasions when a medium stays in one place for almost a month. There are a few of our kind who set up permanent shops, but they are far more visible than they are numerous.

6 — How much contact do you have with other mediums? Do you owe any of them loyalty?

We do display a certain amount of loyalty to our own. A medium about to depart from a city may pass on objects such as city maps, business cards of financially secure clients or information about safe lodgings to other mediums. However, these gifts are often made under the cover of darkness, with no more interaction than a parcel tossed on a fortuneteller's table. The medium who leaves the gift may, it is assumed, ask a favor in return at any time.

We have an innate distrust of any other type of ghosthunter. (I find myself to be the exception to this rule.) Out of an understandable sense of self-preservation, we rarely share information about our skills, and we take great pains to avoid each other and members of established ghosthunting factions, in particular those organizations that are flashy and obtrusive. We have a higher purpose and place in the great chain of psychic beings. Our raison d'être is simply to be of assistance to others who lack our gifts and to bring peace to those who have passed on. Learn well what I have told you; from here, it will be up to you to hone your skills and survive. Use your talents fairly, and use them well.

Reasons Fair and Foul

To the souls in the Shadowlands, mediums exist among the Quick to act as portals to the world of the living. Through them, the Restless can again speak with loved ones across the Shroud. Mediums can be used to protect Fetters, work toward the resolution of Passions and otherwise meddle in the affairs of the living, if the wraith's level of influence is strong.

On the other hand, what drives boardwalk mediums to travel onward in their endless quest, to make their way down every road? What causes them to give parts of themselves to the shades of persons heretofore unknown? Below are just a few reasons why a seemingly normal individual would cast off her material goods and follow where her ghostly Companions take her.

Understanding

I've often felt that I was born in the wrong time and to the wrong parents. Their terms of endearment included "different" and "eccentric." Oh, you want to hear about the voices. I've always heard them. I tried to tell my mother about them, but she slapped me and said never to mention that "craziness" to her again. Sometimes I think the voices are the only things that make sense in this world, and everyone else has gone as mad as they say I am.

Many mediums feel more at home with the voices inside their heads than they do with other humans. The Quick seem to have little use for such "gifted" people other than to cast them out of "normal" society and pretend that their gifts do not exist. Well aware of their eccentricity, these mediums use wraiths to form connections with other humans, even if only for a short while. They use their channeling abilities only to aid other people, hoping that those others may turn to them in gratitude and make them feel a sense of belonging. They move on only when they hear too many pejorative whispers about their practices. One dissatisfied customer is often all that it takes.

Finding Transcendence

The spirits I speak with are caught between worlds. They are too attached to this Earth to leave it behind for a higher plane of existence, and so they are trapped until they sever their bonds. The spirits need someone to help them find peace. Although I am humbled that I am the instrument through whom they give guidance to those wise enough to listen, I feel I must help guide them toward the light.

The highest goal of a medium driven by spiritual beliefs is to help the Dead find some brand of Transcendence. Because they think of the Dead as luminous, higher beings, such mediums channel and perform readings to impart the wisdom of "those on the spiritual plane" to the Quick. However, the medium's main purpose is to send the wraith on her merry way to Nirvana, Heaven or a similar place where everything is beautiful all of the time. In fact, the drive to do so may even verge on fanaticism, as this sort of medium sees herself as something of a savior. Such so-

called "evangelical" mediums believe that assisting wraiths to achieve Transcendence will eventually secure their own destiny as well; many keep running tallies of how many ghosts they've "helped along." The craftiest often try to trick a wraith into revealing the location of her Fetters, only to destroy the objects shortly thereafter out of a fervent belief that, without these bonds, the wraith will move on to a "better place."

Altruism

Everyone has his own special gifts in this life. My small talent is that I can hear the ghosts of our ancestors when they call. I am grateful that spirits from a higher plane than our Earth use me as their vessel. It is my fervent hope that their messages help my sisters and brothers find out what it is that they need to learn in their respective lifetimes. My wants are really insignificant; where the spirits beckon, I must follow and bring comfort.

Certain mediums use their abilities to assist the living with a touching sincerity. They often have a warm, fuzzy view of the Shadowlands as a "plane of higher learning," and not even the ravings of the most malevolent Spectres can dissuade them from their vision. They possess a deep faith their own purpose, which they feel is to offer solace to those living whom the Dead left behind. Unable to ignore the voices of the Dead, who implore them to find and contact their loved ones, to let someone know that they still exist in some fashion, these mediums go wherever their spiritual guides take them. Often acting in direct opposition to those mediums who try to help spirits find the light, the medium who listens to her heart can be easily goaded into protecting Fetters and strengthening Passions.

The Curse of Cassandra

When I foretold pestilence, they said I'd brought it. When I warned them of fire, they claimed that I'd started it. No matter how accurate my prophecies, no one believed me. They'll know soon enough that I am not a fake. They'll learn.

Perhaps no one else believed the rantings of their youth. Perhaps a horrible occurrence resulted in someone's unwillingness to listen. Maybe others ridiculed them when the words of their spirit Companions didn't turn out as foreseen. Like the seer who foretold the fall of Troy, only to have no one in the city believe her words, these mediums are on a quest to ensure that as many people as possible know that their messages are for real. They are the most driven and the most dangerous of all the wandering fortunetellers. Even the most gregarious of mediums knows better than to contradict one of these crusaders for Truth.

Fame and Fortune

I don't know why any of these ghosts would want to talk to or through me. My God is the dollar, my Sabbath payday, and I don't give a damn whether or not Great-aunt Sally is throwing herself at my front door in desperation. Great-aunt Sally had better have

some cold cash on her if she wants to talk to little Johnny, or I'll tell her little Johnny's gone bye-bye to hell.

As with any profession, there are always individuals whose main focus is to secure as much profit and glory for themselves as possible. They are the types of mediums who work the boardwalks with an eye on the casinos, who operate in hopes of building up a big enough reputation to curry favor with the rich and powerful. Such mediums are the types who progress to circus-like shows and television appearances, amid theatrical puffs of smoke, outlandish costumes and canned shouts of adulation. To them, Rasputin and Merlin were the most enviable of people — chief advisors to persons of wealth and distinction and distinguished by an aura of the occult. After all, these hungry souls reckon, if Linda Evans and Yanni could all but adopt JZ Knight and her spirit Companion, Ramtha, why isn't there someone in Hollywood for *them*?

Control

Last night, I sat in a chair beating my wrists against the armrests over and over again for what seemed like a few minutes, in the belief that this small ritual would drive these demons out of my head. It worked, but I was stunned to find that four hours had actually passed. And there I sat, using my precious time on this Earth to drum bruises into my flesh. Sometimes, I can single out a voice. It's always the same voice, and it's always asking for something. Maybe if I just do what it wants it'll give me some peace and quiet. I need peace and quiet.

For those poor individuals who never learn to shut out completely the pleas of souls demanding assistance, there is a fine line between sanity and madness. Some of them learn that it is easier to listen closely to one voice than to the clanging cymbals of many tongues, and so they travel on, speaking to the one Restless who would, for a moment, bless them with something close to silence in exchange for favors granted.

The Ghostly View

Wraiths who deal with boardwalk mediums are almost inevitably Renegades. By its very substance, any discussion between mortal and wraith breaks the *Dictum Mortuum*, and extended associations like those between medium and Companion gleefully stomp on the bits. Thus, working with a medium on a regular basis can be a hazardous operation for a wraith. On the other hand, the chance to deal with someone who can actually see wraiths is too much of a temptation for most Shadowlanders (even normally stolid Legionnaires), and they mob any medium they see — at least for a little while. Most won't make a habit of it — it's just that the temptation of getting a message across or ensuring the safety of a Fetter is a strong one.

The two Guilds that work most closely with boardwalk mediums are the Oracles and Puppeteers, for obvious reasons. The former use their powers of Fatalism (with sanction from the Ladies of Fate, some say) to grant directives unto mortals, while the latter just get off on Skinriding.

Ex-mediums who wind up as wraiths often do their best to help out their spiritual descendents. These wraiths also work hard on the other side preventing young mediums from getting overwhelmed; most of them have Passions along these lines.

Tarot and Candle Magic: Peeking Through the Shroud

While the crystal ball is the stereotypical tool of choice for mediums, most practitioners prefer to use tarot decks and candles to peer across the Shroud. While a crystal ball certainly is flashy and provides something of a focus for concentration and emotion, tarot cards provide for more specificity when a medium tries to contact an individual wraith. Candle flame offers the same sort of focus that a crystal ball does (and a brighter beacon to Deathsight-afflicted wraiths). Plus, crystal balls are heavy, expensive and hard to replace — all negatives for mediums who might have to pick up and run at a moment's notice.

For these reasons and others too numerous to go into, tarot readings and candlelight are integral to the process of contacting the Restless. Below is an outline of how to work Tarot readings into your **Wraith** chronicle, what actually happens in terms of ghostly metaphysics when you do so and the game mechanics of tarot use by mediums.

Shedding Light on the Matter:

Let the Readings Begin

Breathe deeply as I light this fire. I want you to close your eyes and inhale the patchouli oil I put before you to invoke the wisdom of Saturn. Spread a dropper's worth of this oil in your palms, then cup your hands around the flame to mix your aura with the earth, fire, water and air that the sacred candle embodies. Good. Breathe the essence into your body and soul. Now envision the departed soul. Where has this soul gone? How can this soul help the living? What remained unanswered with the passing of

Planet	Moon	Saturn
Main Association	Spirits	Death
Day/ Candle Color		
Monday (Pearl)	Women's mysteries	Past lives, the Crone
Tuesday (Red)	Prehistory, Female power	Illness, War, Endings
Wednesday (Yellow)	Ancient mysteries and secrets, Charon	Learning the secrets of death
Thursday (Purple)	Expansion of spirit	Transmutation, Religion,The Hierarchy
Friday (Pink, Green)	Female power, Self-love	Open relations, Needs, Enfants, Fertility
Saturday (Black)	Death's door, the Shroud, Endings	Old age, the Deathlords
Sunday (Orange)	Balance of Shadow and Psyche	Transformation, Lemures

this soul? Think of the departed mortal's eyes, but with golden irises. Now, repeat after me, seeker:

Saturn shed wisdom on the secrets of death,

Please manifest answers for thee,

Speak to me like before your last breath,

Please offer an epiphany.

Now, with the same questions in mind, I want you to take this deck of cards and hold it to your heart. Shuffle your question into the deck until you feel that your vibrations have entered each and every card. Now, seeker, open your eyes slowly, look immediately at the dancing flame, then hand the deck back to me. Together we will choose the appropriate significator card for the departed....

Readings commonly begin in such a manner, with the medium helping the client to focus her thoughts. It is customary in many cases for the medium to request the aid of Saturn, the planet most often associated with wisdom and death. Some readers choose, however, to seek guidance and knowledge from the moon, as the moon is commonly associated with spirits. Spirits, however, are a Garou matter; readings done with the invocation of Saturn tend to work a bit better.

Candle magic is best performed on certain days of the week that correspond to the type of knowledge the seeker is pursuing. Below is a chart that explains various associations with planets, days of the week and the sort of information that can be best communicated by the Dead on a particular day.

How It Actually Works

Obviously, having a deck of tarot cards and a candle doesn't give you the keys to the realm of the Dead. What really happens when a medium attempts to use tarot and candles to extend her perception across the Shroud is simple. The tarot reading, intended to echo the spirit of the wraith, provides an emotional focus for both medium and client (in addition to whatever prophetic function it may serve). The card spread helps to clarify the image of the wraith in the minds of both reader and querent, and thus "focuses" the client's emotion into something more directed than just free-floating Pathos. At the same time, the candle flame shines extremely brightly in the Deathsight-tainted eyes of the Restless, and it attracts attention even as it aids concentration. (**Note:** Strong incense also attracts the Restless, who are thankful for any scent besides the faint whiff of decay that often rides the breezes of the Underworld.)

In any case, the directed emotional energy created by the reading crosses the Shroud and, with luck, attracts the attention of the wraith for whom it is intended. Readings don't always work, though; not every soul becomes a wraith, the wraith might be in Stygia or soulforged into a boot scraper, or the wraith might not want to answer. In that case, there are myriad possible outcomes: What responds instead may be a wraith with a strong connection to the target of the reading, or perhaps a Spectre with hive-mind knowledge of the desired wraith, or perhaps just a fragment of memory that wafts loose from the Tempest. How these impostors may react to medium and querent is up to the Storyteller, though most mediums (Perception + Enigmas, difficulty 7) know fairly swiftly if something is going wrong.

As for the matter of choosing the right day, invoking the proper celestial entity and so on, most research done on that topic has come up with a pair of contradictory conclusions. The first camp believes that choosing the appropriate day for a reading simply provides a psychological crutch for the medium, en-

In addition, each day is associated with a particular Legion — and those wraiths who make up a Legion's ranks (or should).

Sunday	The Penitent Legion
Monday	The Silent Legion
Tuesday	The Skeletal Legion
Wednesday	The Grim Legion
Thursday	The Legion of Paupers
Friday	The Emerald Legion
Saturday	The Iron Legion

The Legions of Fate, not surprisingly, stand outside this correlation. Depending upon whom you believe, this Legion is linked to all days or to none.

abling her to be more efficient in her efforts. Other researchers fall back on the "It just works better; we have no idea why" theory. It's not a surprise that the first batch of researchers is generally much better funded than the second.

It's All in the Cards: Recommended Tarot Decks

For Storytellers wishing to introduce tarot-reading NPCs or individuals who wish to play a medium in a **Wraith** chronicle, nearly any tarot deck will suffice, though we suggest using the **Mage Tarot Deck**; its World of Darkness imagery should be inspirational during your journey beyond the Shroud.

When selecting tarot cards, it's of great importance to choose a deck with which you feel comfortable. Although many experts recommend that beginners start out with the classic Rider-Waite deck, you may find that the artwork on the cards is not as appealing or inspiring as some on other decks. It's helpful to select a deck that will evoke certain moods to facilitate interpretation.

Playing with a Full Deck: The Basics of Tarot

Before you can introduce tarot into your **Wraith** chronicles, you've got to understand some tarot basics. You can use the information in this section for **Wraith** chronicles and for readings in general.

What's in Your Deck?

Standard tarot decks consist of 78 cards. Fifty-two of these cards are numerical and court cards, similar to the cards found in any playing-card deck. In playing-card decks, the suits are spades, clubs, diamonds and hearts; tarot cards are divided into wands, swords, pentacles/coins and cups. In either type of card deck, the suits have nearly identical meanings. A predominance of **wands** in a reading suggests creative inspiration; a predominance of **swords** suggests intellect or mental power; a predominance of **pentacles/coins** suggests material or monetary matters; and a predominance of **cups** suggests an emotional outpouring or an emotional lesson to be learned from the reading.

Aces — Beginnings, births, gifts, potential

Twos — Affirmations, balance, dynamism

Threes — Planning, synchronicity, advancement and growth

Fours — Manifestation, planning for the future, stability, control

Fives — Struggle, strife, adjustment, challenges

Sixes — Abundance, exuberance, adjustment, adaptation, beauty, harmony

Sevens — Imagination, introspection, self-analysis, maturation

Eights — Change, evolution, organization, intensity

Nines — Completion, integration, fulfillment, culmination of the Ace's potential

Tens — Fully developed manifestation of the depicted suit

Each card in any suit has a numerological correspondence that helps to identify the meanings of that particular card. The information below is a general guideline to follow when conducting a reading.

Court cards, which usually consist of Kings, Queens, Knights and Pages, also hold great influence over readings. Before a reading, it is customary for the inquirer or reader to choose a court card as a **significator**, a card representing the inquirer at the time of the reading. The significator card is usually chosen based on the inquirer's gender, age and astrological sign.

When consulting the tarot in a **Wraith** chronicle, the medium usually uses the significator for the wraith rather than for the person making the inquiry. The medium takes into account the zodiacal correspondence of the wraith's "deathdate" and uses the appropriate card as a significator. Laying this significator card in a spread theoretically puts the influence of the deceased into a reading. If you do not know your wraith's "death" sign, or are unsure of the dates corresponding to each of the signs, check your daily newspaper's horoscope section. The dates appear next to each of the signs used in Western astrology.

Court Card/Significator	Astrological Sign	Gender
King of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Male
Queen of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Female
Knight of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Young Male
Page of Cups	Cancer, Scorpio, Pisces	Young Female
King of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Male
Queen of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Female
Knight of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Young Male
Page of Pentacles	Taurus, Virgo, Capricorn	Young Female
King of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Male
Queen of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Female
Knight of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Young Male
Page of Swords	Gemini, Libra, Aquarius	Young Female
King of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Male
Queen of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Female
Knight of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Young Male
Page of Wands	Aries, Leo, Sagittarius	Young Female

The Spread

The method of arranging the cards in a graphical pattern is called the spread and is very important to a tarot reading's outcome. In **Wraith** chronicles, most mediums use a spread known as "the Shroud." The Shroud spread uses only five cards, and tells the inquirer about the wraith's Passions, Arcanoi, Fetters and Background in Restless society. It is laid out as follows:

There are two horizontal rows in a Shroud spread. The top row consists of only one card: the card chosen as the significator for the wraith. The second row consists of four cards. From left to right, these four cards are: Background, Arcanoi, Fetters and Passions. The card layout should look like this:

Significator

Background Arcanoi Fetters Passions

The **Significator** card is the card that represents the wraith, and it is placed above the other four cards to exert the wraith's influence or "vibes" over the reading. Often this card is a "face" card of one of the four suits, though some mediums "in the know" reserve the suit of Cups (Primordialism in the **Mage Tarot**) for Spectres.

The **Background** card indicates the wraith's place in the society of the dead. It also indicates the socioeconomic status of the wraith, and the wraith's wealth in oboli.

The **Arcanoi** card indicates the special talents or arts that the wraith is currently practicing or has mastered. Often this card depicts a Guild to which the wraith may belong. Numerical cards usually reflect the degree or strength of the particular Arcanos.

The **Fetters** card shows to the inquirer or medium information about the physical objects that hold the wraith to his former life.

The **Passions** card is probably the most important card, at least where inquirers and mediums are concerned. This card is key in determining the wraith's probable path or motivation in the Shadowlands, and indicates what is currently motivating the wraith in question. This card is similar to the outcome card in a typical tarot layout.

Example

Julia wishes to consult a medium to communicate with her mother, who died while giving birth to Julia 17 years ago. Because, according to the chart, Friday is the best day to receive information pertaining to fertility, Julia's medium decides to consult Saturn by lighting a pink candle during a

Friday-evening tarot reading. With luck, this combination will help to attract Julia's mother's attention.

Friday evening rolls around and Julia returns to the medium's shop. They choose the Queen of Dynamism as the significator for Julia's mother; the Medea figure's loss of her children strikes Julia as appropriate. Then Julia cuts the deck and whispers her question (even as the medium lights the appropriate candles) and lays down the four cards. The Background card is the Ace of Primordialism reversed, which strikes the medium as a bad sign. It would seem that Julia's mother is just starting down a dark road, perhaps that of Spectrehood. Next comes the King of Questing, which rests in the Arcanoi card slot. It indicates mastery of powers and a certain tendency toward dominion over others, perhaps Puppetry. The third card, the Fetters slot, is the Page of Questing — Julia herself, as she seeks her mother. Finally, there is the Passions card: the two of Pattern, reversed. This is a card of opposition and strife, with patterns overthrown. Looking at the reading as a whole, the medium gets worried. It seems to indicate that the wraith of Julia's mother isn't necessarily that friendly any more and just might come looking for her daughter. She opens her mouth to warn her client, but another voice issues from her throat.

It says, "Hello, daughter."

Mechanics

As noted previously, ownership of a deck of tarot cards and a candle, or even of a crystal ball the size of a watermelon, does not automatically make one a medium. Most boardwalk mediums have the Merit: **Speaker with the Dead**, which eliminates the real need for paraphernalia such as tarot cards. These mediums may still use tarot decks and whatnot either to impress clients or to help them focus, but they can see and hear ghosts just fine without any props.

The remainder of boardwalk mediums have the Merit: **Small Gift**. (Most also possess the Merit: **Easy Consort**.)When attempting to contact the Restless, these mediums must roll Perception + Occult, difficulty 10. For each mitigating factor (appropriate day for the wraith's Legion, proper color candle, etc.) the difficulty decreases by 1. The number of successes determines, within reason, how well contact is established with the appropriate wraith. Any possibility of contact, of course, assumes that the wraith wants to be contacted, can respond to the summons and, in fact, still exists.

Chapter Three: The Good, the Bad and the Incompetent

Charlatans

he girls started reflexively at the percussive burst of rain that hammered against the bedroom windows. "Well," Bonnie said, her voice a touch too energetic, "'It was a dark and stormy night'!" Her friends laughed. Janet sat on the rug and leaned against the ottoman. "We sure picked a good night, didn't we?" she said, hugging her flannel-clad knees to drive off the chill that passed through her.

"This is perfect sleepover weather," Bonnie agreed. "And just the right conditions for a seance." Along with the other two girls, Bonnie joined Janet on the floor. Wrapped in blankets and resting on pillows, the girls arranged themselves around a Ouija board. Thunder rumbled distantly; Rae said "Oooooooo!" amid more laughter.

The last girl sat cross-legged, looking intently at the board as her friends settled down. In a solemn voice, she said, "Are you prepared to contact the spirits who dwell beyond the land of the living?" Her gaze pierced the three other girls, but the effect was ruined when she burst out giggling at the faces Bonnie was making. "Cut it out, Bonnie! This is serious stuff." She threw a pillow for emphasis.

Bonnie tossed popcorn back. "So come on, Gwen. Show us how it's done."

"Okay, but you have to be quiet. The spirits won't come if you make a lot of noise." Gwen touched her fingers to the plastic planchette resting on the Ouija board, then closed her eyes. Someone slurped loudly from a soda. "Stop it, Rea," Gwen said without looking.

Ignoring the hushed giggles and shhh!*-ing, Gwen said, "Oh spirits of the Dead, hear me! I, Gwendolyn Pearsall, command your presence. Attend me on this dark night, and answer the questions I put to you." There was a moment where the only sounds were the steady hiss of rain and Bonnie crunching on popcorn.*

"Spirits!" Gwen called out, making the others jump. "Do you hear me?" The planchette under her fingers moved lazily, wandering over the board until the plastic pointer finally slid over to YES. *("How does she do that with her eyes closed?" Janet wondered and was instantly hushed by Bonnie and Rea.)*

The planchette resumed its aimless patterns while Gwen spoke again. "Attend me then, spirits. I—" Gwen's eyes opened in shock as the planchette shot to the NO, *seeming to drag her arms with it.*

"'No' what?" Janet asked. "You didn't ask a question yet, Gwen." The pointer was already moving in fast, jerking patterns. Rea wrote the letters on a notepad while Bonnie called them out, so only Janet noticed the strained look of terror on Gwen's face.

"Gwen?" Janet said in a small voice. "Bonnie, something's wrong with Gwen."

Just then, the pointer stopped moving; Gwen yanked her hands away. She curled into a ball, shaking uncontrollably. As the girls rushed to her they could hear Gwen murmuring, "I couldn't stop" over and over.

Bonnie and Rea held Gwen, and whispered soothing words, while Janet picked up the notepad. Seventeen letters marched across the page, menace clearly conveyed through a simple connection of lines:

YOUDONOTCOMMANDUS

There was a moment of stunned silence, then the temperature dropped ten degrees and all three bedroom windows exploded inward, showering the screaming girls in glass shards and wood splinters....

For every living person who actually pierces the Fog to reach a wraith, there are two who simply fake it. Call them frauds, hucksters, poseurs, shysters, Madame Zorbas or your Aunt Claire, these folks simply don't have what it takes. These Quick share two things in common: interest in the afterlife, and the total inability to contact it.

True mediums apply many terms to any mortal who plays around at the business of touching the Underworld. Most of the labels used aren't fit for polite company, so "charlatan" is the common substitute. In the mediums' opinions, these hacks are the ones who give the profession a bad name. Charlatans cheapen the time-honored art of the occult with their stumbling, hackneyed "channeling" and their ridiculous, superstition-filled "seances." In general, however, most mediums find charlatans relatively harmless and easy to ignore (although hardly agreeable company).

Wraiths can find charlatans irritating as well. The Restless already have too much to worry about, what with all manner of threats lurking in the Underworld and the hassles posed by true mediums, to waste their time on Muffy and Buffy, who've gotten a deck of tarot cards and think that they have uncovered the secrets of the universe. Wraiths don't take it kindly that some mortals think ghosts exist strictly for entertainment value. Whether those Quick truly have the power to contact the other side or just play at it is a minor consideration. The affront is still just as grievous in the wraith's mind, whether it comes from the Pinball Wizards or a gaggle of high school girls with a Ouija board.

Yet, in their constant struggle to survive, the majority of wraiths tend to disregard charlatans' fumbling antics. The Restless who take it personally are in the minority — albeit a rather active minority. These "medium-busters" consider it their duty and privilege to show charlatans (in often horrifying detail) the forces they tempt. Some Restless ask only for respect from the unwitting transgressors, while others are determined to punish charlatans' ignorance severely. Some are subtle and benevolent, others are blunt and brutal. The wraiths' methods and intents vary wildly, but all feel the need to put charlatans in their proper place.

While any number of individual wraiths and groups deal with charlatans, most can be placed in a couple of categories. These are most often referred to as tutors and thrashers.

Tutors

utors look on charlatans as well-intentioned fools. From the viewpoint of these wraiths, Quick who play at the occult are honestly ignorant of what they're dealing with. They dabble, not truly knowing the enormity — or horrifying ramifications — of what they do. It is the tutor's responsibility to educate the charlatan on the potential repercussions of her actions, with the intent that the "student" will thereafter treat the dead with more respect.

Methods

With their goal being to educate the ignorant, tutor wraiths use their powers to reveal the reality of the Underworld that lies behind the misconceptions of the living. Tutors use their Arcanoi to teach, not harm. Frightening a student is acceptable to a point, since sometimes "tough love" is the only way to get the message through.

However, there's a huge difference between what an average tutor is willing to do and the measures even the most benign Bedlameer may take. While it might be simpler and faster to assault a charlatan as thrashers do, tutors see this way as counter-productive. In the tutors' opinion, violence ends up spreading more confusion and ignorance. In the end, no one, Quick or Dead, learns anything. Instead, by teaching charlatans the truth of the world that exists beyond the Shroud and the perils involved in toying with that world, tutors hope to impress upon their students the folly of any further meddling. Tutors try to have transgressors leave off playing necromantic games. Still, there have been rare occasions when promising charlatans were recruited to act as liaisons between wraiths and the land of the living.

Considering the dubious success of tutors' methods, it's surprising that they even bother. And, truth be told, the tutor turnover rate is rather high. Tutors are often looked at with amusement and even outright derision by other wraiths (other Renegades, anyway; Hierarchs tend to be less than pleased with tutors' energetic disregard of the *Dictum Mortuum*), and clearly positive results are few and far between for them. Most wraiths who start off as tutors end up in thrasher groups or simply shake their heads in frustration and give up on the entire business.

Wraiths who stick with it do so mainly because of their Passions. Such Restless were most often teachers, counselors or members of clergy in life. The Passions of such wraiths often involve dedication, responsibility, love, perseverance and even guilt, pride and loneliness. Passions of this sort make a wraith well suited to spending long periods of time under frustrating circumstances with little hope of positive results. In this way, even if the wraith doesn't turn any charlatans from their necromantic pastime, she can at least get some Pathos out of the attempt.

Arcanoi

Most tutors use rather standard techniques when they begin. As time goes on, those wraiths who stick with it develop individual styles. The following are Arcanoi that have application to the living, and have found at least some use in the tutors' curriculum.

• **Embody**: This is most useful when a wraith combines Whispers and Phantom to appear before the charlatan and warn her about the forces with which she conspires. The combination of ghostly manifestation and spectral speech is enough to strike fear in many who have little true experience with the supernatural.

• **Flux**: This Arcanos sees little use, but can be effective nonetheless. Most often, Flux is used to destroy the charlatan's props. After her Ouija board rots to ragged splinters and her crystal ball shatters into powder, a charlatan typically decides to pursue a different hobby posthaste.

• **Inhabit**: This Arcanos is used by tutors less often, as it tends to backfire on the wraiths employing it. Generally, the tutor possesses something in the room whenever the charlatan plays at summoning spirits. The intent is to frighten the living so that they'll leave the afterlife alone. Of course, after this demonstration of "power," many charlatans instead seek *more* knowledge of the spirit world, in hopes of seeing more miracles.

• **Intimation**: This would likely be the most commonly used tutor Arcanos if it weren't nearly impossible to find a wraith who can teach it. After all, what is more effective in dissuading someone from pursuing an interest than simply to remove that desire entirely? On the other hand, any remaining Solicitors tend to have more pressing concerns....

Success Rate

While some charlatans who are instructed by tutors turn to more prosaic pursuits, the majority are more intrigued than ever by the afterlife once they get a taste of the "real stuff." As a result, these Quick delve into the occult with a renewed fervor. Their tutors then return for another "session," hoping in vain that this time the lesson will stick. It never does, of course, and all that's happening is that Quick and Dead fall into a co-dependent relationship. This sort of cycle usually ends only when the charlatan is visited by a thrasher instead of her regular wraithly tutor, when the tutor succumbs to Oblivion or when the charlatan dies (thereby receiving first-hand information on the Shadowlands).

• **Keening**: Keening is possibly the most useful Arcanos in dissuading charlatans from further forays into the occult. The wraith can generate feelings of disquiet and fright in the target whenever the charlatan attempts to meddle in things metaphysical. After a few instances of this Pavlovian training, many charlatans refuse even to look at a crystal ball.

• **Mnemosynis**: Applied infrequently due to its limited availability, this Arcanos can be quite effective. Dragging the charlatan into a flashback of a disturbing memory every time she takes out the Ouija board is bound to turn her away from such arcane dabbling. Alternatively, Mnemosynis is also handy at erasing any memory of supernatural encounters, thereby taking away the charlatan's impetus for further study.

• **Outrage**: Too blatant for most tutors, Outrage is usually used only to knock over vases, shake tables and otherwise disrupt the charlatan's seance. Much like Inhabit, this sort of exhibition often serves to intrigue the living further.

• **Pandemonium**: This used to be the tutors' standby Arcanos; when all else failed, Pandemonium could always be relied upon to scare the bejeezus out of the target. It's still rather useful, but as people become more skeptical and jaded, Pandemonium's effectiveness lessens. Furthermore, tutors dabbling in Pandemonium have a nasty tendency to meet with untimely ends. The rumors say that the old Guildwraiths don't take kindly to this sort of thing.

• **Phantasm**: Phantasm is very handy for a tutor, since the wraith need only implant severe nightmares about the occult in the charlatan's dreams. After a few weeks of waking up screaming every time she dreams of a tarot deck, the charlatan often decides the entertainment she gets from dabbling with the Dead isn't worth the disturbing dreams it brings.

• **Puppetry**: Using this Arcanos can be a very poor idea. While many charlatans are left feeling terrified and violated after a wraith finishes possessing them, there are others who take such an action personally. These Quick often plunge into the occult with a passion, looking for some way to get back at their spiritual rapist.

The Ministry

The Heretic cult called the Ministry is composed of wraiths who claim that they exist in Purgatory, and must atone for their sins by steering the living toward redemption. Those mortals in the most danger of falling under Satan's spell are any who indulge in occult practices. They must be shown the error of their ways, and it's up to the Ministry to dissuade them from such infernal customs.

The cult's main focus is on those Quick who make a game of contacting the afterlife. The Ministry feels it's vital to stop the living before they walk down that dark road; a display of the true dangers existing in the afterlife should teach misguided Quick to pursue holier goals. While officially condemned by the Hierarchy, the Ministry seems to have a steady influx of new recruits. Few stay for very long (the group has some monastically severe codes of conduct), but the cult has an average of 30 to 40 members at any given time.

Some wraiths wonder why the Ministry doesn't also go after the living who have a proven ability to traffic with the "other side." The Ministry's leader, Finlay Morrison, claims that once the Quick obtain their infernal powers, they are lost to all but God's own salvation. The Ministry's job is to stop misguided men and women from even getting near that point. Considering Morrison was a preacher in life, this explanation is more than good enough for his wraithly flock; however, others find such motivation a little suspect.

Finlay Morrison

Nature: Visionary

Demeanor: Leader

Circle: The Ministry

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Empathy 3, Expression 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Firearms 2, Leadership 3

Knowledges: Enigmas 3, Linguistics 2, Medicine 2, Occult 3, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Haunt 4, Legacy 1, Notoriety 3, Status 4

Fetters: Tree from which he was hung 3, Old Bible 3

Arcanoi: Argos 1, Embody 3, Keening 3, Phantasm 4

Passions: Save others (Pride) 3, Deny the powers of darkness (Faith) 4, Atone for mistakes (Guilt) 3