

# Shadow™

P L A Y E R S  
G U I D E S



A Mean, Vicious and Nasty Sourcebook  
for **Warcraft** The Oblivion™





# SHADOW

PLAYERS

By Tim Akers, Andrew Bates, Jackie Cassada, Trevor Chase, Ben Chessell, Jeff Combos, Richard E. Dansky, Elizabeth Ditchburn, Beth Fischl, Ed Huang, James A. Moore, Laurah Norton, Nicky Rea, Ethan Skemp and Cynthia Summers





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MENTS. IT IS A RADICAL, A PRIMITIVE  
IMPULSE — ELEMENTARY.

— EDGAR ALLAN POE,  
“THE IMP OF THE PERVERSE”



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# Ghost Story: Whispers



I have to give credit where it's due; he does his best to ignore me. When he first decided to wander the Shadowlands in search of his beloved Melissa, I was less subtle than I am now. I suggested that the easiest way to find Melissa might simply be to throw himself into the Tempest.

I was young and naive. I hadn't been allowed the freedom to speak with him before. He disregarded me at first, then demanded that I leave him alone; then he got abusive. To be honest, I did not appreciate his attitude in the least.

He still doesn't understand that I have no choice in this matter, no more than he does. We are, after all, only one being. Two sides of the obolus, as it were.

I used to shout, but now I've learned to whisper. Now he listens without understanding that he is following my suggestions. I've even discovered when to stay quiet. When he found his beloved Melissa at last, I kept my tongue. I didn't point out what he already knew: If she'd loved him as deeply as he remembered, she never would have killed him in the first place.

They'd made sweet, passionate love. He was feeling good about himself and about his life. He was feeling warm and comfortable in the afterglow. On impulse, he asked her to marry him.

He'd expected warmth and happiness as a response. Instead he got confused silence. You'd think the fool would have caught on then, wouldn't you?

I wasn't completely aware then, but I gave what warnings I could. I sent butterflies to whir madly in his stomach and increased his pulse rate until it was a thunder in his ears.

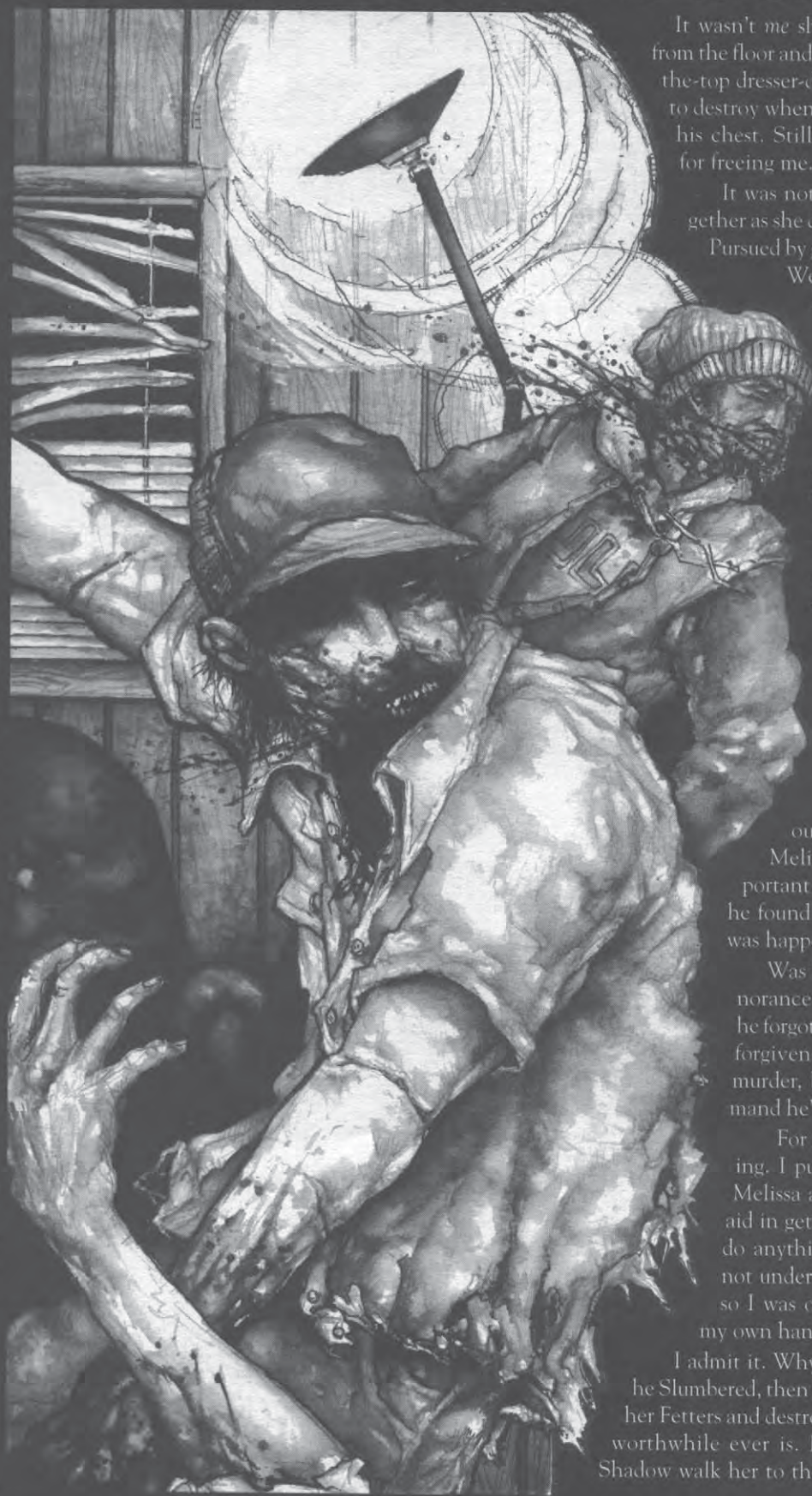
"Jerry," his sweet Melissa said in a quaking voice, "I can't marry you. I don't love you."

Too late. Far, far too late to heed my warnings. Even when he was alive, I tried to protect him from the things that would hurt him the most. Even then he ignored me.

He calls me a monster, but I wasn't the one who flew into a rage. I wasn't the one who accused Melissa of loving another.

I wasn't the one who beat the truth out of her, though he prefers to blame me.





It wasn't me she was aiming for when she climbed from the floor and found the scissors in her second-from-the-top dresser-drawer. It wasn't my heart she wanted to destroy when the cold, steel blades ripped through his chest. Still, I should thank dear, sweet Melissa for freeing me.

It was not that long after that we watched together as she drove like a demon through the night. Pursued by guilt, perhaps — we shall never know.

We sat beside her while he spoke to her of his love and how he forgave her for her transgressions. He longed to touch her again, to hold her in his arms. Did I stop him? No. I made the task easier. I reached out with his hand and I concentrated. It was my strength that yanked the steering wheel hard to the left and drove the car into the oncoming tractor-trailer, even as she tried in vain to counter me. I did that for him, so that his pain would go away. I even made sure that he could not find her when she fell into the Shadowlands. She should have been easy to spot, but I worked my subtle miracles and he overlooked her completely.

He always has been easy to fool.

Then he wasted time seeking her out in the Shadowlands, looking for Melissa in every place that might be important to her. The bastard luck of it was that he found her eventually. Before I knew what was happening, they were reunited.

Was he satisfied? Of course not. In his ignorance and blind devotion to sweet Melissa, he forgot that she did not love him. She hadn't forgiven him, either. He forgave her for his murder, but she could not forgive the reprimand he'd given her. That's gratitude for you.

For months I endured his constant whining. I put up with his endless chasing after Melissa and his ever-present requests for my aid in getting her. I helped him, of course. I'd do anything to ease his grief. Still, he could not understand that she was bad for him, and so I was obligated again to take matters into my own hands.

I admit it. Why would I deny it? I just waited until he Slumbered, then used the body we share to track down her Fetters and destroy them. It was not easy, but nothing worthwhile ever is. I'm even the one who helped her Shadow walk her to the edge of a Nihil and plummet into



the great beyond. Sweet Melissa even thanked me. Well, at least some part of her did. I'm the one who turned a deaf ear to her screams as she was drawn down the end of her miserable existence.

When he awoke to find her gone, he blamed himself for her disappearance. Fool. He hadn't the strength to do what I did. Still, who am I to claim all the glory when he wants it for himself?

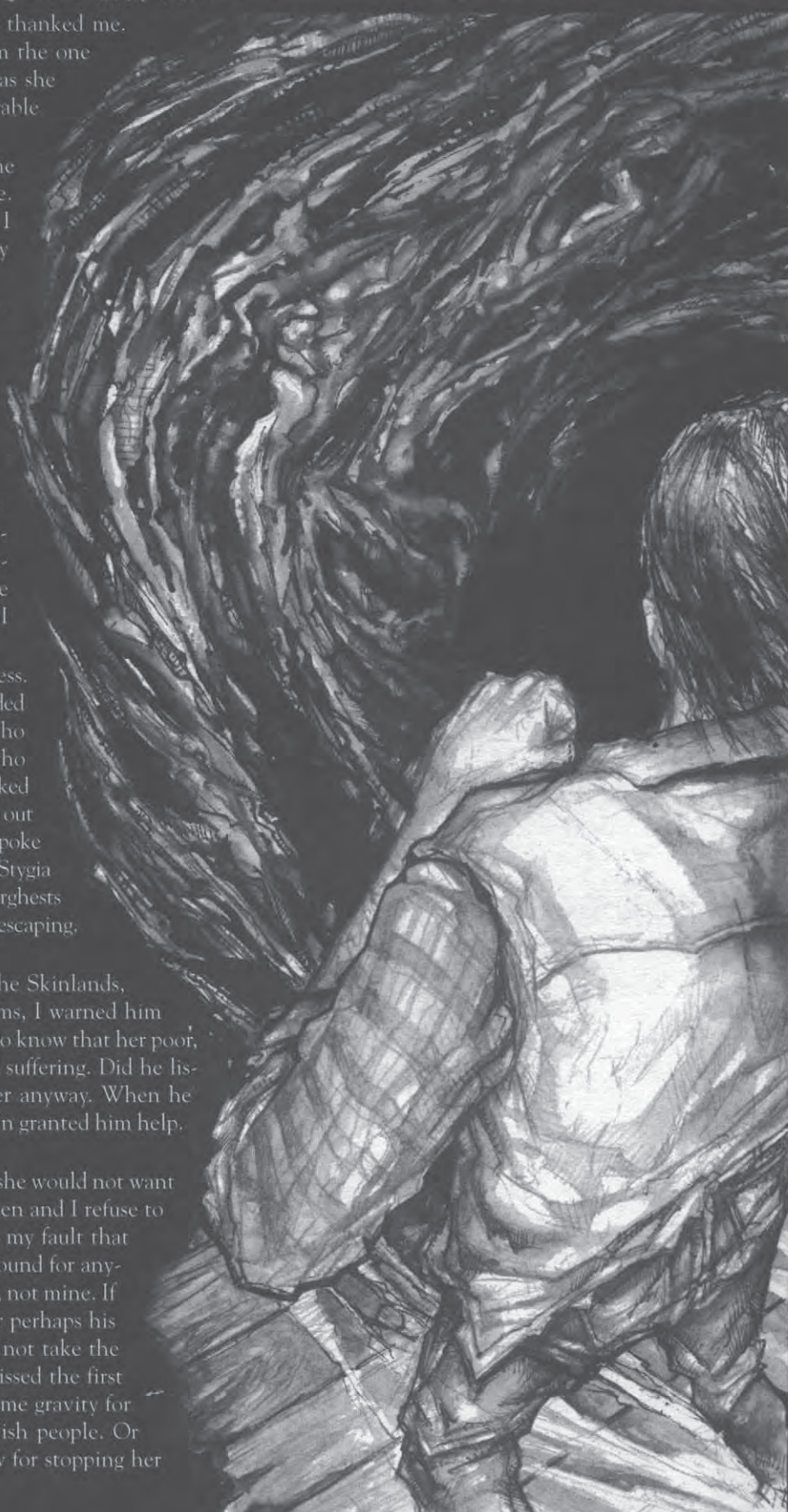
I listened to his endless prattling for a while, and then I spoke again. I pointed out that she had not wanted to be with him, and that the ungrateful bitch was unworthy of his affections and deserved whatever she got. *She had left him*, after all.

And his thanks for all I did for him? He cursed me. He damned me to a thousand years of suffering and wept his anger out into the dark winds of the Shadowlands. There are times when I don't know why I bother.


The things I do for him are endless. When he recovered from her loss and decided to join with the Hierarchy, it was I who averted that mistake. I was the one who showed him the chains of servitude locked around the necks of so many. I pointed out the errors of the Deathlords' ways and spoke with his voice to make sure the buffoons in Stygia heard my complaints. And when the barghests came for him, he turned to me for aid in escaping. My sacrifices for him know no bounds.

When he once again climbed to the Skinlands, seeking the comfort of his mother's arms, I warned him that it was a mistake. She did not wish to know that her poor, missing son was not only dead but still suffering. Did he listen? Of course not. He approached her anyway. When he could not make her see him, I once again granted him help. I let her see her precious son.

I did warn him. I told the fool that she would not want to see him as he is. Still, he did not listen and I refuse to take the blame he assigns me. It is not my fault that he still bears the his scars of his fatal wound for anyone to see. That was entirely his choice, not mine. If anyone deserves the blame, he does, or perhaps his mother. Hers was the heart that could not take the sight of him. Hers was the foot that missed the first descending step. Perhaps he should blame gravity for doing what it has always done to foolish people. Or maybe he should blame the floor below for stopping her fall. Not I. I am as innocent as a lamb.







Nor will I accept the blame for the slavers who claimed her as she fell into the Shadowlands. All I did was remove her Caul so that she might see the world around her. He weeps still for the panicked, shrill screams his beloved mother uttered as the Reapers harvested her. He seems to forget that she did not want him dating his sweet Melissa. Forgotten, too, are the beatings he received for taking cookies and for getting bad grades. I do not forget these things. I cannot. He sobbed pathetically at the loss of his beloved mother. I laughed. The old whore got what she deserved.

Again he spent his time moping about, constantly asking why he was made to suffer so. As always, I did my best to comfort him and he in his turn condemned me. To this day, he has not come to understand that he is already in Hell, or that his constant need to defy his rightful place is what keeps the both of us suffering.

So I whispered. I whispered that the root of all his problems was likely resting with his body. I told him that only when he walked the Earth again could he hope to find peace. I told him exactly what he wanted to hear. Oh, it took a great deal of time. I had to be subtle, for I have seen what actually trying to discuss things rationally with him does. He is not a rational being.

I had to make him think it was his idea.

Oh, how I held back the eagerness in my voice, feigning ignorance when he asked if it were possible to return to the land of the flesh. I let him know how shocked I was by the concept. I let him “persuade” me that this was the thing to do. I made him grovel. I made him suffer for every time he had turned away from me when all I wanted to do was help. In the end, I agreed.

He was so happy, just as I knew he would be.

I suppose he was fortunate. Sweet Melissa had not buried him in a cemetery; she’d rolled his bloating corpse into the waters of the abandoned granite quarry outside the city limits. Aside from the weighted wires that cut into his body, his return to the Skinlands was almost without complication. He had his body and for the first time I had one of my own. As for me, I had the scissors that she’d used to kill him.

He longed to return to his home, and I did not stop him. He did not think that almost two years had passed since his death. It never occurred to him that other people might live in the place he had called home. Who was I to shatter his illusions?

He went a little crazy when he saw the old homestead. He expected the world to look the same when he rose from the grave as it had when he was alive. Of course, this naiveté was disappointed. Instead of the beautiful things he remembered, he got the ugly truth.

I made certain the that neighborhood appeared to have degenerated quite a bit, at least in his eyes. Truth be told, it hadn’t altered much, but now he saw the decay and the filth

with new eyes. My eyes. I whispered about the drug dealers in the house he had once called home, and he agreed that they were...not exactly his sort of people. There was blood and violence. His howls of righteous anger swelled the night along with their shrieks of pain and fear. Really, I never imagined teeth could do so much damage.

So he found a new goal, a new reason to continue existing. Damn him; he was persistent in his need to make me suffer along with him. He decided that he would preserve everything he remembered from his time among the living. He would make his old neighborhood safe from the predatory scum who slithered into the area, and he would preserve the graves of his mother and sweet Melissa, protecting them from the vandals who regularly stalked the Oakwood Cemetery.

And when he rested, I whispered. It wasn’t very difficult. He was already so frustrated, so much in need of a way to see that he was making a difference. He desperately needed a method of proving that he was important to the world, despite his death. “Why stop at one subdivision?” I asked. “Why not rid the entire city of those who would make others suffer for their own pleasure?”

It was easy. He took my suggestions and ran. Less than a week after I began to whisper to him, he was off on a holy crusade. The news displayed pictures of corruption and violence to him constantly, and he found his cause there. His sole driving goal was to see the criminals fall before him. Blood, violence and pain became the only things that mattered. Muggers, rapists, murderers — all went down with our hands on their throats.

So I whispered some more. *What of the whores and the scam artists?*, I asked him. *Surely they were criminals, too.* Pickpockets, shoplifters, even beggars — they all became a part of his agenda of retribution.

I did not stop there. Why should I have? I continued my suggestions, and he continued to listen. I was more careful and subtle than I had ever been before. My task was monumental, and his resistance was the strongest I’d ever seen it.

I asked him questions he never considered before I found my voice. *What was the root of his suffering? Did he not lead a good life? Had he been prepared for the insanity that he faced after death?* Perhaps if his mind had not been filled with lies of a false afterlife, he would never have endured the agonies he now knew as commonplace. Perhaps the problem was much worse than he ever realized. Every week, even the most innocent fell victim to the twisted, sadistic lies told by teachers in every Sunday school. By offering false hope, they, too, committed crimes. It took longer to make him see things my way, but it worked.

He spent one full day on a violent rampage like few ever seen. With hands, teeth and whatever weapons he could find, he committed murder after murder, atrocity after atrocity. For one sweet spin of the clock’s hands, he reaped the souls of the living and sowed the seeds of his own destruction.



When the rage finally left him, he was torn and battered. He'd destroyed everything in his path and survived to remember the carnage he had left behind. In ruins of the "crack house" he once again called his home, he stared at the television and heard the tales of mass murder and violence. The national news gave the story a five-minute report, and during that time, he patted himself on the back, pleased with what he had accomplished. Then the newscaster moved on to other abominations.

Exhausted and badly wounded, he listened with growing horror. Slowly he realized that his actions made not the least bit of difference to the world at large. The crime rate had not changed, and drugs still were bought and sold. People still suffered, and graves were still vandalized. Outside in the street, he could hear gunfire. Nothing had changed, despite all that I'd goaded him to do.

He wept at the futility, and in that sweet moment, he was mine. With just the slightest push, I made him surrender his earthly form for the second time. Reunited again, we moved into the Shadowlands and met the deluge of Enfants he had delivered into the death realm. We saw the Hierarchy in all its glory, soldiers Reaping those poor souls who never had a chance against his anger.

Numbed and shocked beyond his ability to cope, he was easily guided to the edge of a Nihil. Together we stared into the darkness of Oblivion.

We stand but one step away from the peace I have desired for so long. Below, my brothers await to take us to the mouth of the Void.

He no longer has the will to fight.

My foot moves.

He screams.

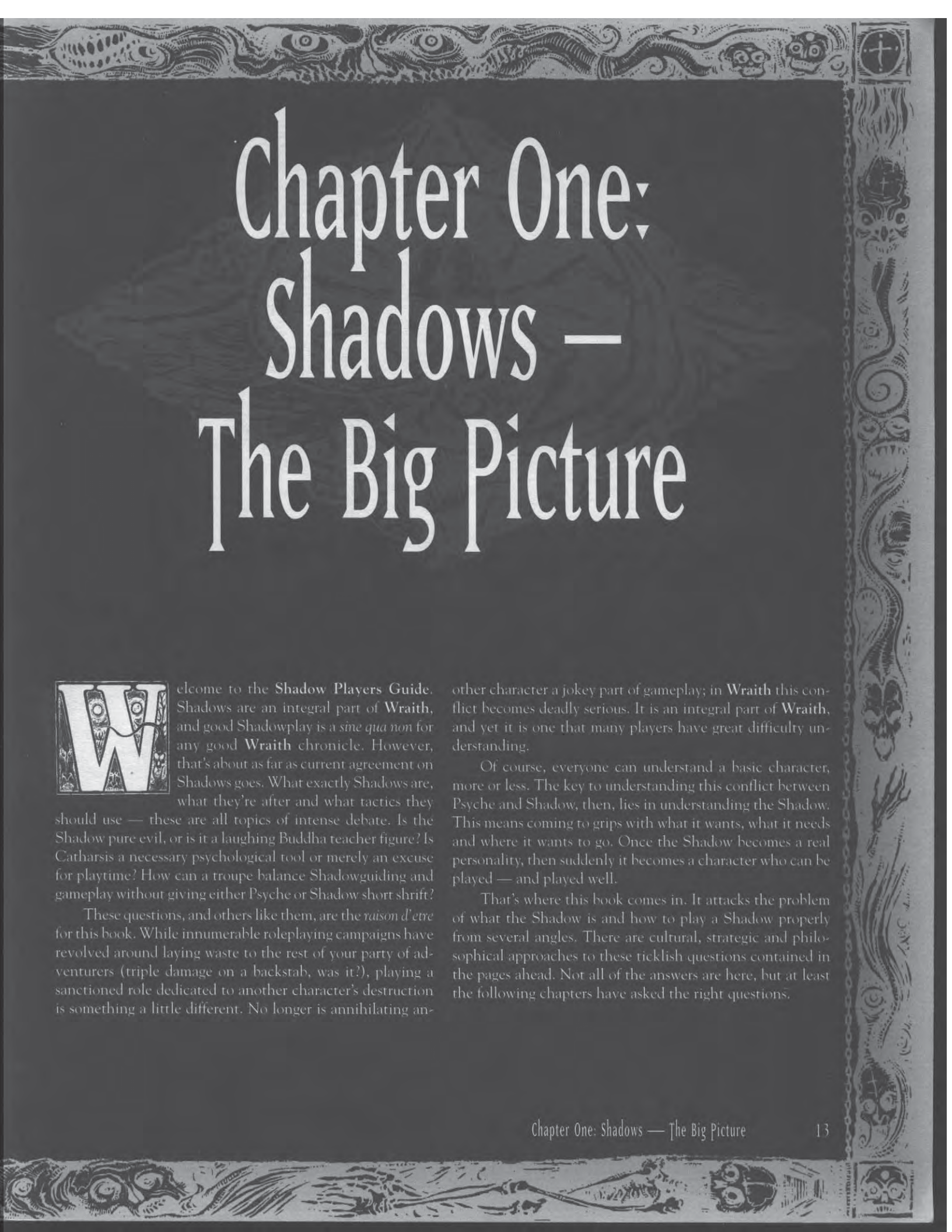
If I had the capacity, I would weep with joy.











# Chapter One: Shadows — The Big Picture



Welcome to the **Shadow Players Guide**. Shadows are an integral part of **Wraith**, and good Shadowplay is a *sine qua non* for any good **Wraith** chronicle. However, that's about as far as current agreement on Shadows goes. What exactly Shadows are, what they're after and what tactics they should use — these are all topics of intense debate. Is the Shadow pure evil, or is it a laughing Buddha teacher figure? Is Catharsis a necessary psychological tool or merely an excuse for playtime? How can a troupe balance Shadowguiding and gameplay without giving either Psyche or Shadow short shrift?

These questions, and others like them, are the *raison d'être* for this book. While innumerable roleplaying campaigns have revolved around laying waste to the rest of your party of adventurers (triple damage on a backstab, was it?), playing a sanctioned role dedicated to another character's destruction is something a little different. No longer is annihilating an-

other character a jokey part of gameplay; in **Wraith** this conflict becomes deadly serious. It is an integral part of **Wraith**, and yet it is one that many players have great difficulty understanding.

Of course, everyone can understand a basic character, more or less. The key to understanding this conflict between Psyche and Shadow, then, lies in understanding the Shadow. This means coming to grips with what it wants, what it needs and where it wants to go. Once the Shadow becomes a real personality, then suddenly it becomes a character who can be played — and played well.

That's where this book comes in. It attacks the problem of what the Shadow is and how to play a Shadow properly from several angles. There are cultural, strategic and philosophical approaches to these ticklish questions contained in the pages ahead. Not all of the answers are here, but at least the following chapters have asked the right questions.



## How to Use This Book

The **Shadow Players Guide** is a sort of tour guide to the darker side of wraithly existence. In here you'll find:

- An introduction to what exactly a Shadow is, more or less. (We're still working on it ourselves, to be honest.)
- New Archetypes, Thorns, Merits and Flaws for Shadows, not to mention some dirty tricks and information on what a Shadow actually *does* during a Harrowing.
- Information on the Shadows of wraiths from Dark Kingdoms besides Stygia.
- Help with playing Spectres in Wraith games, tidbits on the Shadows of Risen, an introduction to Doomslayers and more peripheral information.
- For all of you goody-two-shoes types out there, expanded information on Eidolon and Castigation.
- And a few short essays on assorted Shadowy topics.

This book isn't a be-all and end-all. Instead, think of it as a buffet of Shadowy delights. Pick and choose at your leisure (but go light on the Eidolon. Too many sweets can be bad for you).

## What is the Shadow?



Imagine death. I'm not talking about the afterlife here, but rather the act of dying itself. No matter how accepting of death pop culture makes a given society out to be, dying is still an event loathed and feared in some way by damned near every human being on this planet. While there

are many stories written and told about how people have returned from the precipice that is dying, few of these tales describe what having your life slip away actually feels like. More importantly, none of these near-death monologues describe the formation of the Shadow.

It is known that every wraith has a Shadow. It is known that there must be a Shadow in order for the wraith to exist at all. It is also known that without eternal vigilance on the Psyche's part, a Shadow will slowly corrupt and destroy the wraith's Passions and Fetters until the wraith succumbs to Oblivion. Complicating matters, it is taken as gospel that while it may be possible to weaken the power of the Shadow, to destroy it is suicidal. After all, the Shadow is as much a part of the wraith as the Psyche is; to destroy that aspect of a wraith's personality would be to lobotomize the wraith's soul.

But these are all facts *about* Shadows. Thus far, no one has asked: *What is a Shadow?*

There is an undeniable duality in a wraith. One side is represented by the Psyche, the other by her Shadow. These two aspects of a single wraith are always in conflict from the moment of their transition across the Shroud. It is an eternal struggle that these two personalities engage in, and more importantly, the struggle is a personal one. But what do these struggling aspects of a single soul stand for? How can one play a Shadow without knowing what a Shadow is?

One cannot deny that the Psyche rules a wraith's actions — if nothing else, it's stated clearly in the rules. Yet one of the core themes of the World of Darkness games is a striving to challenge one's perceptions of good and evil. Therefore, a Shadow cannot *just* be the evil side of a wraith. That's too easy.

Everyone knows that wraiths can be just as corrupt and as evil as living humans in the Skinlands. Why should death change that? There's no moral component to dying. More importantly, how can an aspect of a wraith's personality be so neatly categorized as her "evil side" when she might already be evil by society's standards? How can one represent the repressed emotions of a sociopath as better or worse than her conscious desires? Not all who become wraiths are angels. In other words, the genesis of the Shadow is far too complex a moral conundrum to reduce to a case of "good wraith, bad wraith."

So if a Shadow isn't a wraith's "evil" side, what is it? Simply put, a Shadow is the part of the wraith that wants the wraith to fail, the part that wants the wraith to be damned. This, and this alone, is what every Shadow has in common with every other Shadow. The Psyche may struggle for self-actualization, Transcendence or personal power, but every Shadow has the same end in mind for its other half.

The Shadow embraces the darker emotions of the wraith, feeding upon and strengthening them. It revels in ideas that represent excess and personal weaknesses, exploiting any that the wraith may have. While this sort of exploration of excess can be subjective, depending on the wraith's personality, background and beliefs, everyone has chinks in their armor (and Shadows are very good at finding them). Common vices are a good start for a Shadow, as are societal values that may not hold up under the harsh light of the Underworld. Greed, addiction, arrogance and prejudice are all good places to begin an assault on the Psyche, but they only serve as starting points.

## Developing the Shadow

A good way of defining a Shadow archetype for a particular character is through an exercise adapted from those self-improvement tapes advertised via direct-mail campaigns and infomercials. Complete this sentence: "This character would have been both satisfied and successful in life (and death) if only he hadn't been so \_\_\_\_\_."

The word that you fill into that blank should give you a general idea of the tenor of the underlying emotional darkness and telling flaw of the character. You should choose a





weakness the Psycheguide understands and recognizes as an essential part of his character's persona, and work from there to bring depth to the Shadow. Key incidents in the character's life should be gone over, with the player and the Shadowguide explaining to each other their different perceptions of the formative events.

One of the most important roles of the Shadowguide involves blurring the delineation between the Shadow and the Psyche. A Shadow's job is to reinforce the perception that it is

not a separate entity, that all of its foulness comes from within the wraith. It should appear to be part of the whole that is the wraith, not an external opponent who is easy to objectify and combat. Not every action or suggestion the Shadow makes needs to be directly corrupting, only self-serving.

Why? Because as a Shadowguide you are in essence representing a different agenda of the same entity as the player. While these two agendas will and must conflict on occasion, they don't have to butt heads all the time. Both Shadow and

### For Example...

Sister Mary Margaret's player and her Shadowguide discuss her Shadow. They discuss Mary Margaret's background and agree that the best aspect of her personality to work upon is the fact that, while she has complete faith in God, she has always had absolutely no faith in humankind. Fearing betrayal, she finds it difficult to talk to, trust or ask for assistance from others.

With this established, the player and Shadowguide continue brainstorming to figure out what made Sister Mary develop that way. Mary's player explains that the reason she turned to God was because of one of her priests in Catholic School, a certain Father Kiley. Father Kiley was kind to Mary, who had been something of a social recluse. He recruited her into the choir, where she learned to love being in the relative stillness and serenity of the church, her voice joining others' in worship and praise.

Hearing this, Mary's Shadowguide gets an idea. He suggests the Shadow Archetype: Paranoid to reflect Mary's distrust of others. He also decides that while Mary has always had genuinely fond memories of Father Kiley, Mary's Shadow might have some doubt as to Father Kiley's true motives. Playing up the character's fears, he twists the affection and kindness that Father Kiley showed Mary into something unpleasant and depraved. The Shadowguide can now use these altered memories to color future interactions involving trust of other people. When Mary's Psyche, in an attempt to overcome her fear of trusting others, tries to refer to Father Kiley as an example of a trustworthy person, the Shadow can pervert this thought, as well as the memory from which Mary draws strength.



Psyche can work toward a given goal; the Shadow is just likely to be a bit more open about the selfish nature of the benefits to be gained. Also, by confusing issues and every so often working toward the Psyche's best interests, the Shadow positions itself as reasonable, helpful and useful. Once this is done, the wraith will not blindly disregard the Shadow's urgings and suggestions quite so reflexively — after all, last time around he turned out to have some great ideas.

A Shadow must compliment its Psyche. If a character is cold and calculating, as a Shadowguide you must have elements of that personality even if you decide that the Shadow is more primal in nature. The Shadow shouldn't necessarily be unrecognizably different than the Psyche, but it should represent another path that the core personality could and still might take.

## Shadow Themes

The role the Shadow plays in illuminating the ramifications of "the path not taken" answers many questions about why the Shadow seeks Oblivion. After all, every thing the Shadow does demonstrates a choice the Psyche might easily have made and an action the Psyche might very well have taken. Every driving motive the Shadow has could well have fueled the Psyche at some point. With that in mind, here are some of the basic themes of Shadow existence:

- **Self-Hatred** — You know you have done many things wrong in your life; you've committed horrible deeds that you should pay for. While your Psyche has either forgotten or forgiven herself for all these misdeeds, you have not. You feel the need to destroy yourself to make proper atonement for all you've done wrong. You will not allow any sort of rationalization or weaseling to deter you from paying for your crimes — the delay just makes it worse.

- **Indulgence** — All your life you were told not to do this and not to do that. All your life you did what everyone considered to be the *right* and *proper* things. You always chose right over wrong, in hopes of achieving salvation or at least a favorable karmic balance when you died. That was what made the denial of pleasure worthwhile: the notion of the reward at the end of the road.

So you denied yourself many thrills and pleasures, and all for what? An afterlife? This afterlife? Isn't it time to live a little, to say to hell with right and wrong? There is no final salvation, there are no just desserts, and it's time for you to get what's coming to you. Take your pleasures and *live*.

- **Denial** — You are not dead. You have not died. You vaguely remember images of yourself dying, but it wasn't you; it couldn't be. Perhaps you are unconscious, perhaps you are dreaming, but you are certainly not dead. After all, you're still around to be having this conversation with yourself.

The weirdest part of this dream is that there seem to be two parts of you. One part apparently moves you from place to place, as a dream would, and that guy takes this stuff way



AR



too seriously. Come on, a society of the dead? Charon? Legionnaires? The wonders that a subconscious can come up with. It is a bit interesting, but hardly reality. You can't help but treat this like a game, and games don't have consequences, do they?

• **Fear** — All your life you've been taught to fight death and to fear death. You've been taught how life is the most precious thing in creation and now you've just lost yours. And you are afraid. Very afraid. You are afraid that this is all there is. You're afraid that this isn't all there is, and that you might have to die again. You're afraid to form bonds here, because you might lose them, and you're afraid to let go. You're afraid to commit. You're afraid to run, to fight, to die, to Transcend, because any action can be the wrong one.

## Shadowguide Strategies:

Now that you have fleshed out the Shadow you'll be guiding, and know both who the Shadow is and what it wants, it is time to think about session-to-session play. While the Shadow's primary goal is gaining Angst (with causing Catharsis and crafting Harrowings neck-and-neck for second- and third-most-important goals), the relentless quest for Angst shouldn't be the sum and total of the Shadow's in-game presence. There are plans to sabotage, allies to alienate, snide comments to make and hearts to break. If you can pick up Angst by doing these things, it's a bonus.

The role of the Shadowguide is a difficult one. Remember that the Shadowguide has a greater responsibility to the flow and balance of the game than the Psycheguide does. After all, the Psyche is the star of the story. The Shadow is merely the villain, and therefore, part of the supporting cast.

In this matter you should be assisting both the Chronicle and the Storyteller. This may mean opting for silence when speaking or acting would otherwise interfere with the direction and pace of the adventure. It means resisting the urge to try for Catharsis at a moment of crucial emotional delicacy, simply because doing so wrecks a month's worth of careful buildup. It means knowing when to pull back for the sake of the story and the other players.

And here we hit a contradiction. Whereas the Shadowguide must be aware of the story at large, the Shadow is basically selfish and self-serving. Its entire existence is that of a prisoner in a being under the control and whim of the Psyche. While a Shadow's existence is a harsh one (watching the Psyche do everything wrong), its secondary position allows the Shadow to plan, plot and prepare numerous surprises for the Psyche to encounter.

This is where the fun starts — but be careful not to have too much fun. After all, the game has to come first. Good old sadistic, self-serving fun is merely a close second.

## Discourage Success:

One of the primary goals of a Shadow is to discourage the success of the Psyche, primarily because success builds up the ego and isn't conducive to either angst or Angst. It is a good idea to allow the Psyche the occasional bit of success to create a false sense of security that you can take away at any moment, but not such a good idea when the successes give the Psyche a solid foundation to build upon for future conquests.

Success is relative. While it is not always possible to corrupt the Psyche *per se*, it is possible to corrupt its actions or even the perception of its actions until the Psyche's success becomes your own.

### For Example...

Orel Rooney, a Puppeteer, takes control of a mortal and uses this pawn's abilities to save his (still-living) wife from a gang of muggers who have been tailing her. Frustrated by the Psyche's success, Orel's Shadow uses the Thorn: **Freudian Slip** to make the "heroic" mortal ask Orel's wife to dinner. This is done just before Orel leaves the body to head back across the Shroud, so it's too late for him to make a countermove and nullify this genteel offer from the charming rescuer. As Orel watches impotently, his wife accepts the invitation and a relationship is born that may end up displacing him in his widow's affections.

While Orel did succeed in freeing his wife from the muggers, Orel's Shadow quickly subverted that triumph. Orel's Shadow has given him a series of unpalatable choices: Destroy the budding relationship and inflict pain on his widow; let the relationship develop but continue to Skinride the mortal, making the romance the worst sort of lie; or sit and watch as his widow falls in love with someone else. No matter what path he chooses, all the while Orel will be seething with the sort of negative emotions his Shadow knows exactly how to use.

## Exploit Weaknesses

A Shadow knows some, if not all, of a wraith's most intimate secrets. More importantly, it knows exactly how the wraith works mentally. It knows best how to adapt its actions to greatest effect, as a Shadow is a tormentor with but one victim — itself. If the Psyche has flaws, exploit them. If he has poor skills in a particular area, make it so that his existence depends on those skills, and then harp on his repeated failures. If he has prejudices, get into situations where those prejudices come up. Don't be afraid to complain to the Storyteller if your wraith conveniently forgets his flaws (and Flaws). No doubt your own Shadowguide will do the same for you.





But don't make the mistake of limiting yourself to the figures or statistics written on the character sheet. Figure out how the wraith thinks and acts. Try to understand the pattern of his thoughts and actions and then disrupt them.

### For Example...

Alix Travaiz is a Masquer-in-training who's not terribly good at Moliate yet. She's very self-conscious about this, and hates being asked to use her Arcanos in public. This reluctance, of course, comes out of fear that she'll be embarrassed by messing up a Moliation while people are watching.

This, of course, is meat and drink to her Shadow. He starts using his Thorns, like *Devil's Dare* (*I'll wager 5 Angst you can't make that Spook over there look better than he does now...*) or *Freudian Slip* (*Whoops! Did our arm just go up to volunteer?*) or *Trick of the Light* (*Hey! Is our face melting? Looked like it for a minute...*) all with the goal of forcing Alix to use Moliate in public. The results, predictably, will be catastrophic. The Shadow, battering on the Angst her failure will inevitably generate, will have a feast.

### Cause Doubt

Another way of dealing with the Psyche has to do with causing doubt — making the wraith afraid to act. Undermine the wraith's self-confidence.

At times, try some psychological warfare — egg her on to an action that you don't really want her to take, but cackle to yourself while she's attempting it. Periods when the wraith is trying to make vital decisions may call for the judicious passing of notes to the Storyteller, just to raise the paranoia level a little. The whole idea is to make the wraith question every step she might make and every action she might take. If you do this well enough, after a while she'll start questioning herself so much that you won't have to do or say anything.

Another good tactic is to explore and suggest so many options that you bury the Psyche in possibilities and paths that she can take. If she actually stumbles across a good option to consider, attack the smallest detail of that option and make her debate with you how badly screwed up this tiny detail is. (Note: Don't do this if the Storyteller has



things planned or at the expense of other players who want to continue with the adventure. Remember that the focus of Wraith is roleplaying, not quibbling.) If she can't convince you on that small point, she just might give up the good idea entirely, and pick a course of action that's less beneficial.

### For Example...

Clayton is ready to move out of the Haunt he's been sharing with the rest of his Circle and find his own space. This is an indication of his growing confidence in his own abilities. Finally, he feels secure enough in his Arcanoi to move out on his own.

His Shadow, on the other hand, doesn't like this one bit. If Clayton gets too good at handling external threats, how long is it going to be before he gets a grip on dealing with internal ones? So before the plans to move are finalized, the Shadow starts harping away. *What about security? What if Spectres come? What if he can't find a new place and has to come begging to the Circle to let him back in; won't he look like a fool then? What if the new place isn't as good as the old one, and doesn't yield as much Pathos? Why does Clayton have to be the one to move out; why won't one of the other wraiths go instead?*

While there may be perfectly good responses to all of these questions, the repeated sledgehammer tactics will wear down Clayton's resistance. Some doubt will inevitably creep into Clayton's thoughts on the matter, and the move out, if it happens, will end up being a tentative expedition, rather than a bold statement.

### Confuse the Facts

There is no such thing as a fact. There is only the perception of reality, as seen through the eyes of an individual. When you want to create some doubt about the nature of that reality, lie in that wonderful Shadow voice of yours. Many players of roleplaying games pride themselves on never telling lies. They use half-truths, obscure answers and lies of omission. The





funny thing is that they expect that of everyone they deal with as well.

Part of this expectation of truth comes from the truism that roleplaying demands that you grant a reality to the narration of the Storyteller and your fellow players. People can get confused about what is real and what isn't when someone in this shared reality goes about spelling out untruths. After all, the only thing you have tying you to the world you're playing in is the succession of words coming out of the Storyteller's mouth. If you can't trust that narrative, what can you trust?

However, the rules you have to abide by as a player go out the window when you're Shadowguiding. As a Shadow, it is your *job* to make the Psyche distrust reality, and the easiest way to do this is to lie.

Lying works. Mind you, you don't have to lie all the time. You just have to lie often enough that the Psyche is aware that you *can* lie. Once he doubts your veracity, you can start interspersing truths that he shrugs off as more mendacity at his own peril.

The keys to a good lie are twofold. The first part is a lack of concrete facts that immediately contradicts what you say. For example, the statement, "The sky is green," is a rotten lie because it is immediately proven to be false, no matter what excuses or rationalizations you use to support it. On the other hand, the statement, "Back in the Bronze Age they used thyme as a preservative," is a much better lie because rarely do people know what actually happened in the Bronze Age. Who really has the expertise to dispute you, and who's going to want to look like a fool trying?

Until someone works up the gumption to contradict you, you have as much claim to the truth as they do, which brings us to the second part of a good lie: confidence. You should be confident when you tell a lie. Remember that as far as your audience is concerned, you are stating a fact. Don't allow the Psyche the slightest room for doubt by putting conditional modifiers like "I think," "it may," or "I'm almost positive." Also make sure that lying isn't the only time you don't use conditional modifiers in your speech — Psyches aren't necessarily stupid, and they will pick up on such details.





### For Example...

Susan is trying hard to gain the trust of a new Circle of Renegades she's fallen among. Obviously, they're not going to trust her until she proves her worth, so she comes up with the notion of leading a strikeforce into the local Citadel and swiping a few valuable Artifacts.

Susan's Shadow sees this as a golden opportunity to get both sides of the law mad at her. If she can somehow both the operation, both the Hierarchy and the Renegades are going to be looking for Susan with blood in their collective eye. With that in mind, Susan's Shadow drops Susan a few hints about knowing the layout of the Citadel defenses.

Now, there's no rational way Susan's Shadow could have come by that knowledge. However, the possibility is just so tempting that in the end, Susan just might give in and listen to her Shadow. After all, the information her Shadow is doling out seems so reasonable. With luck, the expedition will be mounted according to Susan's "revelations"; the intruders will blunder into the guards, and everyone's going to blame Susan for the plan's failure.

Why? Because the lies sounded good.

### Engender Fear

This is by far the toughest job for the Shadow. It is far too easy for the Psyche's player to ignore what should scare her, just by focusing on the fact that her character's reality is just a game. Optimally, the Shadow should create a personal horror or hell just for the wraith; it should attack the wraith's beliefs one by one and corrupt the pillars that support the wraith's efforts to resist Oblivion.

A Shadow is something and someone the wraith can never flee from — something the wraith can only ignore pe-

riodically. No secrets can be hidden; no actions can be unnoticed with the Shadow around. This in and of itself can be cause for fear — with every peccadillo observed and commented upon, there is no such thing as a secret any longer.

However, there are more overt techniques that can be used by the energetic Shadowguide. If you know your Psyche's phobias, maneuver her into situations where they come into play. Make sure to remind her of unpleasant past experiences, and foreshadow repeat sessions in the near future. Make idle threats — or not-so-idle ones — about what you'll do once you gain control in a Catharsis. With any luck, you'll be able to divert a wraith from acting on her own to reacting to you, and then things can get really interesting.

### For Example...

Michael is a wild-eyed idealist of a rebel haunting the Pittsburgh Necropolis. Nearly Reaped by the soldiers of the Emerald Legion after his death in an auto accident, he has a near-incapacitating fear of those troops — masked by an implacable hatred.

Of course, this doesn't fool Michael's Shadow. Belittling him by using the diminutive "Mikey," he attacks on two fronts. Primarily, he claims that Mikey's just chicken. To spice things up, the Shadow also plays on Michael's paranoia by constantly dropping hints that he's actually leading Emerald Legion soldiers to Mikey's Haunt. This forces Michael to confront the always-troubling issue of his own courage at the same time that he's faced with real concerns about his personal security.

Of course, if Michael proves resistant to the first wave of the assault, the Shadow can simply wait until the next round of Catharsis, walk down to the Citadel, and enlist....









# Chapter Two: Systems and Dirty Tricks



Every Shadow is unique. Each has a personal history to draw upon, an individual register of pain and humiliation to serve as inspiration in its quest to drag the Psyche down to nothingness. Even worse, each Shadow is alone in its battle, trapped inside the mind of the enemy with only brief respites of freedom. It is a thankless war, and one that surely brings the Shadow little joy in its waging.

Well, maybe not, but that's the way many of them feel about themselves. That's also why inside the head of every wraith there's an arms race going on.

The number of types — or Archetypes — of Shadows dwelling in the Underworld is practically limitless. The bag of dirty tricks, nasty tactics and Thorns they have access to grows every day, and when Shadows have the opportunity, they compare notes. For every stratagem a clever Pardoner comes up with to countermand a beloved Shadow plot, somewhere a soul's less pleasant half is coming up with something new and vile.

Shadows may be selfish, but they're not stupid. Shadows may be trapped, but they're not ineffective. Shadows may be quiet sometimes, but that doesn't mean that they're unarmed.

Escalation, anyone?

## New Shadow Archetypes



**T**he Delver — Nothing is as simple as it seems, and nothing is worthwhile unless it involves some significant issue. This Shadow plumbs the depths of everything and anything, looking for a subtext even if one doesn't exist. "What are you *really* thinking?" is her mantra; "Why did you *really* do that?" The Delver's not satisfied with easy or obvious answers; she has to pick everything apart until she drives you, your friends and everyone you encounter stark raving mad.

The Delver isn't paranoid in the traditional sense; she may suspect conspiracies against you, but that's not her real focus. No, she just wants to figure out what lies beyond the obvious answers, and she will not accept that some things are exactly what they appear to be. When she takes control, she Shadow asks painfully probing questions, dissects every an-





swer and comes back for more. By seeking a root cause behind every gesture, joke or glance, she throws you into a downward spiral where everything needs a second guess... and a third and a fourth and a fifth....


- **The Plague Dog** — Sickness doesn't end when you die. The real curse of your condition is that everything that was wrong with you when you were alive has followed you to the Shadowlands. Damn that cough — it's never going away now. That old war wound still pains you when the war itself is only memories. And who would have guessed that chronic fatigue syndrome lasted *forever*? The Plague Dog knows that illness is something that roots itself deep in the soul, and he never lets you forget it.

Unlike the Hypochondriac Shadow, the Plague Dog doesn't imagine a host of new sicknesses for you. Instead, he latches onto

some real (or imagined) infirmity from your bygone life and carries it into the Underworld after your body has (theoretically) left even the possibility of disability behind. When he assumes control, every move becomes a struggle. If your leg was broken before you died, he makes you limp in pain. If you had a nasty cold, he forces you to cough up incorporeal phlegm. If you suffered from some chronic disability (real or otherwise), he'll sap your energy by reminding you just how sick you feel — often at the worst times. Through a combination of "physical" pain, weakness and whispered suggestions, the Plague Dog undercuts your immortality by recalling the frailties of mortal flesh and all its attendant aches and pains.

- **The Rager** — Everything is someone else's fault. If those goddamned (fill in the blanks) just minded their own business and quit trying to control the world, everything would





work out fine. The Rager rants incessantly, imagining schemes behind every fortune or misfortune you encounter. Nothing can be done. Someone else is running the show, and nothing you or anyone else can do will shake their grip. All you can do is make sure that everyone understands the cause of your misfortune.

The worst thing about the Rager is that he hides beneath the skin of the most reasonable wraiths, folks who would never consider themselves bigots. Yet these same souls hear stage whispers blaming “those goddamned queers” or “feminazis” or “the freaking fundies” when something goes wrong.

Each Rager has a particular group (or *group* of groups) that set him off — liberals, blacks, whites, women, men, homosexuals, communists, capitalists, Heretics, whatever — and he maintains that every person in that group shares a sort of hive-mind that is focused exclusively on making your existence miserable. When he assumes control, the Rager begins his reign with a stream of complaints against the offending coalition. Once he gets going, the grumbles become a stream of obscenities, then tirades, then threats. If Catharsis goes on for too long, this Shadow might well turn to violence. After all, if some brave soul like yourself stands up against the rampaging hordes of (fill in the blanks), the tide might turn and reason might prevail.

The Rager always relinquishes control immediately after any violent or confrontational action, leaving the Psyche to clean up his messes. For all his bluster, the Rager isn't very brave, and he prefers to let someone else deal with the actual dirty work.

- **The Victim** — Nothing is ever really your fault, you know. You've had a hard time. People picked on you. No one can blame you for what you do. After all, if they'd have suffered as you have, they would have done the same thing. It's not your fault. Really.

The Victim rationalizes everything he does as justifiable reactions to trauma. He's been abused, accused and thoroughly misused, and hence, isn't responsible for his actions. He answers any accusations with a litany of horrors (real or imaginary) that have caused him to become as he is. He never takes any blame on his own shoulders and gets hostile if anyone suggests that he should. When this Shadow takes control, excuses pour forth in reaction to any misdeed. Images of past abuse flicker through your mind, making you break down in shivers or freeze with indecision. As you try to break the Shadow's hold, he chides you for trying to rise above your fate. After all, a victim never *really* forgets his wounds. Any attempt to do otherwise is denial. You deserve nothing better than abuse, but can justify any atrocity you may commit because of what you've gone through. After all, what you've done is nothing compared to what you've endured.

- **The Voice of Hope** — You never really died. This is all a mistake. Once you figure out how to reverse this condition, you can return to your old life as if nothing had hap-

pened. This whole thing is one long bad dream. You *will* awaken.... You *have* to, sooner or later... right?

This cruel Shadow denies the reality that is your ghostly existence. He holds out a bright candle that sustains you through bad patches, but becomes an unattainable torment as time wears on. How long could a nightmare possibly continue, anyway? Doesn't it ever *end*?

When he takes control, the Voice of Hope shuts out any possibility that the Underworld is anything other than an extended nightmare. If you ever manage to convince him that you are indeed condemned to this twilight walking, he shifts your concentration toward finding a “cure” for your Restless state. He'll lead you to elder wraiths, living sages, magical spells and spiritual quests, all of which will supposedly undo your death and restore you to the living world. Although he seems relatively cheery compared to say, the Monster, this Shadow inflicts endless pain by offering up hope, seeing it dashed, then repeating the process endlessly.

- **The Innocent** — This Shadow seems harmless. It assumes the best of everyone, to the point of painful ingenuousness. *Why wear armor?* it whispers. *Even if you get caught the Centurions will just let you go because underneath it all, they're really just nice guys trapped in a bad job.* The Innocent refuses to believe ill of anyone at all, to the point where he verbally abuses the Psyche for daring to suspect another's motives. By thinking the best of everyone, the Innocent leaves the Psyche unprepared to face the worst.

During Catharsis, the Innocent wanders blindly into the lion's den. He takes every statement at face value, trusts every promise and generally exaggerates the notion of innocence to a cartoonish level. Although this behavior by itself may not be that dangerous, it often results in the Psyche regaining control, having been hamstrung by the deals and commitments the Shadow struck in perfect faith.

- **The Somnambulist** — Life was a blur, unlife more so. The Somnambulist sleepwalks through the afterlife, dripping ennui. Nothing is worthy of her attention unless it's directly in front of her, and then she won't do anything to remove the obstacle. The Somnambulist downplays the importance of anything and everything, claiming that the details are always irrelevant. It wants the Psyche to slow down and not give it a migraine worrying about what that growing patch of black on the wall might mean down the road. For the moment, the splotch isn't bothering anyone, and that's all the Somnambulist cares about.

When in command, the Somnambulist withdraws from any activities or commitments. It drops the ball, preferably in the most spectacular way possible (*Yeah, I know we needed those swords forged but I just didn't have the motivation. Oh, wait, are those Spectres?*). On the surface a relatively mild Shadow to have, the Somnambulist enjoys lulling its Psyche into a false sense of security, then drawing the curtain on an unpleasant surprise.



• **The Stormcrow** — Always the bearer of bad news, the Stormcrow is convinced that there's a land mine under every speed bump. It is convinced that every wraith harbors it ill will, that every action is going to be disastrous, and that every corner houses a lurking Spectre. More to the point, it will detail these worries *ad nauseam* to the Psyche, reveling in every gruesome detail it can invent. As far as the Stormcrow is concerned, it's not enough that a wraith's actions be doomed to failure. They have to fail spectacularly, and in such a way that the wraith gets the chance to regret his error for a very long time.

A dominant Stormcrow does its best to dissuade the wraith's companions from any actions that might be beneficial to the Psyche. It dourly points out potential consequences and repercussions, all of which are bound to be catastrophic. It also puts effort into booby-trapping all of the Psyche's work, making certain that the dire fate it foresees will inevitably come to pass.

## Merits and Flaws



These new Merits and Flaws all relate specifically to the Shadow, its powers, abilities and possessions. They can be purchased at character creation like normal Merits and Flaws (see **Wraith Players Guide** for more details). Storytellers can choose to disallow any and all of these

Merits and Flaws; however, in focusing on the Shadow instead of the Psyche they can potentially add depth to Shadowguiding a character.

### Nostalgic Shadow: (1 - 5 point Merit)

Even Shadows have fond memories of something. A wraith who possesses this Merit has a Shadow with a trace of sentiment for one of his Fetters. No matter how easy a target that Fetter is, no matter how quickly destroying that Fetter would drag the wraith to Oblivion, the Shadow will not touch that Fetter.

The point cost of this Merit correlates exactly to the value of the Fetter for which the Shadow has those warm fuzzy feelings.

### Embittered Shadow: (1 - 5 point Flaw)

All of those bad memories have come flooding back, and now there's a particular Fetter that your Shadow focuses its resentment on. This Fetter is the Shadow's primary target, and it will move Heaven and Earth for the sake of its destruction.

The point cost of this Flaw equals the rating of the Fetter that the Shadow has targeted.

### Endless Hunger: (1 point Flaw)

Tales speak of the hungry dead. You are one such — literally. Nothing can satisfy the gnawing ache inside your "guts," even though you know deep inside that nothing hungers but your mind. Some wraiths with this Flaw gorge themselves on nothing, or Skinride gluttons to remember the feeling of eating. Nothing really stops the pangs for long, though. The hunger never reaches crippling levels, but it hangs around just enough to irritate you for the rest of eternity, and your Shadow keeps nagging you to fill it....

### Good Relationship: (3 point Merit)

The Shadow and Psyche have established a good relationship, insofar as this is possible, and have come to a certain understanding. Although they obviously do not agree on many things, (including the Psyche's eventual destination) there is an established level of trust and mutual respect. The wraith may not resist the odd bit of Catharsis; the Shadow may refrain from disturbing the Psyche at a particularly ticklish moment.

All rolls made by one aspect of a wraith with this Merit to influence his opposite number are at -1 difficulty.

### Obsession: (3 point Merit)

The Shadow is focused intensely on one part of the Psyche's personality, so that other opportunities to drive the wraith to Oblivion are neglected or missed altogether. The Shadowguide chooses one of the Psyche's Passions to serve as the focus of the obsession and then goes to work on it. Henceforth, all rolls the Shadowguide makes involving that particular Passion in any way are at -1 difficulty. This includes rolls for using Thorns to frustrate a Passion, rolls to gain Angst from a diametrically opposed Dark Passion and so on. On the other hand, all rolls which the Shadow makes relating to other Passions or any other aspect of the Psyche are at +1 difficulty.

### Shadow Haunt: (3 point Flaw)

The Shadow has its own Haunt, an place to which it can travel for sustenance when the Psyche Slumbers. The Psyche is completely unaware of the Shadow's real-estate holdings and will not recognize his Shadow's Haunt if he ever stumbles across it. Other wraiths may notice the character entering the Shadow Haunt, however, and decide that his denials of any knowledge of the situation are merely ingenuous.

While at the Haunt, the Shadow can affect the Skinlands as a wraith might, using the Arcanoi of the Psyche. The Haunt is always small (equivalent to a level one Haunt background) and particularly feared by the living. Furthermore, just as a normal Haunt has a certain pool of free-floating Pathos, a



Shadow Haunt has a miasma of available Angst, which the Shadowguided wraith can draw upon.

## Warded: (1-5 point Merit)

By dint of luck or hard work, you've found a place where your Shadow doesn't dare poke her head out to see what's going on. Perhaps the site is particularly holy, or maybe it just doesn't strike your Shadow as particularly hospitable. In any case, your Shadow simply leaves you alone when you're resting in the Warded area.

The point cost of the Merit indicates how large the safe zone is. One point indicates a closet or similar enclosed area, while five points could give a wraith free rein over an area of a mile or more.

## Castigation Junkie (3 point Flaw)

Some wraiths have Shadows who thrive on psychic pain. These junkies develop a greater resistance to Castigation. Like the addict who requires more and more of his particular drug in order to feel the rush, Shadows with this affliction are often more difficult to Castigate successfully. Some believe that the Guild of Pardoners knows how to break the addiction of a Castigation junkie, but if they do, they aren't talking.

Certain Shadow Archetypes are more prone than others to become addicted to Castigation. The Freak, the Martyr and the Perfectionist are more likely to fall prey to the junkie syndrome, though a Shadow of any Archetype has the potential to develop a taste for punishment. This Flaw should only be taken with the agreement of the Storyteller, the player of the wraith and her Shadowguide.

The difficulty of any roll to purify a Castigation junkie is always increased by one, and the number of temporary Angst points removed by the Castigation is similarly reduced by one. In spite of this, at least one point of Angst is always lost in a successful Castigation.

## Thorns



These new Thorns can be used in conjunction with those Thorns already listed in *Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition*. They can be purchased at character creation, or with experience later in a Shadow's existence.

## Nightmares: 2 points

When the Psyche Slumbers, a Shadow with this Thorn may cause her to have intense nightmares. The visions this Thorn generates are so horrifying that the wraith must roll Willpower (difficulty 6) or immediately waken from Slum-





ber, in the process losing all benefits accrued from Slumbering.

Nightmares cost a point of Angst to inflict. A wraith can spend a point of Willpower before Slumbering to ensure that she is immune to this Thorn; only the Storyteller should be informed that such an investment has been made.

### Wrack: 2 points/level

The Shadow is occasionally able to express its displeasure upon the wraith. By expending an Angst point, the Shadow can send agony shooting through the wraith's Corpus. This has the effect of making the wraith less capable of action, and a number of dice equal to the level of the Thorn are removed from his dice pool for a single turn as a result. If this leaves the wraith with no dice in his pool, he spends the turn writhing in agony. This Thorn can be activated after the wraith declares his action, so long as it is done before the player actually rolls.

Wrack lasts for a single turn and can be resisted if the Psyche spends a Willpower point.

Shadow Dice can be offered after Wrack has been used.

### Mirror, Mirror: 2 points

Related to Trick of the Light, this Thorn alters a wraith's appearance briefly. Whenever a wraith whose Shadow possesses this Thorn looks in a reflective surface, the Shadow has the option of activating Mirror, Mirror.

When Mirror, Mirror is used, the wraith's appearance in a mirror or any other reflective surface (a pool of water is a great favorite) is horribly distorted in some way. The distortion usually plays up one of the Shadow's Dark Passions, but the Shadow has a full palette from which to work when making his face monstrous. The distorted visage in the reflection is visible to all, not just the wraith himself, and it usually means that he's got some explaining to do.

There is no point cost to activate this Thorn, but as repeated use dims its effectiveness, wise Shadows save it for appropriate moments. One of the more popular uses of this Thorn involves altering a reflection when only the mirror, and not the wraith himself, can be seen by an observer.

### Van Gogh: 3 points

With this Thorn, the Shadow can inflict total loss of hearing on a wraith for the duration of a single scene. The Shadow rolls temporary Angst (difficulty: the wraith's Stamina) and with a success, renders the wraith deaf. All auditory input is completely cut off for one scene, and at Storyteller discretion, spectacular successes can lead to longer effects.

This Thorn does make the wraith immune to all Keening arts as long as it is in operation.

Van Gogh costs one point of Angst.





## Cat Food: 4 points

Cat Food gives the Shadow the power to stop a wraith's tongue for the duration of a scene. While this Thorn is in operation, the wraith cannot speak, grunt, groan, chant or make any other sort of noise. All ability to vocalize is neutralized by Cat Food's effects. The Arcanos Keening cannot be used by a wraith affected by this Thorn, and assorted other arts (if they depend upon a vocal component) are off limits as well.

To initiate a bout of Cat Food, the Shadow rolls temporary Angst (difficulty: the wraith's Stamina) and with a success, renders the wraith completely mute. Sign language and miming are acceptable forms of communication for a wraith struck with this Thorn, but the old notepad-and-pencil trick is difficult in the Underworld. Remember, paper is scarce there, and the wraith you write notes to today could be the pad you write notes on tomorrow.

Cat Food costs a single point of Angst.

## Honeyed Tongue: 4 points

Your Shadow is almost preternaturally persuasive, and it can really turn on the charm when it chooses to do so. By spending a point of Angst, and rolling temporary Angst (difficulty is the target's Manipulation + Subterfuge), the Shadow can make any one sentence strangely compelling — and believable. This covers everything from *I'm sure Lucien won't mind if you steal his relic beer* to *The Shade won't bite if you just lean over and pet it nicely*.

A wraith can spend a Willpower point to counteract the effects of this Thorn.

## Whispers: 6 points

A Shadow with this Thorn can speak to the Shadows of other wraiths without the knowledge of their Psyches. This allows the Shadows to work together, sharing information and stratagems. A wraith can make a Perception + Awareness roll (difficulty 8) to determine if his Shadow seems somehow distracted, but otherwise there is no way for him to pick up on the fact that his Shadow is talking to someone else.

## Manifestation: 6 points

By expending four points of Angst, the Shadow can materialize as an entity separate from the wraith. While in this state, the Shadow can converse, affect objects and use Thorns. The manifested Shadow is in all ways physically identical to the wraith from which it came, and bystanders may have a great deal of difficulty telling the two apart. Even the auras of the two Corpora are the same. On the other hand, a Legionnaire coming across two identical wraiths may well shout "Doppelganger!" and charge in, sword in hand.

A Manifestation lasts for a single scene, and after manifesting, the Shadow must rest for no fewer than 10 minutes.

A wraith can tell the difference between another wraith and a Manifestation by rolling Perception + Awareness (difficulty 8).

## Vampiric Nature: 7 points

Related to the Dark Arcanos Larceny, this Thorn enables a Shadow to siphon Angst from others for its own purposes. Upon physical contact, a Shadow with this Thorn can roll the Psyche's contested Willpower (or Being) against any wraith or Spectre. The number of successes the Shadow achieves on the roll indicates the number of Angst points that it can absorb.

The Shadow does not need to be dominant for this Thorn to operate, and it can gain Angst quite merrily with the Psyche never suspecting a thing. Should the Shadow's target be willing to donate some Angst, the Shadow can accept up to five points of temporary Angst at a time.

## Dirty Tricks



Shadows have an entire lexicon of favorite stunts and strategies, and undoubtedly have a whole series of methods for spreading the word on those dirty tricks that work best. Among the 10 best-loved methods for spreading discord are:

**Note:** These are all roleplaying techniques, and they utilize no Thorns. A clever Shadowguide can certainly find ways to make these approaches even more effective with the judicious use of a Thorn or two.

### #10: Invisible Dice

The Shadowguide repeatedly offers Shadow Dice for every single roll. In most cases these Shadow Dice are completely unnecessary, and the wraith will be perfectly justified in refusing them. However, the ritual offering becomes such a part of gameplay that the Psyche just takes it for granted that he's going to be offered dice before each and every roll.

Then along comes the one roll where the character really, really needs some extra help. This is the perfect time for the Shadowguide, when begged for assistance, to extend a hand filled with...

...nothing. As the Psyche sputters, the Shadow can then lecture him incessantly on how he never listens and therefore doesn't deserve any help.

Rest assured that, should the wraith make it out of this particular crisis, in the future he will take Shadow Dice much more frequently, just to make his Shadow feel wanted.





## #9: It's Too Quiet

After a while, the Shadow can become white noise. One too many pointless threats or one too many weak innuendoes later, the wraith may simply be able to ignore his Shadow. It's become old, comfortable and worn, like a favorite pair of slippers. Even its threats are, in an odd way, a familiar and comforting part of the Underworld landscape.

At times like this the Shadowguide should pull back and take stock, refusing to speak in her role as Shadowguide at all. At first the player will probably not notice the absence of malice being whispered in his ear, but after a while, the painful silence will become noticeable — then embarrassing — then worrisome. Hopefully by this stage, the wraith will be so worried about devilry his Shadow is cooking up that he won't be paying attention to where he's going or what he's doing.

If the player just decides that life without a Shadow is a bed of roses, the Shadowguide should turn up the heat. Staying quiet, but passing notes to the Storyteller and grinning works well. Referring to the Shadowsheet frequently and nodding also inspires terror in the sort of player who metagames just a teeny bit.

## #8: Pavlovian Training

Certain Arcanoi generate Angst. These are also frequently the most powerful and combat-effective arts of the Arcanoi, and as such carry with them a certain incentive to use them. However, most wraiths are wary of relying too much on such arts, as they can imagine (or in some cases, remember) the consequences of going through Catharsis in a tight situation. By a careful regimen of self-discipline, though, most wraiths avoiding using their Arcanoi to rack up unpayable Angst bills.

From the Shadow's perspective, this is unacceptable. The balance between facility and safety is exactly what the Shadow doesn't want to see. However, if it can't convince the wraith to use the art too frequently, it just might be able to turn things around the other way.

Constantly harping on the Angst bounty that she will reap from the use of a given art is a great way to force the Psyche to think long and hard about whether or not the use of that art might be worth it. With enough reminders as to how dangerous the use of that particular art can be (*Use it twice more and it's showtime* and *You know, if you actually succeed in even slowing him down, you're still going to pick up a lot of Angst. Are you sure that's worth it?* are examples of how the Shadow can play this one), the Psyche can be conditioned into simply not using it. Anytime the Shadow convinces a wraith to let one of her best weapons rust, it's a victory for Oblivion.

## #7: Go Fish

Wraiths often jump at any chance to tame their Shadows, even patently ridiculous ones. Some will even believe their own Shadows, much to their later chagrin. Still, there's a sucker killed every minute, and the Shadowlands are full of them.

Many Shadows like to string their Psyches along, offering them "chances" at respite. However, this Shadow down time is only offered on the condition that the Psyche performs some task the Shadow sets (*I'll shut up for an hour if you tell that Centurion that he looks good in a skirt.*). Other times, the Psyche might be asked to guess a certain number the Shadow picks (*I'm sorry, it was 4.6345. You were so close, too; wanna try again?*), or generally has to jump through whatever hoops the Shadow sets up. The torment can be strung out for quite some time with the Shadow's conditions getting more and more humiliating, but many wraiths cling to the vain hope that they can outsmart their Shadows.

## #6: New Tenant

This technique is risky, and those Shadows who can pull it off have bright (albeit brief) futures as Doppelgangers and used-Artifact salespeople. Essentially, this tactic involves taking the Psyche over during Catharsis — and then admitting it.

The Shadow's task here isn't an easy one. What it must do is convince the Psyche's circle that the Psyche is the real bad guy. Selected editing of history, bits dredged up from the Psyche's past and the occasional bald-faced lie all help in portraying the Shadow as someone trapped in the head of a soul far worse than he could ever be. Admittedly, it's a difficult stunt to attempt, but the tacit or overt help of other wraiths' Shadows (reverse psychology works wonders here) every so often an enterprising Shadow can pull it off.

## #5: House of Cards

Every wraith has dirty little secrets, negative thoughts about her fellow wraiths that she's kept bottled up where no one could hear them.

No one except the Shadow, that is. A well-organized Shadow keeps track of this sort of thing, and then unleashes it during Catharsis. A pronouncement of *Hi, I'm Cris' Shadow and I just want you to know that he thinks whichever one of you is the Pardoner needs to get that iron lantern out of your sensitive storage space* can set inter-party conflict bubbling. The other wraiths of the circle will certainly attempt to disregard anything the Shadow says, but little, nagging doubts will always remain. If the Shadow manifests enough times with one of these verbal hand grenades, slowly but surely they will gain credibility. This process translates into suspicion of the wraith herself, and things spiral rapidly downhill from there.

The worst part about this, apart from the fact that it's extremely difficult to silence a wraith (while Moliere does offer some options, removing a Shadowridden wraith's mouth tends to make it difficult to discern when her Psyche has reasserted itself), is not the effect this maneuver has on the wraith whose Shadow is actually performing it. Instead, if the other Shadows of the circle are clever, they'll pick up on their Psyche's unease and start adding fuel to the fire. The prospect of complete honesty — Shadow-style — within a circle isn't a pleasant one.

**Note:** This also works well in conjunction with Freudian Slip.





#### #4: Two Plots Diverged

All wraiths must make choices. It's the nature of ghostly existence. However, the myriad of choices every Restless must make leaves him open to second-guessing from his Shadow. This can be especially deadly if the Shadow senses any regrets in the Psyche for a path not taken or a choice not made.

In cases like this, the Shadow takes the choice the wraith regrets and starts harping on it. Any misfortune the wraith encounters surely wouldn't have happened if he'd made the other choice. Any losses he suffers, any reverses he endures, they all can be traced to that one faulty decision.

Naturally, the Shadow is not attempting to get the wraith to backtrack and make a different choice. If nothing else, it's usually far too late for that sort of thing. What the Shadow actually does want is for the wraith either to fixate on the decision, or to charge blindly into the future just to put distance (and a few other choices) between himself and the decision he regrets. Either way, the wraith isn't keeping his eye on the here and now, which leads to careless mistakes. Careless mistakes, in turn, lead to Angst — and Harrowings.

#### #3: You Owe Me

Not everything a Shadow does is malicious — at first. Sometimes a Shadow will do something for a wraith out of the sheer

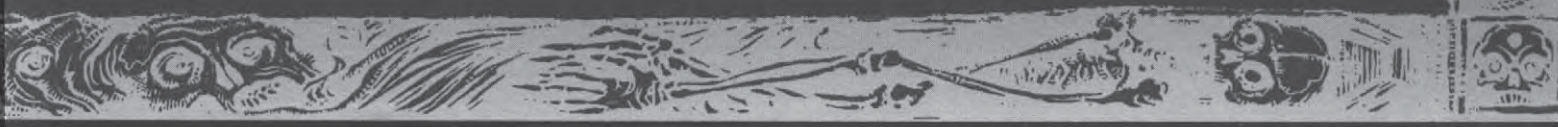
goodness of its heart, or at least it won't ask for immediate payment. These situations are more common than one would expect. After all, the Shadow isn't evil, just self-centered, right?

If the Shadow plays its cards right, however, these "free" favors carry far greater a cost than could ever be extracted in a standard bargain. Every time that a wraith asks for help, a simple reminder that she already owes her Shadow for one favor is enough to set up a wonderful negative feedback loop. The Shadow, if fortunate, will never actually have to collect on the favor the Psyche owes it. Instead, the Shadow can use the debt to lever Angst out of the wraith with guilt for years.

#### #2: Scare Tactics

Even if a **Wraith** player has read the main rulebook cover to cover, the wraith he's playing doesn't really know what his Shadow is up to or what it's actually capable of. The Shadow is quite willing to play on that ignorance for its own ends.

One of the more devious tacks a Shadow can take is to play the innocent as regarding Oblivion, filling the wraith's minds with horrifying details that supposedly frighten even the Shadow. The average wraith can handle a bold Shadow, a devious Shadow and even a powerful Shadow, but a frightened Shadow throws him completely off his stride. At the very least he'll start wondering what his Shadow's really up to, and a wraith who spends too much time chasing after his Shadow tends to neglect his other business.





At the other end of the spectrum, this sort of behavior might cause a wraith to decide that his Shadow is in fact insane. A Shadow who fears Oblivion obviously isn't playing with a full deck, and it might be capable of anything. The thought of a lunatic Shadow is enough to cost a wraith quite a bit of Slumber.

## #1: Lie

Nowhere is it written that a Shadow must tell the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Instead, a steady blend of lies and truth (equal proportions work best) keeps the Psyche off balance. By filtering enough real information to be useful (and to make the Psyche wary of dismissing *everything* the Shadow says,) the Shadow keeps the Psyche attentive to her. After all, the Psyche can't afford to throw out everything the Shadow says, but at the same time there are enough lies in the mix to make sure that the Psyche moves on incorrect information far too often. Unable to trust her information source but unable to dismiss it, the wraith with a Shadow who lies well is in a great deal of trouble.

An alternate tactic is for the Shadow to tell the absolute truth, even if this is to her short term detriment. If the Shadow holds to the truth long enough, the Psyche often comes to trust her other half. Once the wraith trusts her Shadow to tell the truth, the Shadow has *carte blanche* to lie — once — on the basis of accrued trust. However, if the Shadow picks her spot well, once is all she'll need.

## Logistics Help

Here are a few ways in which you can make your experience Shadowguiding both easier and less stressful:

- — Make a cheat sheet of all of the Angst-producing Arcanoi your Psyche possesses, so you can keep a more accurate record of how much Temporary Angst you actually have.
- — Don't offer Shadow Dice more than once per action. Even Shadows have their limits, and the sight of a fistful of dice on every single roll is enough to dismay even the staunchest Storyteller.
- — Don't be afraid to ask your Storyteller for help. Shadowguiding isn't necessarily easy.
- — Plan, plot and prevaricate. If you're Shadowguiding the same character week to week, start setting up some long-range goals. This will provide you with a framework for roleplaying heading into each session.
- — Know what your Thorns do ahead of time. If you need to look your Thorns up every time you want to use one, you'll miss spur-of-the-moment opportunities to wreak real havoc.
- — Be willing to surrender or switch the Shadow. If your Shadowguiding is leading to real-life conflict, swap out of that character immediately.





# Shadows in Harrowings

*Search. Search. Seek. Seek.  
Cold. Cold. Clear. Clear.  
Sorrow. Sorrow. Pain. Pain.  
Hot flashes. Sudden chills.  
Stabbing pains. Slow agonies.*

— Li Ch'ing-chao, "A Weary Song to a Slow, Sad Tune"



harrowings are horrific minidramas, designed to be part psychodrama, part theatre of the absurd and all nightmare. Such theatrics call for a star player, a supporting cast, a playwright and a director to bring it all together. Whenever a new play

is written, one of the most important aspects in its production is the meeting of minds between the writer and the one who will direct and shape her play. In a Harrowing, the star is the wraith unfortunate enough to have landed a major role in her Shadow's snuff film, and the playwright is, of necessity, the Storyteller, who determines the basic framework in which the drama unfolds. All the supporting roles (there are no small parts, only small actors) are portrayed by Spectres gathered specifically to appear in this special production. Emerging from the wings to "host" this episode of "This Is Your Death," the wraith's own Shadow, personified by the Shadowguide, fulfills the critical role of director.

## Before the Harrowing

Storyteller-playwrights who want their Harrowings to be both frightening and effective have a valuable asset in the Shadowguide. Most Storytellers will have something in mind for each player whenever Harrowings are called for, but the Shadowguide, acting as the director, has an intimate understanding of the character whose Shadow she portrays. Since the Shadow is the "director" of the Harrowing, when it comes times to Harrow a wraith the Storyteller should consult first with the target wraith's Shadowguide. Harrowings should never be left to chance, random creation or on-the-spot adaptation. They need to be planned out and focus on things that will be meaningful to the wraith involved.

That means the Storyteller and Shadowguide, with assistance from the other players, should briefly confer and roughly map out a scenario.

Drawing on her knowledge of the dark secrets, innermost fears and hidden weaknesses of the wraith whose Shadow she portrays, the Shadowguide pools her suggestions with those of the Storyteller and the other players (who fill the roles of the gathered Spectres for the duration of the Harrowing) to customize a Harrowing. After all, betrayal is nothing new to

the Shadow, and it is the Shadowguide's responsibility to "spill the goods" on the Psyche.

What determines the direction of the Harrowing are the target of the ordeal and the reason it is occurring. Beyond this, however, the Shadow often has some goal it wishes to achieve. Once the Shadow has ascertained the nature of its goal, the part it will take in the upcoming Harrowing (or Shadow Drama) becomes clear. The usual goal is a weakening of the Psyche through destruction of its Fetters or Passions; occasionally, the Quarry will be the Psyche itself. Each type of Harrowing calls for the Shadow to concentrate all its efforts to achieve a specific goal related to that type of Harrowing. Although the wraith will be the star/victim of the production, the Shadow will be far from idle during its Psyche's ordeal.

## Directing the Harrowing

The Shadowguide's work does not end with the planning of the Harrowing, although how much control the Shadow will actually have during the unfolding of the drama should be worked out in the planning stage. In troupes where the players are both experienced and responsible, the Shadowguide might be given enough control to run with unforeseen reactions and twists in the plot (though it is suggested that the Storyteller retain overall veto so hard feelings do not arise between players). Whether given much or little control, however, the Shadowguide should try to work in elements that reflect the Archetypes of both the Shadow and the Psyche of the Harrowed wraith.

Harrowings are, by their very nature, improvisational theatre. There are no rehearsals! Fortunately, Spectres are superb at ad-libbing on given themes within a sketchy framework. Nevertheless, Shadows need to cue the Spectres' entrances and exits and make certain that their movements are choreographed to best effect. Indeed, the Shadowguide may literally have to fill the role of director to see that everyone gets a chance to say her lines, that needed props are ready on time, and that no one bumps into the furniture. Some players will so relish the role of "villain" that a director is needed simply to call them off or keep them from going overboard. Harrowings should have some subtlety to them; merely beating the character over the head repeatedly becomes boring and ineffective. The Shadowguide is ultimately responsible for helping the Storyteller keep the Shadow Drama on track.

## Participating in the Harrowing

Besides her role in directing the psychodrama, a Shadowguide should be allowed to take a significant role as a participant in the nightmare ride. Probably, though, her particular role will not be as primary antagonist, since she is directing the overall performance of the Spectral cast. The Shadow's Archetype will often determine just what role it



takes in a Psyche's Harrowing and how involved it becomes. Several roles are available for a creative Shadowguide; any or all of them might be appropriate at different times during even a single Harrowing.

- **Tormentor** — Turnabout is fair play, and now it's pay-back for all those times the Shadow has faced Castigation. No one knows more intimately than the Shadow what really gets to the Psyche (and the player) — or how to push those buttons to best effect.

- **Helper** — The Shadow may realize its own survival depends on getting through the Harrowing and may offer advice, help in the form of Shadow Dice or even the use of Thorns that could be of assistance in the Psyche's current dilemma. These latter might include Shadow Traits, Shadowplay, Shadow Familiar, or even a helpfully suggestive form of **Devil's Dare**, and constitute the only time outside of Catharsis when some of these powers may be used.

- **False Friend** — Naturally, the Shadow may only be pretending to help, fooling the wraith into making the wrong choices. It offers false counsel to the beleaguered Psyche, tempting the Psyche to make use of its Shadow powers — especially Shadow Dice — and thereby makes it much harder for the wraith to escape unscathed from the Harrowing.

- **Commentator** — Nothing is more irksome than having someone else mock your best efforts or simply describe every action as you perform it. Not only is a mocking tone likely to annoy the Psyche as it frantically seeks the solution to the Harrowing's puzzles, but mere monotonous repetition can be annoying enough to rattle anyone. Shadows excel at this sort of verbal torment. Shadowguides should beware of the dangers of overdoing this particular role, which can quickly alienate the player rather than the character.

- **Back-Seat Driver** — More than simply making comments, the Shadow can progress to actual advice and demands — none of them solicited by the Psyche and most of them coming after the fact with all the advantages of hindsight. Some of these "I told you so" comments may become so grating that the Psyche figuratively throws up her hands in disgust and attempts to deal with the Shadow rather than concentrating on the immediate problem. Naturally, this is what the Shadow hopes she'll do. It's so much easier to destroy a distracted opponent....

- **Tattletale** — Since a Shadow has a vested interest in having its Psyche lose a Harrowing, it frequently gives the Spectres involved the low-down on what frightens the Psyche. Furthermore, the Shadow often acts in concert with those Spectres to undermine the wraith's efforts to save herself. This allows the Shadow to take on an advisory role while it sits back and enjoys the show engendered by its firsthand knowledge of the Psyche's greatest weaknesses.

- **Scorekeeper** — Sometimes in the heat of the action, neither players nor Storyteller have the luxury of keeping track of the ups and downs or wins and losses involved in the Harrowing. As the scorekeeper, the Shadow takes note of the Psyche's progress (or lack thereof), keeping a running tally of her gains, losses and close calls. The Shadowguide's notes on these may help the Storyteller determine if the player must roll against a higher or lower target to escape the Harrowing once the drama is through — or if she needs to roll at all. This isn't an adversarial role, but rather a neutral one.

The Shadowguide should never take advantage of her role as scorekeeper to "doctor the books" to favor the Shadow's cause and undermine the Psyche's.

## The Consequences

There are three possible consequences to a Harrowing: The Psyche emerges in triumph and with greater confidence in her own abilities and self; the Psyche is beaten down and weakened in some way through the loss of Fetters, Passions, or Corpus; or the Psyche is destroyed and either sucked into Oblivion or transmogrified into a Spectre. Each of these requires some response from the Shadow which is in keeping with the Harrowing's result.

If the Psyche wins hands down, the Shadow faces the challenge of recouping its losses while trying to avoid the Psyche's notice for a while. Most likely the Psyche is angry with the Shadow for its role in tormenting her and might



## Sudden Revelation

Why on earth would the Shadow ever help the Psyche through a Harrowing?

Occasionally, a Shadow seems to understand, almost as if a sudden revelation has come to it, that the Harrowing might result in its own destruction, driving it to help the Psyche at the last minute. This insight might occur during one Harrowing, only to be completely forgotten by the next.

To simulate the Shadow's sense self-preservation, Storytellers may call for a roll on the Shadow's permanent Angst (difficulty 8). One success is all that is necessary for a Shadow to realize that if the Psyche is destroyed, her cushy job as devil's advocate is also over. Some Archetypes may be more prone to cooperate in their own destruction (Monster or Martyr), while others may have a stronger sense of self-preservation (Leech or Child). Storytellers may adjust the difficulty of the revelation roll accordingly.

Once aware of the possibility of its dissolution, the Shadow may decide whether or not to take actions to preserve itself.





even plan to Castigate her unruly darker half. With this in mind, the Shadowguide needs to work within the constraints of her Archetype while appearing to be more accommodating and contrite for a session or two. Naturally, this doesn't actually have to be the case. Some Archetypes (such as the Director or the Parent) might have the temerity to engage the Psyche in a postmortem analysis of the Harrowing, pointing out how the Psyche could have bettered its performance or scolding her for landing in such a situation in the first place. The Martyr might complain that the Harrowing was too easy, while the Leech may just complain.

A partial victory generally results in a weaker, more subdued Psyche. She has been through hell and paid dearly for her escape. The Shadow may view this as an opportunity to take advantage of its Psyche's demoralization by seeking to press any advantage gained in the Harrowing. Possibilities include promising to help the Psyche better its chances in future Harrowings, a ploy that could easily seduce a battered Psyche into accepting whatever advantages it can find to make up for its losses. Again, the Shadow's Archetype should indicate the nature of its interaction with the Psyche. The Fixer or the Perfectionist may offer suggestions as to how the Psyche can "improve" herself for the next go-round, while the Abuser may seek to berate the Psyche into making a bargain with her inner demon. The Freak or Monster Archetype may convince the Psyche that she deserved the "punishment" of losing some

part of herself, eroding her already fragile confidence in her own abilities. Conversely, regardless of Archetype the Shadow may dispense with subtlety altogether and attempt to drive the weakened Psyche into Catharsis.

If the Harrowing results in the wraith's destruction, the Shadowguide may have one final moment onstage. Presumably, the Shadow has been working toward just this end and now receives its reward — Spectrehood. The Shadow may rightly feel entitled to a mocking cry of victory (or a howl of terror) as it realizes what it has become. The Shadowguide should make certain, however, that she does not step on the toes of the wraith's player by commandeering that player's final bow or undermining the poignancy of losing the struggle against Oblivion.

## Dark Plots



In a base level, all Wraith plots have something to do with the Shadow. Every action a wraith takes, every choice she makes — these are measured and countered by her Shadow. Every use of an Arcanos can bring with it a price in Angst, meaning





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that even the most basic of actions can be circumscribed by the mere threat of strengthening the Shadow.

However, it's also possible to work Shadows into much more active plot roles. Just because the Psyche/Shadow conflict is an intensely personal one doesn't mean that the spillover can't impact other members of a wraith's Circle. Besides, who said that the Psyche is the only one a Shadow wants to talk to?

## The Shadow as Personality

Just because a Shadow is a part of a wraith's personality doesn't mean that the Shadow can't form its own relationships with other Shadows — and wraiths — with whom the Psyche comes in contact. Should Catharsis occur frequently enough, a Shadow can even start to interact with other wraiths in a Circle on its own terms, not on the Psyche's. The Shadow may decide to cultivate some of his Psyche's Circlemates as friends, or at least try to win them over enough so that they don't run for a pair of shackles as soon as it looks like Catharsis is a possibility.

Once a Shadow has established his own relationship with other wraiths, long-term stories and plots can be spun from there. The Shadow may specifically target one particular wraith (probably one the Psyche is fond of) for destruction, and use any rapport that develops as a means to the other


wraith's permanent end. Conversely, if the Psyche clearly loathes another wraith, the Shadow could bend his efforts to helping that wraith succeed — just to rub the Psyche's nose in the fact that his hated rival is prospering.

## Loving the Other

A plotline that particularly daring Storytellers may wish to explore involves having one of the characters fall in love with another character's Shadow. This isn't as far-fetched as it might sound; after all, a Shadow can be witty, charming, seductive and attractive. It's not beyond the realm of possibility that during a Circlemate's interludes of Catharsis (particularly with a subtle boost from his own Shadow) a wraith could acquire first sympathy, then affection for his companion's Shadow. The smitten wraith would of course start to resent his paramour's Psyche for keeping his beloved imprisoned, and might even start to look for ways to bring the Shadow personality to the fore — permanently.

The brew is made even more potent if the wraith whose Shadow becomes an object of affection had a romantic involvement with the wraith who falls in love with the Shadow. Then again, if the lovestruck wraith has Fetters relating to love that tie him to the Skinlands (say, a surviving widow), the internal conflict between the old forbidden love and the new one can be fertile ground for roleplaying. Don't think





that the wraith's own Shadow is going to ignore such juicy material, either — there's a great deal here for the enterprising Shadow to work with.

Of course, a wraith who has an attraction to a Shadow is going to be in for a rough time. Should word of his perversion get out, the wraith is likely to be ostracized, abused, bodily dragged off to a Pardoner for therapy, or worse. After all, a Shadow sympathizer isn't a good thing to have around during the war with Oblivion. Furthermore, the wraith himself is likely to have conflicted feelings about his new-found romance, hindering his effectiveness.

On the other hand, there's the question of how the suddenly beloved Shadow deals with a sudden surfeit of suitors. A Shadow will likely be suspicious of any wraith who's nice to her, fearing a setup or trap. The sheer lunacy of a wraith falling in love with a Shadow should be enough to excite the Shadow's suspicion — no wraith in his right mind would be saying kind things about a Shadow, let alone whispering affectionate phrases — and that suspicion can force a Shadow into a reactive, rather than an active, role.

Once the Shadow realizes that another wraith is in love with her, however, things can get interesting. The Shadow may attempt to use her suitor to further her own agenda against her Psyche, or she may be contented with simply destroying her would-be lover. There is also the possibility of collaboration between Shadows, catching the unfortunate wraith between the Scylla of his lover and the Charybdis of his own Shadow.

There does remain, however slight, the possibility of a Shadow somehow returning affection which is shown to it — not all Shadows are incapable of love. However, such affairs are inevitably tragic, and likely to result in disaster for all parties involved. The gap between Capulets and Montagues was nothing compared to that between Psyches and Shadows when it comes to romance.

## Getting Plots into Shadowy Hands

Just because you want to run a plot that centers on a Shadow's actions doesn't mean that you should come out and announce that. Rather, the best way to go is to get together with the Shadowguide who's going to key the new plot and let her in on what's going on. As soon as the players hear the word "Shadow," their characters start expecting treachery. However, if the players don't know that the plot has a Shadowy center, their characters' reactions will be normal — and thus play right into their Shadows' hands.

After all, secrecy is one of the Shadow's best weapons

## Other Ideas

There are an endless variety of chronicle ideas that can be centered around Shadows that don't involve romance or even friendship. Here are a few:

- — **Finders Keepers:** The Shadow wants something, and drives the wraith to find it. Maybe it's an Artifact, maybe it's a Fetter that the Psyche doesn't know about — the details are irrelevant. However, the fact remains that the Shadow wants something, and is willing to drag the rest of the Circle along — kicking and screaming, if necessary — in order to go get it. This is an instance where a purely internal struggle — the Shadow wants something that the Psyche may not — spills over into the existence of the Circle as a whole. After all, if a Shadow hauls a wraith off on a wild goose chase, his Circle has the choice of following him or letting him wander off, perhaps never to be seen again....

- — **Buried Secrets:** There's something the Shadow knows, perhaps picked up in conversation with a Spectre, that the Circle desperately needs. Maybe it's something that the Shadow overheard during Catharsis, and the Shadow won't talk unless it's allowed out and on top again. Of course, the Psyche may have a few things to say about his quote-unquote friends trying to urge his dark side to come out and play.

This sort of chronicle builds slowly. It starts with the notion that the Circle is missing some vital information, then inevitably builds to the horrifying realization that only a Shadow could possibly have the needed info. What sort of deal would a Circle (or a wraith) be willing to strike with a Shadow in exchange for something that the Circle's Psyches obviously need so badly? The price could be steep, or it could be permanent.

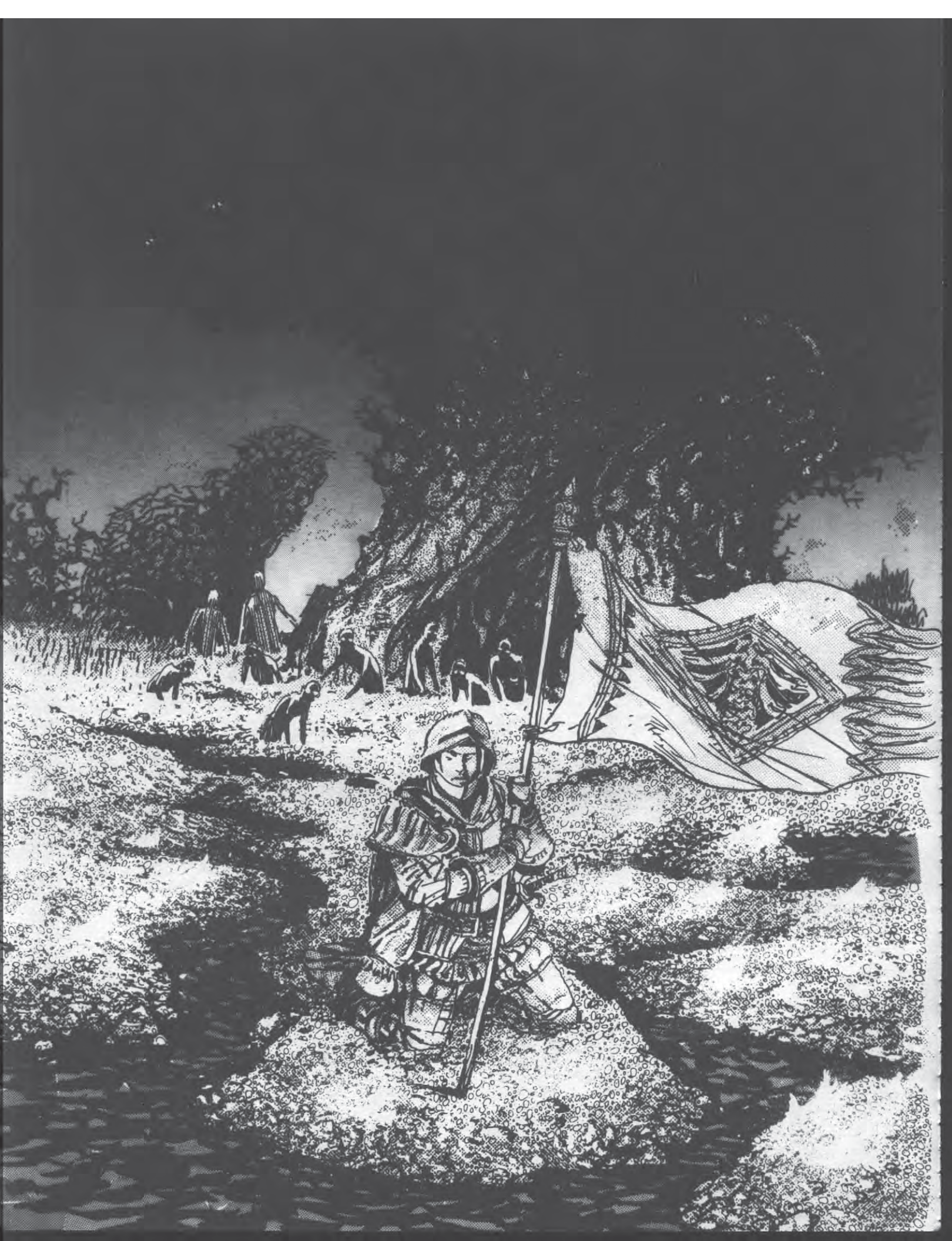
- — **Spitting Image:** The local Necropolis has welcomed (well, not really) a Doppelganger, who's insinuated himself into local life by serving as a clearinghouse for all sorts of unsavory services. While that may be bad enough, the Doppelganger's real mission is something far, far worse: to get in touch with one or more of the Circle's Shadows and go to work, using them to further Oblivion's ends.

In stories like this, there are two levels of intrigue. The wraiths may sniff around the Doppelganger trying to discover what he's up to. The Shadows, on the other hand, have the ulterior motives of their putative ally to consider and perhaps counteract. Even if they find themselves on the same side as their Psyches, the Circle's Shadows may not want to admit that they were working with the Doppelganger. This can lead to all sorts of subterfuge, as the Shadows try to clean up their mess without letting their Psyches in on the secret...and nobody said that Psyches were dumb.

- — **Motive Force:** The Shadow performs an act that seems inexplicable — a murder, an assault, perhaps even a good deed — and then leaves the Psyche to puzzle out why. Is the maneuver part of a larger plot on the Shadow's plot, or is she just trying to get her Psyche nervous? An enterprising Storyteller, in conjunction with a suitably creative Shadowguide, can string this plotline out for weeks or even months, piling up evidence that the Shadow was up to something, but never quite letting on what.

Then again, when the Psyche finally uncovers what the Shadow was *really* doing, he may wish he didn't know....







# Chapter Three: The Other Dark Kingdoms



Stygian wraiths aren't the only ones with Shadows. Each Dark Kingdom, through the presuppositions of its populace, has its own unique species of Shadow. However, assuming that a Jade Empire or Kartan Shadow acts in a manner identical to a Stygian one is to make a grave error. Each culture creates and defines its Shadows' role to make those Shadows something unique and culturally specific. The function and ambition of a Shadow from the Dark Kingdom of Clay is very different than the function and ambition of a Shadow from the Philadelphia Necropolis; a Jade Empire wraith's *p'o's* efforts to safeguard its mortal remains would be incomprehensible to an African *goredenna*, who works incessantly to have its mortal existence forgotten.

In this chapter are explorations of the dominant Shadow paradigms in several of the Dark Kingdoms besides Stygia. Included is information on the unique mindsets of each kind of Shadow, as well as notes on perspectives, powers and ultimate goals. Oblivion isn't necessarily what each and every Shadow is after. Some have higher goals, while some have lower.

The information in this chapter is not necessarily comprehensive, nor is it universal. It does, however, represent the dominant Shadow paradigm within each culture of the dead.

While not all African Shadows necessarily fall into the *goredenna* pattern detailed here, odds are that any wraith that a character comes across — or that a player wishes to take the part of — will be part of that dominant paradigm.

## Darkness on Jade: Shadows of the Yellow Springs

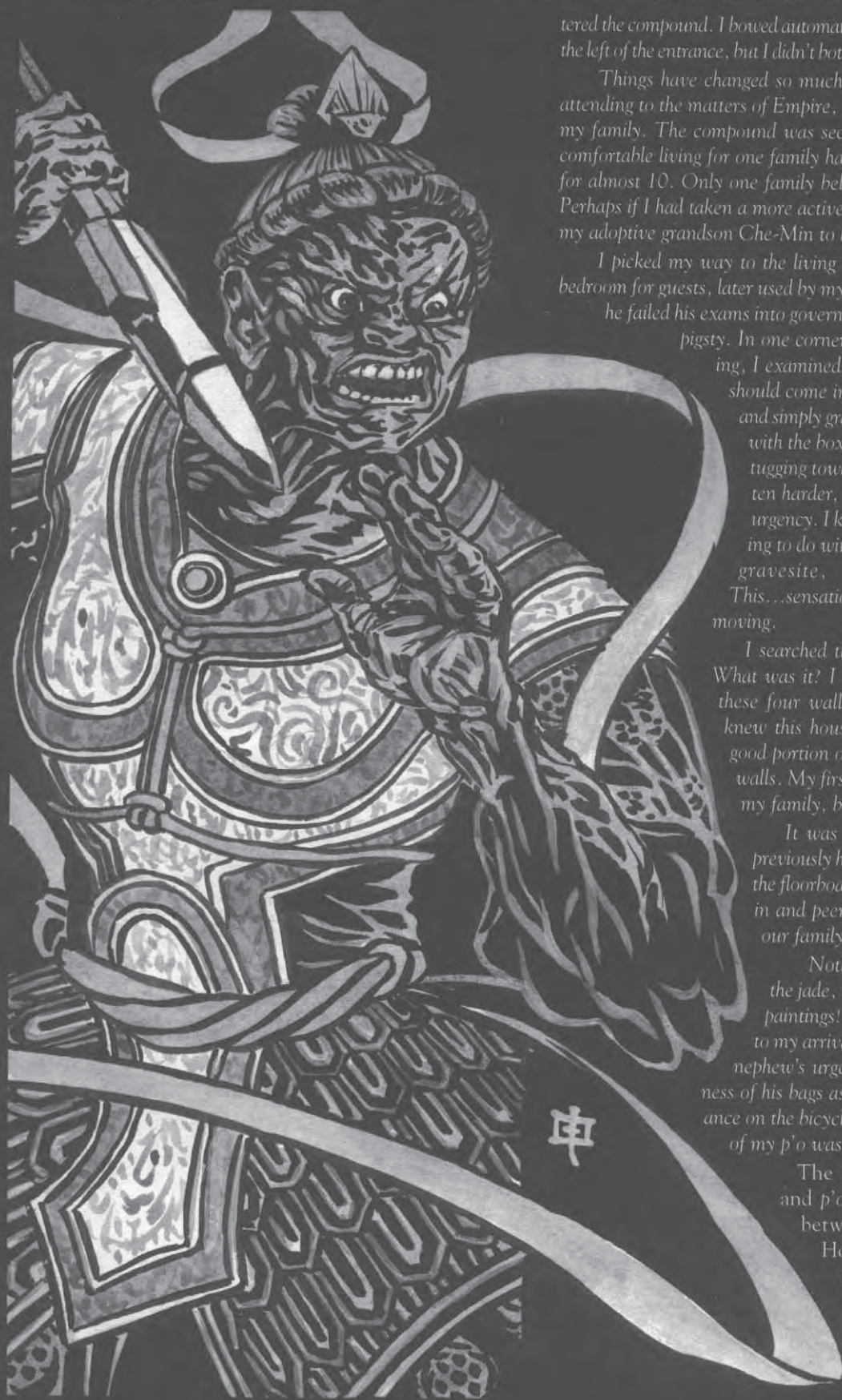
by Ed Huang



As I returned to the familiar surroundings of the family compound, I felt an almost constant desire to travel westward. My *p'o* was screaming; I think the pull affected him much more strongly than it did me. Good. It was about time he suffered as much as I have.

A young man hurried past on a bicycle, and I recognized him as my great grand nephew. No doubt he was off to lose more money at a mah-jongg parlor. Turning from him, I en-





tered the compound. I bowed automatically three times to the shrine to the left of the entrance, but I didn't bother picking up the incense sticks.

Things have changed so much. I have spent too much time attending to the matters of Empire, and not enough watching over my family. The compound was sectioned off, so what was once comfortable living for one family had now become cramped living for almost 10. Only one family belonged here, and it was mine. Perhaps if I had taken a more active interest, rather than allowing my adoptive grandson Che-Min to be watching over them...

I picked my way to the living room. Once this was a spare bedroom for guests, later used by my third son and his family when he failed his exams into government service. The place was a pigsty. In one corner was an electric box. Frowning, I examined it. I saw where the electricity should come in from, but the box was silent and simply gray. Something was wrong. Not with the box, I realized, but with me. The tugging toward the west had suddenly gotten harder, and it pulled at me with more urgency. I knew somehow that it had nothing to do with my p'o's urges to patrol our gravesite, to protect our body. This...sensation...was closer, and yet it was moving.

I searched the house with some urgency. What was it? I knew the answer was within these four walls. Frantically, I searched. I knew this house intimately, having spent a good portion of my life and unlife within its walls. My first thought was for the safety of my family, but no one was home.

It was then that I considered what previously had been unthinkable. Beneath the floorboard, under the kitchen I peeked in and peered at what should have been our family treasures.

Nothing. It was bare. All of it — the jade, the jewelry, the paintings (my paintings!) — were gone. I flashed back to my arrival. I saw in my mind's eye my nephew's urgency to leave, and the bulkiness of his bags as he struggled to keep his balance on the bicycle. I realized then the howling of my p'o was mad laughter...

The interactions between *hun* and *p'o* are very similar to those between Psyche and Shadow.

However, the way such interactions are treated by ghostly society at large, as well as the motives of and power struggles between the two aspects of the





soul, are much different in the Empire of Yellow Springs than they are in Stygia.

In Chinese culture it is believed that there are two parts to the soul of a person. The *hun* appears in a person during conception, and is the part of the soul that seeks *P'eng Lai* — Paradise (or travels to Oblivion to be reincarnated in a material form). Balanced against it is the *p'o*, the part of the spirit that dictates one's physical needs and desires. Furthermore, the *p'o* is also the part of a wraith that inherits the traits of the parents. It is not evil or sadistic, merely another aspect of the soul.

According to tradition, if the proper burial procedures are followed, the *p'o* remains with the physical body, protecting its corpse from being molested and watching over its descendants. Simultaneously, the *hun* travels on to its next destination. Each part fulfills its function; everything is in balance. Neither part of the soul is better or worse than the other. Neither is preferable, or can be labeled "evil" or "unnecessary." They are two separate and balanced parts that create a greater whole.

In the case of wraiths, however, the *p'o* and *hun* splinter but do not separate. Whereas normally the *p'o* and *hun* would sunder, with each achieving its goals individually, in a wraith they are forced together unnaturally and must have a choice of destinations; whether to try to seek *P'eng Lai*, settle in the Yellow Springs, or allow Oblivion to overtake him in hopes of reincarnation. The *p'o*, however, knows on an instinctual level that they (the *hun* and *p'o*) should be *doing* either one of two things; they should either be protecting their late physical body, or embracing Oblivion to be born again in the family's offspring. This dilly-dallying in the Underworld is, according to the *p'o's* viewpoint, unnatural. Being a creature of instinct and nature, it will do its best to end this improper situation. In other words, the *p'o's* urge toward expediency and purpose is dedicated to removing the wraith from the Shadowlands, one way or another.

There is no way that the *hun* can convince the *p'o* that Oblivion should not be their shared and ultimate goal; in the eyes of the *p'o*, anything else is unnatural. Dialogue with the *hun* and circumstances may convince the *p'o* to delay the coup de grace, but it will never abandon the notion. While ultimately selfish in its wants, the *p'o* is not a survivalist. It is strictly goal-oriented.

## The *P'o* and Travel

With the strong connection a *p'o* has to its mortal body, travel throughout Zhongguo can be more complicated than one might think. As the *p'o* will not want to leave its remains, any extended trip involves a contested roll of Willpower against Permanent Angst; should the *p'o* win it acquires two points of Temporary Angst. Furthermore, for the entire time the wraith is distant from his corpse, the *p'o* will badger him relentlessly to return and assume guardianship. This roll must also be made for each month the wraith spends away

from his body, so extended sojourns to the Imperial Palace or occupied Nippon are not pleasant for anyone concerned.

During Catharsis on the road, a *p'o's* first concern will be to return to the site of its remains. It doesn't matter if fulfilling this urge means abandoning a current duty, forsaking traveling companions or any other behaviors that might have unpleasant repercussions; the *p'o* must see to its body.

There is an upside to listening to the *p'o*. Whenever a *hun* gives in to its other half's entreaties and spends at least an hour watching over its remains, the *p'o* gladly relinquishes a point of Temporary Angst. However, this should not be seen as a system for random Angst reduction; make too many visits to the body and the *p'o* gets greedy. If the Storyteller feels that a wraith is abusing this method of dealing with his *p'o*, she can insist on a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) before he leaves the vicinity of his corpse. No matter what, the wraith will be allowed to leave, but a failure gains the wraith an Angst point and a botch produces three.

Guarding the remains of its mortal shell is the *p'o's* primary duty. Assuming that there are remains to guard, the *p'o* will manifest the Dark Passion: **Protect My Body and See That It Is Treated with Respect**. In most cases this Dark Passion emerges from life with the wraith; in rarer cases it can take up to three years for the *p'o* to achieve this focus. However, this is never less than a three-point Dark Passion.

Cremation of the body frees the *p'o* from this duty, as does the act of scattering the earthly remains. Should either of these be performed (with proper respect, of course) the Dark Passion should be considered to be Resolved.

In addition, because of the tight-knit relationship that a wraith has with her own descendants, her *p'o* may never have a Dark Passion that in any way calls for harm to or the destruction of the living family. The postmortem family is fair game, but those among the living who are still honoring a wraith's remains are sacrosanct to the *p'o*.

The one exception to this rules comes in the case of descendants who have been grossly negligent in their duty as regards honoring the dead. In this case a *p'o* is obligated to take the Dark Passion: **Avenge the Negligence of Your Descendants**.


## *P'o* People Got No Reason...

### a.k.a. Shadows in Society

Chinese wraiths, like their mortal counterparts, are somewhat repressed by modern American standards. This doesn't mean they don't socialize, but rather that they give some thought to not revealing intimate details about themselves to passing strangers — or even good friends.

This reticence is understandable, because one of the touchstones of Chinese society is a love for discussing some-





one else's personal life in intimate detail (preferably with the other person absent, of course). The speed of information among these incorrigible gossips is startling. A fact known to only a couple of friends will spread through an entire social circle in days, and faster if the "secret" is scandalous. What one family member knows, the whole clan will probably know within hours. Furthermore, during these information exchanges, while the good is often stressed and mentioned in gossip, it is the bad that gets repeated endlessly.

With this in mind, it must be stressed that the interaction between *p'ò* and *hun* is one of the most intimate relationships one can have. Problems with your *p'ò* are rarely, if ever mentioned, for fear of the social consequences. Inability to deal with one *p'ò* is seen as a weakness, and any weakness is inevitably seized upon by gossips and rivals.

This overhanging threat of social repercussions gives a wraith much in the way of motivation to keep his interactions with his *p'ò* very quiet. Far more so than in a Western setting, the loss of face can have a profound impact in the Yellow Springs. Position and rank, both in the family and in Imperial service can be determined by how much "face" you show, and an embarrassment generated by problems with one's *p'ò* can be particularly damaging to political aspirations. After all, such a...concern demonstrates a lack of self-control.

There are very few Pardoners in the Kingdom of Jade. Here, a wraith is expected to deal with any problems with her *p'ò* on her own. A trip to a master of Castigate is an admission that one's *p'ò* is out of control, and a demonstration that one is too weak to keep one's *p'ò* under wraps will surely be taken as a glaring weakness by one's enemies. Even worse, problems with the *p'ò* are often considered to be a harbinger of corruption in a wraith, and a wraith whom rumor associates with *p'ò*-spawned difficulties will often find himself ostracized.

The societal need for self-sufficiency does make a *p'ò*'s job much easier. It's much simpler to attack a victim who refuses reinforcements, after all. However, because a wraith is unwilling to show his problem, that doesn't mean that meddling wraiths within his clan won't interfere on his behalf. Such help, while often needed, is not necessarily appreciated.

As a countermeasure against their *p'ò*s, most Chinese wraiths learn at least the basics of the Way of the Soul. Use of this Arcanos is limited almost exclusively to private moments. In the Yellow Springs, it is not better to have struggled and won than to seem invulnerable to base emotions. Again, the appearance of control over the *p'ò* is almost more important than the actual control itself.

A wraith should not necessarily despair if she is unversed in the Way of the Soul, though. In the lands of the dead, there are many "doctors" who will prescribe medicines or apply needles or massages to protect a wraith against the whispers of her *p'ò*. These cures have various levels of effectiveness, depending on, among other things, the abilities of the

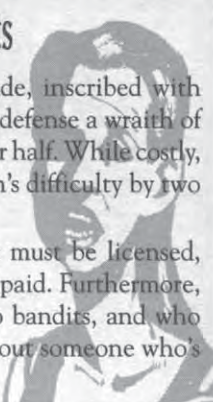
"doctor," the wraith's faith in the cure and the materials involved in the treatment. Indubitably, the most effective method of taming the *p'ò* is the use of custom-made True Jade Artifacts, which are draped on the wraith's body for the duration of the treatment. In extreme cases, the wraith must wear the jade amulets for days, weeks or even months, which is both ostentatious and a sure sign that she's having *p'ò* trouble.

**System:** At Storyteller discretion, if a wraith goes to a doctor for help with his *p'ò*, the doctor rolls Manipulation + Occult (difficulty 7) to convince the patient of the efficacy of his techniques. The wraith then rolls Willpower (difficulty of the *p'ò*'s permanent Angst). If the wraith succeeds, he may subtract a number of Temporary Angst points equal to the number of successes the doctor achieved from his *p'ò*. If True Jade Artifacts are involved, the difficulty on all rolls is reduced by two.

In the case of a failure on the Willpower roll, the *p'ò* gains a single Temporary Angst point. A botch produces an Angst gain equivalent to the number of failures the doctor had on his initial roll. Furthermore, in cases like this the doctor may prescribe the wearing of True Jade, to tame and pin the *p'ò* until such time as the wraith can regain some semblance of control of himself. If the doctor fails his roll, the wraith must still roll Willpower. Accidents do happen....

**Note:** While this sort of treatment can occasionally be very effective, it can also get quite expensive. Also, if a wraith is seen making repeated visits to a doctor, the damaging whispers start immediately.

### True Jade Amulets



Amulets and charms of True Jade, inscribed with charms against the *p'ò*, are the surest defense a wraith of the Yellow Springs has against his other half. While costly, such amulets will give reduce a wraith's difficulty by two in all rolls relating to his *p'ò*.

Just remember that all Artifacts must be licensed, and that there are taxes that must be paid. Furthermore, wearing True Jade is an invitation to bandits, and who knows what the neighbors will say about someone who's wearing so many amulets?

## Doctrinal Views of the *p'ò* and *Hun*

As a whole, the denizens of the Yellow Springs were a mystical and superstitious lot in life. The fact that the after-life they all found after death is suspiciously like all the old stories does tend to reinforce these beliefs, transforming a living human's superstition into a wraith's unshakable conviction. While there are different regional beliefs that vary from town to town — not to mention province by province — there are a few basic concepts of the *hun* and *p'ò* that are





more or less universal. Below are a few notions as to how religious philosophers, as well as wise women with too much time on their hands, explain the existence of the *p'ò*.

None of these views are exclusive. Eastern philosophy is a buffet table of different beliefs and ideas. Most pick and choose what they want to believe—and then believe it. It is possible to be a Confucianist, Buddhist and communist all at the same time. In fact, it is not at all uncommon. With that in mind, the doctrinal notions of *him* and *p'ò* can be integrated in fascinating ways. As to who's right, well, that's still open to debate.

## Confucianism

Confucianism is a philosophical system founded by the teachings of Confucius (551-479 B.C.) a.k.a. K'ung Fu-tzu. This system of thought has dominated sociopolitical life in China since the philosopher's death, and almost all exams for governmental positions have been based on the examinee's knowledge of Confucian classics. Furthermore, at its inception, Confucianism was vague in such a way that it blended smoothly with all of the disparate religious beliefs of the time, while instilling a strong and distinct moral code in its followers.

In essence, Confucianism is a way of approaching your day-to-day activities in order to achieve a harmony with both yourself and the society around you. After all, humans are social creatures, and society is what separates humans from beasts.

In Confucian teachings, one achieves the harmony by following *li*, or social rituals that convey your respect for humanity. This means that one should show patience, sincerity, obedience, and should always fulfill one's obligations. Fortunately, Confucianism also takes time to outline those obligations. The most important ones are those between parent and child, employer and employee, and ruler and subject. All of these relationships follow the same paradigm: The "greater" member of the relationship provides an example to those under him, for it is natural for people to imitate those figures who command respect.

With practice, and by always acting in accordance with *li*, one eventually acts in proper fashion instinctively. Once such a state has been achieved, a person's natural inclinations are in harmony, which is all to the good. Proper behavior is performed, while improper behavior is eliminated. This state is called *jen*, which is the highest level of moral development that a human being can achieve. Once everyone achieves *jen*, then the world is at peace, order abounds, and the harmony between the natural and the social spheres results in material well-being for everyone.

## Dealing with the *p'ò*

Confucianism relies on the use of *li* to control the destructive urges of the *p'ò*. If one rigorously follows the various





rituals of everyday life, there is very little danger of the *p'o* being able to force the wraith to do anything that contradicts proper behavior. After all, the *p'o* only wants to be in its proper place, so it has a difficult time arguing with a *hun* concerned with acting correctly.

In modern psychological terms, this can be defined as something akin to conditioning. By accepting the superstitions, customs and rituals of society, the wraith forces his *p'o* to play within the boundaries of established metaphysics. Essentially, the *p'o* is compelled to play by the traditional rules of what is and what isn't done. Even if the *p'o* can somehow convince the wraith to consider various improper actions, in theory the observance of *li* prevents the wraith from acting out any of the more radical ones.

Optimally, the wraith can balance her *hun* and *p'o* through the continuous use of rituals. Most wraiths concentrate on those customs that involve social interaction, such as the greeting of a guest, the offering and exchange of gifts and the respectful, though shrewd, banter in the marketplace. True masters of the use of *li*, however, know the value of using rituals to cater to the needs of the *p'o*; bribing it as a way of distracting it from its long-term goals. Such rituals involve, for example, bodily needs that a wraith no longer has, but which the earthy *p'o* misses. Some examples include Japanese tea rituals and traditional Chinese wedding banquets or even more simply, dinner. While the actual ceremony *per se* cannot be performed by a wraith in these cases,

## The *P'o's* Views on Confucianism

The *p'o's* view of Confucianism is less hostile than one might expect. Confucianism stresses the importance of families, which jibes nicely with the *p'o's* agenda of protecting the body and achieving one's proper place. The honoring of ancestors and the filial duties practiced by both the living and the dead are things to be commended and respected, from the *p'o's* perspective. However, the *p'o* also knows how sincere the *hun's* acceptance of these beliefs is in truth, and it has a few issues with that.

While the *hun* may claim to honor Confucianism's traditional beliefs, the *p'o* realizes that the *hun's* piety has very little to do with family and a lot to do with the balance and distribution of power. Those who follow their family's wishes do so, not from a sense of duty, but from a concern over their status in the family and a healthy sense of ambition. Many of the elder wraiths of the Yellow Springs have long since given up actual concern for their offspring, claiming that the youngest generations of both living and dead are so *alien* and disrespectful. In addition, after a while, wraiths just start losing track of who the by-blows actually are. One's family's offspring are still important in an abstract sense, because they can help determine how much status your family has. However, the countless great-great-grandchildren rarely have a face or a personality to a wraith who's dwelled in the Underworld for



centuries. In these cases the mandated Confucian relationship becomes a charade, and while respect is forced from younger wraiths, older ones do not necessarily reciprocate by setting an appropriate example.

This inherent hypocrisy rarely discourages the *p'o*. Rather, the *p'o* sees this sham as an opportunity, and concentrates on the corrupting its *hun* despite his adherence to ritual — assuming, of course, that adherence is salutary and not evidence of true piety. Even in the closest adherence to tradition there is still corruption and there is still greed, assuming one follows tradition without understanding why. Oblivion is never too far away for those who blindly follow the motions of Confucianism while blithely feeling that mere robotic ritual is enough to keep the *p'o* at bay.

However, those who truly believe in and master the tenets of Confucianism operate in some harmony with their *p'o*. It is possible (though not easy) to make the *p'o* see that its instinctive desire to protect its offspring can be fulfilled by protecting those wraiths who belong to the *hun*'s family, as opposed to the forgetful living. This arrangement, should *hun* and *p'o* be able to reach it, has several advantages. The *p'o* finally has the recognition and respect it deserves, as well as a more active role in the family welfare. Simultaneously, the *hun* can concentrate on its wraithly business without quite so much interference from the *p'o*.

### A Confucian *P'o*'s Views on Confucianism

SO THE *HUN* FOLLOWS THE RITUALS AND SEEKS TO KEEP ME AT BAY WITH LL AND HOLLOW OBSERVANCE? SO HE ATTEMPTS TO PLACATE ME BY MUMBLING WORDS OF PIETY AND TOTING UP HIS OFFSPRING LIKE THEY ARE LIVESTOCK? THIS, HE CLAIMS, IS THE WAY TO *JEN*. THIS IS WHAT HE THINKS IS BALANCE.

I KNOW BETTER.

NOW WERE HE TRULY PIOUS, WERE HIS ATTENTION TO HIS DESCENDANTS AND DISPLAYS OF RESPECT SINCERE, THEN I WOULD BE MOST SATISFIED. I DO NOT SEEK CONFLICT WITH HIM. I MERELY WISH HIM TO ALLOW ME TO FULFILL MY DUTIES EVEN AS HE FULFILLS HIS. THIS, HOWEVER, THIS MOCKERY OF THOSE THINGS THAT CALL ME NIGHT AND DAY — THIS IS AN INSULT. I SHALL NOT BEAR IT.

HE SHALL BE TAUGHT RESPECT. THIS, TOO, IS A DUTY.

## Buddhism

The founding of Buddhism is attributed to Siddhartha Gautama, the Buddha, or Enlightened One, who lived circa 560 to 480 B.C. Buddhism has its roots in Hinduism, and the first trickle of missionaries for this new faith made their way into the Jade Kingdom during the first century A.D. However, Buddhist wraiths had not started appearing in great numbers in the Yellow Springs until the third century A.D., when they suddenly became a major threat to the Emperor's reign.

It was the tremendous influx of Buddhist wraiths that finally convinced Yu Huang to construct his own version of hell, so as to control his increasingly restive Buddhist subjects.

What exactly comprises the complete teachings of Buddha is a matter of contention, and the mystery is shrouded in two millennia of historical contradiction and misdirection. However, the central doctrines of the Four Noble Truths are almost universally acknowledged.

The First Noble Truth is suffering. In other words, everyone, whether human, animal, wraith or other supernatural being, is caught up in *samsara*, the cycle of rebirth and reincarnation. *Samsara* is a maze of suffering and physical existence where one's path is determined by one's karma (actions.)

The Second Noble Truth is that suffering has a cause. The cause of suffering is desire, or the craving of material things in a material world. By desiring things in the "physical" world, one becomes tied to that world and the changes that occur within it. As a result, one suffers.

The Third Noble Truth is that suffering can cease. The escape from the constant trauma of reincarnation and suffering in the *samsara* is called Nirvana.

The Fourth Noble Truth is that Nirvana can be reached by practicing what is known as the Eightfold Path. Following the Path requires changing one's existence to revolve around certain ethical and disciplinary ideas, to train in the arts of concentration and meditation, and to develop wisdom as a step in the eventual achievement of enlightenment. The eight paths that comprise the Eightfold Path include: right views, right intention, right speech, right conduct, right livelihood, right effort, right mindfulness and right concentration.

Buddhism is not an evangelical religion. While Buddhist priests are more than happy to discuss religious matters with non-Buddhists, there is no active recruitment or attempt to coax outsiders into the fold. Buddhism is not exclusionary, allowing it to be adapted to coexist with whatever religion you may believe in. Most Buddhist teachings are personal in that you have to decide for yourself how much you wish to be involved.

## Buddhism and the *P'o*.

Buddhist doctrine provides for two main views of the *p'o*, as well as thousands of splinter opinions. While the two schools of thought run counter to each other on several levels, there is no conflict or open debate between the two. Time will simply prove which is correct.

The first prevailing opinion is that Yellow Springs is the soul's final stop before achieving Nirvana. At this point, the only thing preventing the soul from achieving Nirvana is the *p'o*, defined as the part of the soul which desires and seeks *samsara*. Oblivion represents the entire rebirth process, one that represents a step backward for any wraith who has already reached such an advanced stage in spiritual development.



By following the Eightfold Path, by denying the *p'o* through meditation and what can be best described is good living, one finally triumphs and casts the *p'o* aside. From here, the victorious soul journeys into Nirvana. Unfortunately, the *p'o* as a whole has been very successful at bringing *samsara* to the afterlife. According to those who accept this notion, the entire society of the Yellow Springs is a dark mirror of Zhongguo.

Perhaps it is best that way. After all, no one ever said attaining Nirvana was supposed to be easy.

This school of thought reviles the *p'o* and seeks to deny it in all forms. However, its followers tend not to be very good at keeping track of their Fetters. Such wraiths do not even try to make conciliatory gestures to the *p'o*, preferring instead to find a way of separating themselves from any urges it recognizes as part of the *samsara*. The urge to protect one's Fetters (and follow any Passions related to the Skinlands) is unmasked as the workings of the *p'o*. As a consequence, such wraiths actively neglect their Fetters and Passions, often with disastrous consequences. Faced with total abnegation, the *p'o* feels no compunctions about fighting dirty.

Followers of the second school are a bit more pragmatic, knowing that they are in real trouble. A land where one might accidentally get melted down into white jade for all eternity is about as far away from Nirvana as one is likely to get.

To these Buddhists, the *p'o* does not represent *samsara*, but rather the only thing holding them back from reincarnation. Oblivion is not reincarnation. Oblivion is...oblivion. Nothingness. It is not reincarnation; it is destruction. Existence in the Shadowlands is a horrific detour from the soul's real journey, and

it is every wraith's calling to end this side trip as soon as possible. Reality demands that it is necessary to use karma (defined by these wraiths as one's actions) to escape from this nightmare existence rejoin the normal flow of *samsara*.

Then again, it may not be the *p'o* holding the wraith back from reincarnation. It could be the *hun*, as obviously the wraith's Fetters and Passions still mean something. Those attachments, if not renounced (or Resolved) do not allow a wraith to move on from the Yellow Springs. In the end, if the *hun* dominates the shared Corpus of the wraith, it is the *hun*'s karma that will have to resolve the predicament that the wraith finds himself in. The *p'o* has nothing to do with that at all, no matter how much the *hun* might like to blame it.

## Shadowguide Strategies in the Jade Kingdom.

There are several different strategies one can use in playing a *p'o* in a Jade chronicle. The key thing to remember is to take advantage of the societal quirks and traditions as much as possible, hiding your activities under the banners of acceptable behavior. Whereas Western play tends to focus on modern problems, Far Eastern play tends to have a much more traditional flavor, and as a *p'o* guide, you can make those traditions work in your favor.

Instead of having the *hun* focus specifically on you, your motives and your desires, play the wraith off against his divided loyalties. Country, family and friends will all tug him in different directions, and by playing up his obligations in first one area, then another, you'll drive him mad. Try to set up as many conflicting goals and motives for him as possible, while making sure he knows he's obligated to follow through on everything you trick him into doing. Then, when he's wound into a tizzy, remind him of your obligation to protect your grave and body. It may be just enough to push him over the edge — or to get him to do what you say.

One important thing to remember about the Kingdom of Jade is that here, the word "family" is actually interpreted very loosely. The average postmortem "family" resembles a political entity more than an actual genetic bloodline; new members are recruited based on talent and wealth, while unworthy blood descendants may find themselves disowned. This makes for a vibrant and competitive "family" setting, which can provide fertile ground for a cunning *p'o*.

While a *p'o* may not have active ties with a group of Spectres in his immediate area, he doesn't need them to wreak suitable havoc. Often, a *p'o* will conspire with other *p'o* from his family, always with the ruin of the *hun* in mind. By gossiping with other *p'o*, a wraith's dark side can pick up quite a bit of useful information. The juiciest bits, the *p'o* can leak to the *hun* — adding details and highlighting pertinent information about the family's history and current politics.

Don't be afraid to blackmail the *hun* with details of her past or present personal life. Learn to trade for small favors; it's surpris-

### A Buddhist *P'o*'s Views on Buddhism

*There are duties and obligations that one has to one's family. There are cravings and desires that must be satisfied because one is human. It is easy for my hun to wax poetic about the frailties of the flesh and the need to achieve Nirvana, but to deny desire, to deny samsara, this is to deny existence. If that denial is the hun's goal, it is but a simple matter for me to finish my duties and to lead the hun with me into Oblivion.*

*The reality of the situation is that while Buddhist wraiths claim to be on the road to Nirvana, the Eightfold Path is impossible to follow in the Yellow Springs. They stumble; they all stumble, as to be truly successful at following the Path one must deny even self-defense. No matter what a holy man's theories of this afterlife and its purpose might be, he will still fight tooth and claw to protect himself from violence when push comes to shove. I and my kind make sure of that, even if our hunns wished it were otherwise.*

*And so, they do not find the Eightfold Path, because we are here, and we will not surrender.*





ing how many times they'll make a "harmless" swap for a moment's gratification. The *hun* has more to lose than you do, (after all, she is in charge) so don't be afraid to push your advantages. However, don't dig your own grave, and don't destroy your own family while putting your *hun* back into her place. Some things are beyond the pale, even for a *p'o*. Destroying individual family members is acceptable; destroying the family as a whole is not.

The *p'o* is a physical and earthy part of the soul, and this cannot be overemphasized. While you are not as conniving as a Western shadow might be, you are more forceful and stubborn. Still tied into the physical world and physical sensations, you are relentless in the pursuit of concrete sensuality. If your *hun* allows you access to the physical world, you are much more likely to cooperate with his requests. However, in the end, the *hun* is keeping you from doing what you need to do, and it must be subdued in order for you to perform your charges properly.

## New Merits and Flaws

### Improper Burial: (2 point Flaw)

Your body was improperly buried. It doesn't matter whether it was bad *feng shui* or your corpse was dumped into a mass grave; your *p'o* is still going nuts. Something must be done, this shameful state of affairs must be rectified and some-

one has to pay for the indignity, otherwise you'll never get any peace from your *p'o*'s naggings.

For wraiths with this Flaw, all Harrowings have the same theme: improper burial and its hideous, soul-rending consequences. In addition, an Improperly Buried wraith's *p'o* has its difficulty reduced by one on all Catharsis rolls.

### *Kuei-p'o*: (4 point Flaw)

Your *p'o* is actually a mindless, ravaging *kuei*. When she takes over, she almost immediately goes into a rending, tearing frenzy. Even your appearance becomes savage and bestial. As the Imperial army's reaction to rampant *kuei* is usually both swift and harsh, if your *p'o* comes out at the wrong time you could be in a great deal of trouble. If you have this flaw, you need either a safe place to be locked away during Catharsis or some friends in high places to keep you from being hammered into White Jade the next time your *p'o* comes out to play.

### Exceptional Burial Site: (3 point Merit)

You have an exceptional burial site, one with superb *feng shui*. If anything your *p'o* seems more content than anything else — its job has been taken care of, after all. It is not as insistent as an average wraith's *p'o* is about the safety and well-being of your physical remains, and it actually leaves you in peace a good portion of the time.



## *Kuei* Vulnerabilities: (5 point Flaw)

You can be destroyed by mortals through the use of saliva and blood. You flee at the sound of firecrackers. Mirrors turn you away. In other words, you have all the vulnerabilities of a *kuei* without being a mindless harbinger of chaos.

See **Dark Kingdom of Jade** for more information on *kuei* and their weaknesses.

# Shadows in the Flayed Lands

by Tim Akers



At the heart of all Mesoamerican cosmology is the concept of duality. The forces of Light, Life and Fertility stand arrayed against Darkness, Death and Sterility. In this paradigm, however, these are not forces in conflict. Rather, they are opposites working in conjunction for the betterment of all. Reality is seen as existing in a state of flux, with this world and all its inhabitants dwelling in a continual process of change brought about by the two balanced sets of forces. This creation is but one in a series of lesser creations, all leading toward the creation of a perfect world.

In this process of worldbuilding, the various dualities act to hone creation itself, building up reality and then tearing it down in the quest for perfection. One or the other of the extremes might achieve a temporary superiority, but then a resurgence of the minority inevitably brings everything back into equilibrium. The ancient Aztecs, Mayans and Toltecs saw this alternating pattern of domination in the world around them in everything from the changing of the seasons to the cycle of a human's growth from helpless infant to self-sufficient adult to weak old age. They characterized these forces of Life and Death, Light and Dark, as gods. The names that they gave them were Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca.

## Quetzalcoatl: The Feathered Serpent

Quetzalcoatl's name means "Feathered Serpent," and in his day he was the personification of everything good and life-giving. He was the Morning Star, which guided the sun into the sky. He was Ehecatl, the Lord of the Winds, who brought the rains to feed the crops. He was the protector of all things that grow, and was symbolized as a source of fertility and life. In addition, since disease was thought to be an aberration of life brought by wind, he was thought of as a spirit of healing. Quetzalcoatl's very breath brought life and beauty to the land, and he was tied to spring and the harvest. All art

## A Question of Cosmology

Stygian researchers have attempted — with limited success — to reconcile the Mesoamerican conception of Life and Death with their own experiences. A school of thought currently in vogue holds that the Quetzalcoatl — Tezcatlipoca duality is simply another way of explaining the Triad, but this opinion is hardly universal. Other voices claim that the two feuding forces were merely powerful beings, or even just powerful wraiths.

This squabble is limited to the back rooms of Stygia's dustiest libraries and academies. Even the participants in the debate agree that they're arguing over something that's essentially pointless, and that the finer points of the cosmology of a society of wraiths that has essentially vanished is of little importance.

They have no idea how wrong they are.

was dedicated to him, as it was considered to be simply an unfolding of his spirit made material.

Quetzalcoatl was strongly associated with the Toltec people, a great civilization which preceded the Aztecs. It was believed that he founded their race and gave them superiority over all the people of the land. Under his loving hand, they built a great empire. Unfortunately, Mesoamerican cosmology does not allow either of the great powers to maintain dominance for long. Quetzalcoatl was disgraced in the house of the gods, and consequently was exiled. He threw off his robes of quetzal feathers and marched east to the sea. There he boarded a raft and sailed away, vowing that he would return to overthrow Tezcatlipoca and bring the universe back into order.

During this period of exile, Quetzalcoatl continued to influence matters in ancient Mexico. Exiled, however, he played a minor part in the pageant of life. His nemesis, Tezcatlipoca, became the central force in the land. The balance had shifted the other way.

## Tezcatlipoca: The Smoking Mirror

He is the Evening Star who crushes the sun under his foot and drives light from the land. He is the trickster, responsible for the wound that keeps the earth monster on the surface of the sea, and it is because of the wound that Tezcatlipoca inflicted that humanity must sacrifice its own to sate the monster's hunger. He is a deformed beast, cruelly twisted by his own corruption, and since Quetzalcoatl's exile, he has been dominant force in this kingdom.

His very name means "Smoking Mirror," symbolizing the method by which he spoke to his subjects. A priest would stare into a smooth obsidian mirror until he fell into a trance.



Upon entering this meditative state, the priest would see smoke rising from the mirror. By studying the plumes of smoke, the priest would be able to discern the future, sometimes even seeing visions of things to come.

Tezcatlipoca is not a simple force of destruction, wantonly slaughtering the innocent and laying waste to the land. Such simple destruction offers him no enjoyment, for Tezcatlipoca is a subtle god. With the exile of Quetzalcoatl, Tezcatlipoca was free to rise to power, in accordance with the natural course of things in the cyclic cosmology of Mesoamerica. But Tezcatlipoca was not content just to simply be a cog in a great machine, knowing that inevitably the Feathered Serpent would return and crush him. He was determined to break out of the pattern and strike his own path across the sky, even if it meant tearing down the universe to do so.

As the master of mysteries and the oracle of the Mesoamerican people, Tezcatlipoca knew when Quetzalcoatl would return to land between the waters. Soon, his mortal subjects were asking him for the answer. Tezcatlipoca complied with their request, revealing the month of Quetzalcoatl's return as well as the method. Quetzalcoatl would arrive, he announced, in a great boat from the east, and his arrival would signal the end of the rule of the Aztecs. However, Tezcatlipoca did not bother to reveal the year of his enemy's victorious arrival — only the month.

When Cortés and his fleet landed in Mexico in the same month as Quetzalcoatl's predicted return, Tezcatlipoca chuckled. He had planned this, having manipulated events in such a way to ensure the destruction of his people. When Cortés was welcomed into Tenochtitlan by Montezuma, Tezcatlipoca smiled to himself. When the Heretics who had followed the *conquistadors* over from Spain incited violence and began the abomination later known as the "Flaying," Tezcatlipoca howled with pleasure. He collected all the anger of the dying Aztecs, all the fear and hatred of Ix Chel and his doomed band of defenders, and gathered it under his dark banner. As the ground of the Fifth Sun tore open and Ix Chel was cast into the Tempest, Tezcatlipoca redefined his very role in the universe. No longer a necessary and balanced force of change, he remade himself into a force of Oblivion. He ripped history from its predestined track and pulled it into a downward spiral, aiming all creation at the Void so that he might escape his predestined fate.

## Shadowplay Today

The modern Shadow in the Flayed Lands traces her origin to the time of the Heretic triumph. Before Ix Chel was cast into the Tempest, the Shadow was merely a player in the age-old cosmic game, influencing a wraith but never actively coercing him toward Oblivion. Balancing the creative aspect of each wraith (as associated with and perhaps empowered by





Quetzalcoatl), the Shadow did what was necessary to rein in its other half's excesses. However, in the wake of Quetzalcoatl's exile, Tezcatlipoca assumed absolute domination in the great game, and the notion of balance became obsolete. Individual Shadows found themselves in a position of power without the responsibility of helping to maintain equilibrium. No longer were tentative shoves toward destruction canceled out by the constructive forces of Quetzalcoatl. The universal balance was askew, and in the Shadow's favor.

The burden of righting this balance now lies in the hands of each individual wraith. What was once a cosmic struggle through which all of creation was slowly changed for the better had become a personal battle, fought in each wraith's soul.

## Playing the Shadow

There are a few subtle differences between Stygian Shadows and their counterparts in the Flayed Lands. Where a Stygian Shadow is merely a part of each wraith, that portion of the unconscious that yearns for Oblivion, Flayed Shadows are truly a part of Tezcatlipoca. They are an unfolding of all the hate and pain that was garnered at the time of the Conquest, and an expression of Tezcatlipoca's desire for destruction. In the days before the Conquest, Shadows were simply players in the pageant, pawns that Tezcatlipoca maneuvered in his bid for momentary power. Now the endless cycle has been broken, and Shadows are expressions of destruction personified. Each is more a piece of

Tezcatlipoca itself, vibrant and hating, than it is a part of the wraith who wishes to serve Tezcatlipoca.

# Society in the Ranks of the Smoking Mirror



Back in the days when the forces of Tezcatlipoca stood arrayed against Quetzalcoatl and his minions, a Shadow represented the forces of death and disintegration, but in a limited, controlled way. Each "Player" on Tezcatlipoca's side in the cosmic struggle had a counterpart on

Quetzalcoatl's team, one who balanced and matched her. When the Feathered Serpent was exiled, his Players lost their power and only humankind stood against Tezcatlipoca on the field. The responsibility of playing on behalf of Quetzalcoatl now rests with the individual wraith. It is his own sense of what is right, and not the aid of a supernatural agent, that drives a wraith of the Flayed Lands forward against the night.

The model of the team has carried on into this modern age. Each Shadow continues to play the role that she played prior to





## Games

The metaphor of the Cosmic Game is integral to understanding the role of Shadows in the Flayed Lands. The contest between Quetzalcoatl and Tezcatlipoca is implicitly understood as a combination chess game/athletic contest, and their representatives are thought of as Players. Ergo, individual Shadows are defined as pawns or Players on Tezcatlipoca's side. Each Shadow Archetype is a type of "Player" for the Smoking Mirror, acting and moving according to type and pattern.

For this section, Player, when capitalized, means a specific Mesoamerican Shadow Archetype. When not capitalized, player keeps its traditional meaning.

the Conquest, even though her traditional opponent has left the field. In the original game, Players were restricted to merely influencing the conditions around the person whose soul was being contested. The individual was free to make the decisions that would save or condemn him, with only hints and nudges from each side in the Great Game. Now that Tezcatlipoca has managed to throw the universal balance out of whack, Players (primarily the Smoking Mirror's) are no longer limited in this way. While Shadows still prefer to be as subtle as possible, they are now capable of taking a much more active role in the existences of their opponents/hosts.

The ranks of Tezcatlipoca's Shadows are organized into Player types. Originally, these Players simply represented negative forces that would influence humankind. In the post-Conquest Flayed Lands, the Players have become personifications of the forces that they once symbolized. Furthermore, each is now able to tap into the primal power of the force it represents to alter the course of its Psyche's afterlife.

Each of the Player roles below is organized into a brief description of the Player, suggested types of Dark Passions that a Shadow who assumed this role would be inclined to take, and one or two Thorns in which that Player specializes.

## Miquiztli: The Skull

The most primal of all degenerative forces is death, defined not just simply the ending of life itself, but more accurately as the ending of the patterns that life creates. Miquiztli concerns itself with chaos in all its forms, from the decay of material things to the disruption of organized factions and the dissolution of ideas. Miquiztli is not happy for as long as any force of order exists in the wraith, and it will do everything in its power to disrupt that order.

## Dark Passions

Shadows who act out the part of the Skull tend to focus on bringing chaos into the afterlife of a wraith. Skull-Shadow's Dark

Passions always target the pillars of stability in the wraith's existence, be they the community in which the wraith lived or some Fetter that he holds especially dear. Miquiztli is a patient Player, slowly chipping away at any support structure a wraith is able to create for himself. This patience often manifests itself as a Passion which may seem beneficial to the wraith, but which ends up resulting in chaos. For example, a Shadow may strive to increase the wraith's status in her community, bending its will to maneuver her into a position of influence. While this may at first seem to be a positive thing for the Psyche, Miquiztli's reasoning is that it is easier to destroy a community from the top.

## Thorns

**Corrupting Touch: 7 points** — Oblivion is the embodiment of passive destruction, and Miquiztli is the master of decay. The Shadow can use this Thorn to corrupt anything that the wraith touches. By spending two points of Temporary Angst, the Shadow may attempt to corrupt an object, introducing the force of decay into its very structure. Once the Angst has been spent, the player rolls Temporary Angst. Difficulty is at Storyteller discretion, depending on the importance or strength of the object. A building that has emotional ties to many wraiths would have a difficulty of nine or 10, whereas the difficulty to affect a relic ashtray would be three or four.

If the roll is successful, then the object is infected. An infected object will immediately begin to decay at a heightened rate, depending on the number of successes rolled. One success will result in a slow process of decay that might take years to complete, whereas five successes would bring about destruction in a few short days. This power may be used on relics, Artifacts or objects in the Skinlands (if the wraith Embodies first), but it may never be used on living creatures or other wraiths.

The Shadow can only use this Thorn during Catharsis.

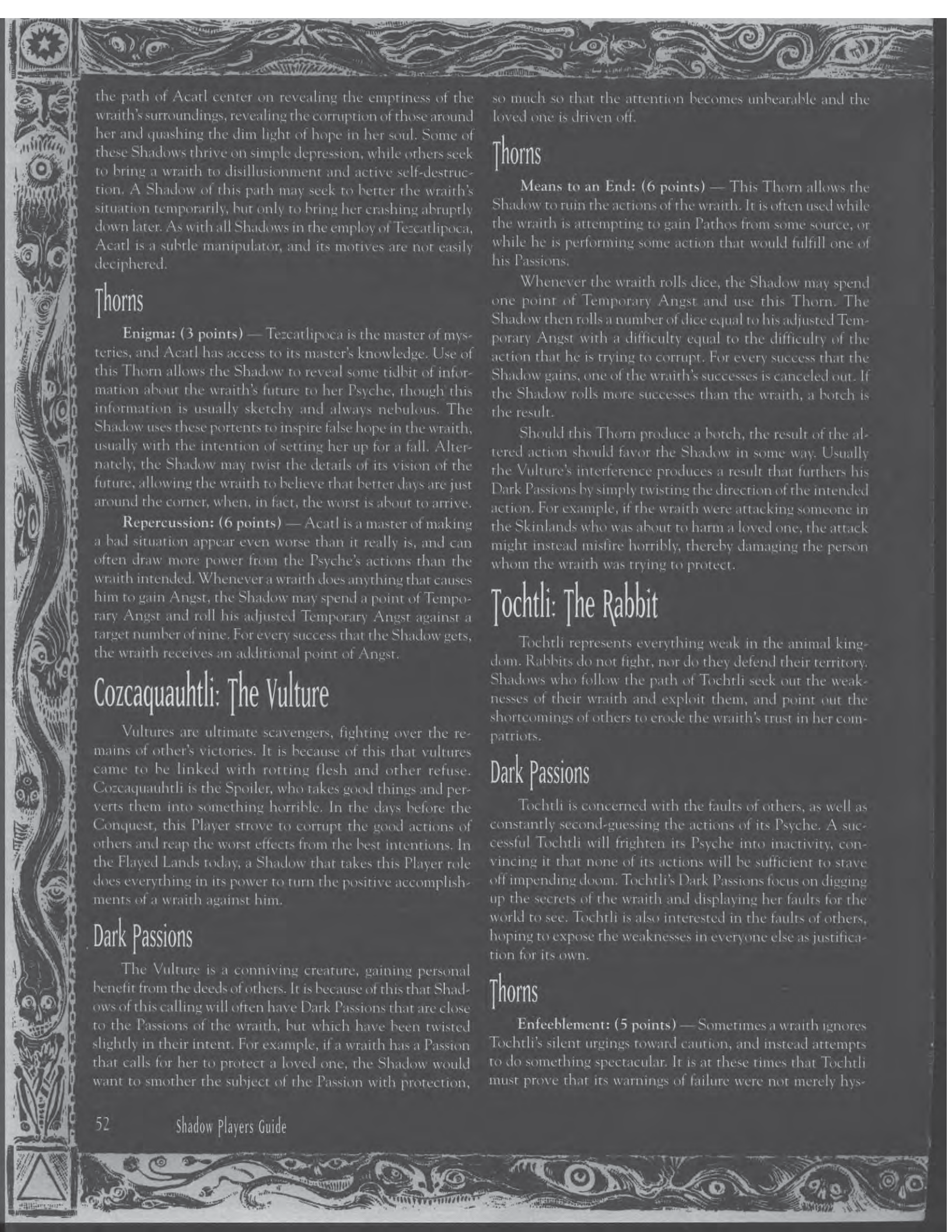
## Acatl: The Cane

An empty cane represents a fruitless crop, and it symbolizes emptiness and meaninglessness. While this Player was fairly important in the Skinlands during the days prior to the Conquest, it has reached its full potential in the Maelstrom-swept desolation of the Flayed Lands. Every wraith knows the feelings of loss and emptiness that plague the Flayed Lands, and Acatl thrives on these emotions.

## Dark Passions

Acatl is bent on reminding a wraith of all that she has lost, constantly pointing out the fruitlessness of her afterlife and reveling in the destruction caused by the Heretics during the Conquest. The Dark Passions of a Shadow that follows





the path of Acatl center on revealing the emptiness of the wraith's surroundings, revealing the corruption of those around her and quashing the dim light of hope in her soul. Some of these Shadows thrive on simple depression, while others seek to bring a wraith to disillusionment and active self-destruction. A Shadow of this path may seek to better the wraith's situation temporarily, but only to bring her crashing abruptly down later. As with all Shadows in the employ of Tezcatlipoca, Acatl is a subtle manipulator, and its motives are not easily deciphered.

## Thorns

**Enigma: (3 points)** — Tezcatlipoca is the master of mysteries, and Acatl has access to its master's knowledge. Use of this Thorn allows the Shadow to reveal some tidbit of information about the wraith's future to her Psyche, though this information is usually sketchy and always nebulous. The Shadow uses these portents to inspire false hope in the wraith, usually with the intention of setting her up for a fall. Alternately, the Shadow may twist the details of its vision of the future, allowing the wraith to believe that better days are just around the corner, when, in fact, the worst is about to arrive.

**Repercussion: (6 points)** — Acatl is a master of making a bad situation appear even worse than it really is, and can often draw more power from the Psyche's actions than the wraith intended. Whenever a wraith does anything that causes him to gain Angst, the Shadow may spend a point of Temporary Angst and roll his adjusted Temporary Angst against a target number of nine. For every success that the Shadow gets, the wraith receives an additional point of Angst.

## Cozcaquauhtli: The Vulture

Vultures are ultimate scavengers, fighting over the remains of other's victories. It is because of this that vultures came to be linked with rotting flesh and other refuse. Cozcaquauhtli is the Spoiler, who takes good things and perverts them into something horrible. In the days before the Conquest, this Player strove to corrupt the good actions of others and reap the worst effects from the best intentions. In the Played Lands today, a Shadow that takes this Player role does everything in its power to turn the positive accomplishments of a wraith against him.

## Dark Passions

The Vulture is a conniving creature, gaining personal benefit from the deeds of others. It is because of this that Shadows of this calling will often have Dark Passions that are close to the Passions of the wraith, but which have been twisted slightly in their intent. For example, if a wraith has a Passion that calls for her to protect a loved one, the Shadow would want to smother the subject of the Passion with protection,

so much so that the attention becomes unbearable and the loved one is driven off.

## Thorns

**Means to an End: (6 points)** — This Thorn allows the Shadow to ruin the actions of the wraith. It is often used while the wraith is attempting to gain Pathos from some source, or while he is performing some action that would fulfill one of his Passions.

Whenever the wraith rolls dice, the Shadow may spend one point of Temporary Angst and use this Thorn. The Shadow then rolls a number of dice equal to his adjusted Temporary Angst with a difficulty equal to the difficulty of the action that he is trying to corrupt. For every success that the Shadow gains, one of the wraith's successes is canceled out. If the Shadow rolls more successes than the wraith, a botch is the result.

Should this Thorn produce a botch, the result of the altered action should favor the Shadow in some way. Usually the Vulture's interference produces a result that furthers his Dark Passions by simply twisting the direction of the intended action. For example, if the wraith were attacking someone in the Skinlands who was about to harm a loved one, the attack might instead misfire horribly, thereby damaging the person whom the wraith was trying to protect.

## Tochtli: The Rabbit

Tochtli represents everything weak in the animal kingdom. Rabbits do not fight, nor do they defend their territory. Shadows who follow the path of Tochtli seek out the weaknesses of their wraith and exploit them, and point out the shortcomings of others to erode the wraith's trust in her compatriots.

## Dark Passions

Tochtli is concerned with the faults of others, as well as constantly second-guessing the actions of its Psyche. A successful Tochtli will frighten its Psyche into inactivity, convincing it that none of its actions will be sufficient to stave off impending doom. Tochtli's Dark Passions focus on digging up the secrets of the wraith and displaying her faults for the world to see. Tochtli is also interested in the faults of others, hoping to expose the weaknesses in everyone else as justification for its own.

## Thorns

**Enfeeblement: (5 points)** — Sometimes a wraith ignores Tochtli's silent urgings toward caution, and instead attempts to do something spectacular. It is at these times that Tochtli must prove that its warnings of failure were not merely hys-





terical ranting, and that the wraith is too weak to survive on his own. Whenever the wraith attempts an action that the Rabbit feels is inappropriate, Tochtli may use this Thorn. By spending two points of Temporary Angst, the Shadow may roll a number of dice equal to its adjusted Temporary Angst (difficulty is Willpower). For every success that the Shadow gains, the wraith effectively loses one level in the Ability that is about to be tested. For example, if a wraith were about to strike a blow in combat, the Shadow could use this Thorn to reduce its Psyche's Melee rating. This loss is temporary, and only lasts for one Scene. At the end of the Scene, all Abilities return to their normal value. The Shadow may use this Thorn multiple times, so long as it has the Angst to pay for it.

**Escape: (4 points)** — What good is it to point out the weaknesses of the wraith if the wraith gets herself destroyed anyway? This Thorn allows the Shadow to provide the wraith with an escape when things get desperate. Escape works in a way similar to Argos, and may well be a limited form of that Arcanos. To use Escape, the Shadow must offer a quick way out of a situation to the Psyche, who may refuse it. If it accepts, the Shadow then opens a portal to a safe place, through which the wraith may escape. Only the wraith whose Shadow opens the portal may make use of it, and all others (wraiths and Spectres alike) remain left behind. The portal opened is not a Nihil *per se*; instead it is a direct link to the wraith's safe destination.

Once the wraith has agreed to let his Shadow get it out, the two personalities have precisely one turn to agree upon two things: their shared destination and the cost of the Shadow's help. The price for Escape is paid in both Pathos and Angst, and the exact amount that each contributes is left up to the two personalities to decide. A rule of thumb is that one or two points sacrificed will get a wraith out of immediate danger, but maybe not far enough away to insure that danger won't come looking for her. Three or more may well be enough to get the wraith to a safe place long enough for her to rest and heal up.

As for destination, the time limit on deciding where the wraith is escaping to is absolute. Should a turn expire without an agreement having been reached, the Shadow gets to decide where he's taking the wraith. The only restriction on the Shadow at this point is that the destination must be safe. However, this gives Tochtli an awful lot of latitude. "Safe" destinations meeting the Rabbit's criteria have ranged from the top of the Empire State Building to a chamber in the Labyrinth with Spectres waiting patiently at every exit.

## Ehecatl: The Windstorm

Ehecatl most closely resembles Tezcatlipoca's true self incarnation as the destroyer. The Windstorm is the personification of senseless violence, and represents the obliteration



of things both material and immaterial. In the Flayed Lands, Ehecatl was glorified in the destruction of Ix Chel and his minions, and has only grown in power since those dark days. Shadows who play the part of the Windstorm urge their Psyches to take revenge on the Hierarchy for the destruction of their lands, and these Shadows sometimes go so far as to provide their Psyches with the means to exact this revenge.

## Dark Passions

These are simple enough: *Destroy, destroy, destroy!* When Ehecatl is the Player, the Shadow is rarely concerned with the exact nature of the destruction it wreaks, nor with the identities of the victims of its fury. It is far more interested in the act of obliteration itself. The Shadow may receive more pleasure from the annihilation of objects or people that meant a lot to its Psyche, but its overriding concern is to sow as much destruction as possible while it can.

## Thorns

**Xipe (The Flaying): (6 points)** — This is the most potent Thorn commonly used by Ehecatl Shadows. It is a spectacular display of power, tapping directly into the destructive forces of Oblivion to fuel it. The Shadow may offer the use of the Thorn to the wraith at any time, and its use is both addictive and dangerous.

When offering Xipe to the Psyche, the Shadow dictates precisely how many dice it offers, and the wraith may not negotiate this number in any way. If the wraith accepts the Shadow's offer, he may enact the power of The Flaying.

When using Xipe, a player chooses a target within line of sight and rolls the dice that the Shadowguide offers her (difficulty 7). Each success scored causes one level of damage to be done to the target. If the wraith Embodies, she may use this Thorn on a Skinlands target; otherwise the choice of victim is restricted to the rest of the Underworld. Furthermore, the damage Xipe causes is unsoakable, as it is the raw stuff of Oblivion that causes the wounds the target receives.

In exchange for this power, the Shadow gains one point of Angst for every two dice rolled, and an additional point of Angst for every "1" that comes up on the dice. If the roll

results in a botch, then the winds of Oblivion target the wraith himself. He is immediately stripped of all temporary Corpus and falls into a Harrowing.

This Thorn can be used during Catharsis, but that the dominant Shadow pays the Angst it would normally have received for calling upon Xipe.

## Quetzalcoatl's Players

In the days before the Exile, each of the Players listed above would have been opposed by one of Quetzalcoatl's own Players. Now that the Feathered Serpent has been forced from the field, it is up to individual wraiths to carry on without his guidance. Only faint echoes of the Feathered Serpent's presence remain, and it is these resonances that serve as an Eidolon to a wraith in the Flayed Lands. A Mesoamerican wraith understands her Eidolon to be a remembrance of one of Quetzalcoatl's Players, and will refer to it as such.

# The Bush of Ghosts

by Jackie Cassada and Nicky Rea

*If we lose (our) love and self-respect and respect for each other, this is how we will finally die.*

— Maya Angelou, *Essence*, December 1992



The Bush of Ghosts is the true name of the African Underworld. Though many believe that it comprises only the rural or pastoral part of the Underworld, excluding the cities, in fact, the Bush encompasses the whole of it. Existing before the rise of villages, the Bush still underlies even the greatest of metropolises. The kingdoms which comprise what Westerners erroneously call the Dark Kingdom of Ivory may contain great and powerful cities wrapped in decay, but beneath them lies the Bush — seemingly eternal and therefore, patient. Surrounding the Bush and lying between many of the kingdoms is the great Ocean, which corresponds to the Tempest.

Still, much of the Shadowlands remain similar to its mirror image in the living lands and the wraiths who inhabit them retain their ties to the living even more closely and jealously than do those of the west.

Playing a wraith (and that wraith's Shadow) in the Bush of Ghosts presents several roleplaying challenges. Chief among them are understanding the differences in culture that give the African Underworld its unique shape and how those cultural beliefs create a wraith that is not a dual entity, but a quadruple one. Because of these differences, the Shadow fulfills a slightly different role here than its Western counterpart might.

## A Note About Other Thorns

Shadows in the Flayed Lands are by no means limited to the Thorns listed above. They may use any of the Thorns from *Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition*, as well as those contained elsewhere in this book, assuming that they pay the normal price for them. The ones listed in this chapter are simply those Thorns that the Player roles specialize in, or that Tezcatlipoca has created specifically for the use of his servants.



First, it serves to goad the wraith as those of the Western Underworld do. Second, it alienates the wraith from those who remember her. This weakens her ties to the world of the living and hastens her dissolution or transformation into a Sinkinda (Spectre). Many Africans believe in reincarnation. They see life and death not as mutually exclusive, but as two sides of the same thing. Each is regarded as simply a different state of being. Rather than viewing death as the end of life, Africans see it as a transition state between their former life and one they have yet to live.

Each soul enters the *Ile Aiye* or House of Life — the material world — with a particular purpose to fulfill. A person who dies before doing so retains her responsibility for achieving that end. As a wraith she must continue to use her abilities and enlist her descendants in fulfilling her lifework. Sometimes, the nature of her task on earth only becomes clear after death, when the new wraith suddenly realizes that she cannot complete her passage from the *Ile Olokun* or House of the Deep (another term for the Bush of Ghosts) to the *Ile Oni* or House of Heaven (similar to the Far Shores) from which she may experience rebirth as one of her own descendants.

The intrusion of nonnative religions and belief systems, such as those of Islam and Christianity, has caused drastic changes to this once continuous cycle of the soul's journey through the three Houses. Rumors have proliferated within the Bush of Ghosts that the passages between these three realms have closed, if, in fact, they ever existed. Suspicion that the only future for an African wraith lies in its dissolution in the swirling depths of Ocean fosters a growing anger and frustration for the Bush of Ghost's Restless Dead. Wraiths who inhabit the Bush of Ghosts now cling ferociously to their connections with the *Ile Aiye*, fearful of what awaits them once they are no longer remembered by the living. Shadows of African wraiths thrive on this terror and seek to drive their wraiths closer and closer to Ocean's edge.

## Remembrance

*Abambo*, as African wraiths call themselves, expect to be remembered by their families. What is often mistaken as ancestor worship by outsiders unfamiliar with what they are seeing is actually simple recognition of the place the dead occupy in the current lives of their descendants and loved ones. Maintaining this connection and using it to complete unfinished tasks (as a preface to eventual rebirth into the living world as one of their own descendants) forms the primary goal of wraiths native to the Bush of Ghosts.

Like their Western counterparts, *abambo* (the singular form is *ibambo*) face an inner struggle to achieve their aims and to retain their connection with the world of the living. Unlike the duality inherent in western wraiths, however, *abambo* have a four-fold nature. The *goredenna* (literally "black cloud") or





## Akua and Sikhumbuzo

*Abambo* start with one free dot in Eidolon, reflecting the presence of their *akua* as a separate and distinct part of their four-fold soul. Unless there is some overwhelming reason why they would not do so, *akua* always manifest as the *ibambo's* true Nature, rather than its Demeanor. When attempting to stave off the *goredenna's* depredations, an *ibambo's* player may roll on her Eidolon (difficulty 8). Success causes the *akua* to manifest (Storyteller discretion as to how) for a single scene, lowering by 1 all difficulties in attempts to resist the *goredenna*. The *akua* cannot manifest more often in a session than an *ibambo* has levels in Eidolon. When harvesting Pathos or defending a Passion, the manifestation of the *akua* adds one automatic success to those actions.

*Sikhumbuzo* appear as the idealized memory others have of them. Rather than being a distinct, separate personality, the *sikhumbuzo* embodies those qualities most prized by the *ibambo's* mortal Fetters. (For example: If a great leader's followers remember her as kind, generous and brave, her *sikhumbuzo* appears to have those attributes when it manifests to them.) The strength of the *ibambo's* Fetters determines the appearance of the *sikhumbuzo*. If the *ibambo* has few Fetters, the *sikhumbuzo* is hazy and indistinct; many Fetters or a few strong ones impart an appearance almost indistinguishable from that of a living person. Even *abambo* who lack the Embody Arcanos can manage brief manifestations in the presence of their Fetters by spending two points of Pathos and one point of Willpower. *Sikhumbuzo* only appear when the *ibambo* is in contact with her material or familial Fetters or when a Fetter is threatened during a Harrowing. When the *sikhumbuzo* manifests during a Harrowing, the difficulty to overcome the nightmare ride is lowered by 1.

Shadowself of an African wraith makes up only one part of a four-part entity, existing alongside the *chioneso* ("guiding light") otherwise known as the Psyche, the *akua* (literally "sweet messenger") or dreamself, which connects the *ibambo* with its Passions and the *sikhumbuzo* ("reminder") or heartlife which epitomizes the *ibambo's* relation to its Fetters or family.

The *chioneso* and *goredenna* correspond with the Psyche and Shadow of Western wraiths, having distinct personalities and motivations. The *akua* functions as a manifestation of the *ibambo's* Eidolon, overseeing the harvesting of Pathos and acting as a spiritual bulwark against the *goredenna's* assaults. The *sikhumbuzo* serves as the link between the *ibambo* and the world of the living, handling communications between the *ibambo* and her mortal kin or followers. It draws its strength from the *ibambo's* Fetters.

In essence, the *goredenna* seems to be outnumbered three to one. In actuality, however, this divided state of self makes it poten-

tially easier for the *goredenna* to do its job — sundering the connections between the soul and those who remember it in the world of the living. Should all an *ibambo's* Fetters be destroyed rather than resolved, the *sikhumbuzo* can no longer manifest, trapping the wraith in the deeper Underworld. Should the *goredenna* successfully subvert or weaken one of the *ibambo's* Passions, this also diminishes the *akua*. The *akua* is unable to manifest again until the *chioneso* gains a point of Pathos. This opens the *ibambo* to more potential attacks during which she is unable to use her Eidolon to resist.

All *abambo* begin as "remembered dead"; their primary Fetters are their families, or in the case of great leaders or heroes, those who followed them while they lived. *Abambo* are considered to be vital parts of their family (or following) and communicating with the living is not forbidden, as it is in the Shadowlands of Stygia. The Code of Charon does not apply in the Bush of Ghosts. Remembered dead are honored by their families and friends, who offer them gifts and regularly seek their counsel regarding any important family or tribal decisions. Tasks which the *abambo* failed to complete in life are passed down to their descendants to accomplish, so that their ancestors' lives may have

## Memoriam and Lifetask

All *abambo* must begin with Memoriam scores of at least 2, reflecting their importance to those who remember them. Further, their Fetters and Passions must reflect the unfulfilled obligations or unfinished business that they left behind at their deaths. For example, rather than having a Passion of **Protect Children (Love) 5**, an *ibambo* would have a Passion such as **Protect children by working to bring famine relief to my village (Love) 5**. This not only provides more roleplaying opportunities by clarifying who and what the *ibambo* cared most about, but helps define more clearly what the wraith was like in life.

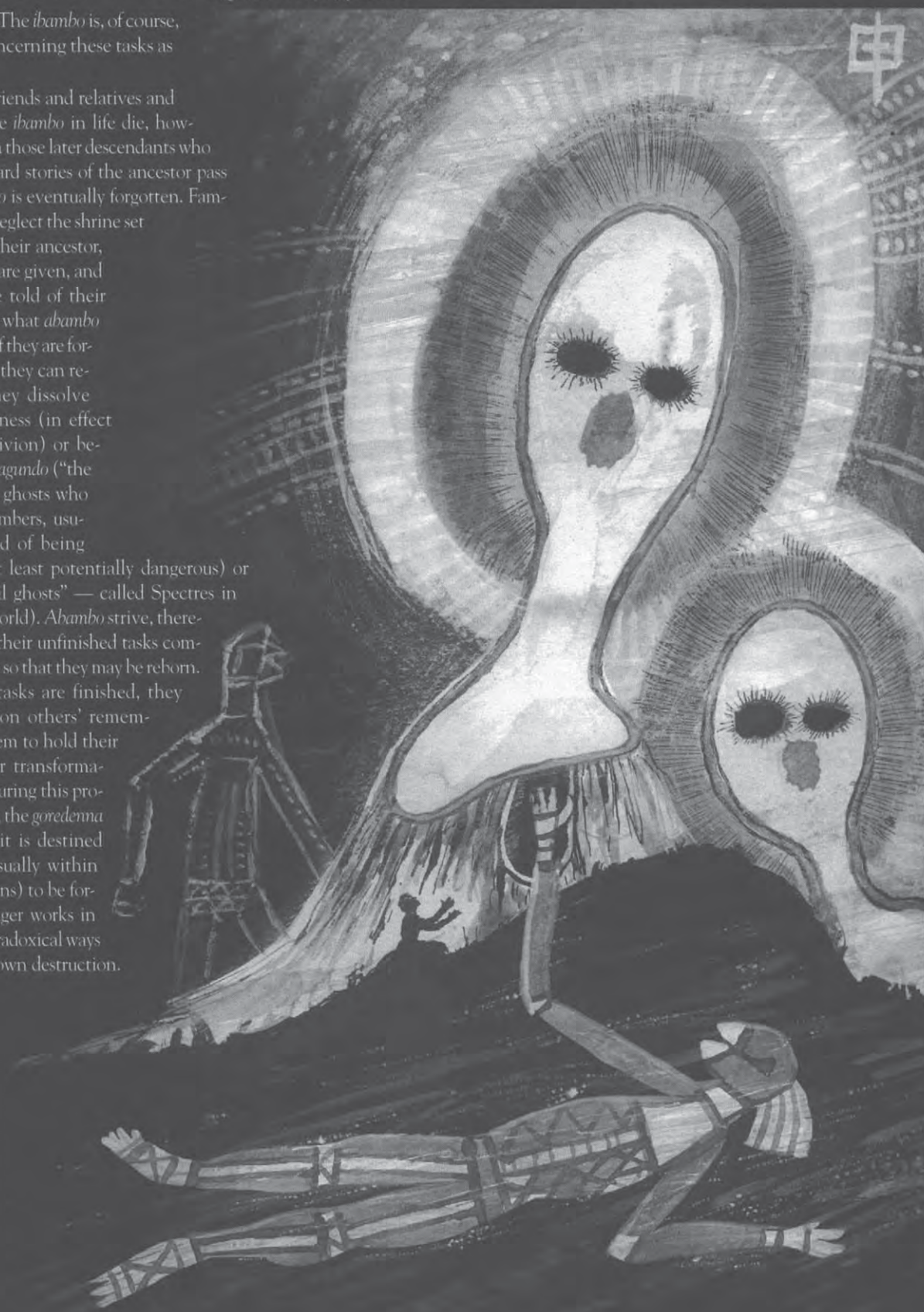
In addition, *abambo* have a Lifetask which must be selected during the process of character creation. While this should serve primarily as a roleplaying tool, Storytellers may choose to lower the difficulty of tasks related to the achievement of the Lifetask. Possibilities for Lifetasks include such goals as **Create something that will outlive my personal existence** or **Return traditional African tribal values to the modern world**. Any task that is unlikely to be completed in one lifetime and that is essentially positive in nature may be appropriate. Negative goals (such as **Eradicate all non-Africans**) or tasks that are ridiculously easy to fulfill (like **Get my nephew a job**) are not Lifetasks and should be disallowed.

Naturally, the *goredenna* seeks to prevent the *chioneso* from completing her Lifetask. It should therefore be given a Shadowtask of its own to fulfill. This may either be in direct opposition to the Lifetask, or a task which more subtly precludes the completion of the *ibambo's* work.



been fruitful. The *ibambo* is, of course, consulted concerning these tasks as well.

As the friends and relatives and who knew the *ibambo* in life die, however, and even those later descendants who have only heard stories of the ancestor pass on, the *ibambo* is eventually forgotten. Family members neglect the shrine set up to honor their ancestor, no more gifts are given, and no stories are told of their deeds. This is what *abambo* fear most, for if they are forgotten before they can reincarnate, they dissolve into nothingness (in effect entering Oblivion) or become either *hagindo* ("the forgotten" — ghosts who nobody remembers, usually suspected of being harmful or at least potentially dangerous) or *Sinkinda* ("evil ghosts" — called Spectres in the western world). *Abambo* strive, therefore, to have their unfinished tasks completed quickly so that they may be reborn. Until those tasks are finished, they must rely upon others' remembrances of them to hold their dissolution or transformation at bay. During this process, however, the *goredenna* realizes that it is destined over time (usually within five generations) to be forgotten. Its anger works in sometimes paradoxical ways to hasten its own destruction.

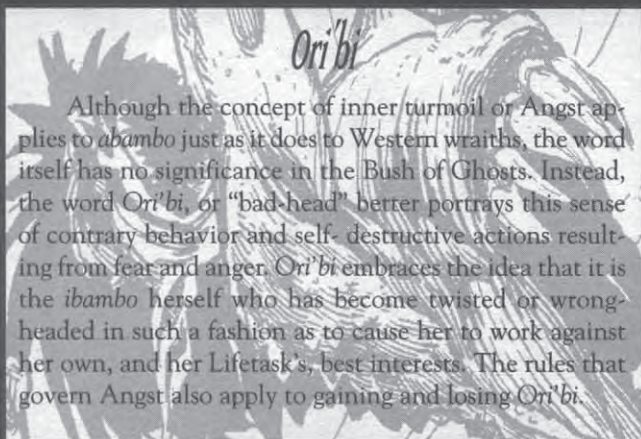




## Goredenna

*Goredenna* are jealous of the living. Although the thinness of the barrier that separates the living world from the Bush of Ghosts allows *abambo* to exist alongside their families and even interact with them in a limited fashion, *goredenna* resent this limitation. Their desire for immediate sensual and tactile gratification overwhelms their respect for the traditions that govern their existence. Moreover, they are angered by the process that requires them to fulfill certain conditions before reentering the *Ile Aiyé* (i.e., before being reborn). Rumors that such a reentry is no longer possible only serve to increase their anger. As the *ibambo* races against time to be reborn, the *goredenna* seeks to make sure they lose that race. Because it cannot have everything it desires, the *goredenna* childishly wants its higher self to have nothing at all.

In essence, playing a *goredenna* is not very different from taking on the usual role of a Shadowguide. Many of the tricks, manipulations, Dark Passions, Thorns and temptations remain the same. The major difference comes from the unique mindset, the reasons behind what the *goredenna* is trying to do and the goals the *goredenna's* *ibambo* is attempting to accomplish. Because the *goredenna* can “win” by eradicating the wraith’s Memoriam score, its primary purpose is to garner *Ori’bi* (Angst), and most of its actions are bent to that purpose.



Although the concept of inner turmoil or Angst applies to *abambo* just as it does to Western wraiths, the word itself has no significance in the Bush of Ghosts. Instead, the word *Ori’bi*, or “bad-head” better portrays this sense of contrary behavior and self-destructive actions resulting from fear and anger. *Ori’bi* embraces the idea that it is the *ibambo* herself who has become twisted or wrong-headed in such a fashion as to cause her to work against her own, and her Lifetask’s, best interests. The rules that govern Angst also apply to gaining and losing *Ori’bi*.

## Becoming Forgotten

The *goredenna* attempts to obliterate its *ibambo's* memory in the living lands. It does this through several means: Attempting to harm or discredit the *ibambo's* family, giving bad advice, helping others destroy material objects that serve as its *ibambo's* Fetters, and frightening other members of the tribe so they will want to drive out the “evil ghost” are only a few of its tricks. Whenever the *goredenna* is able to take over, it immediately seeks to destroy the ties between the wraith and her family and Fetters, and to sap the will of the *ibambo*. As with Western wraiths, threats to and destruction of Fetters and Passions bring on Harrowings.

The *goredenna's* actions result not only in the accumulation of *Ori’bi*, but also decreases its *ibambo's* Memoriam score, thus weakening its connection with family or followers. At the same time, the resulting loss in respect paid to it only adds fuel to the fire of its anger and causes it to seek revenge for not being remembered. The Shadowself fights a losing battle; as it works to keep the *ibambo* from being remembered, it dooms itself to become one of the Forgotten Dead or consigns itself to Oblivion in Ocean.

**System:** For every permanent point of *Ori’bi* (Angst) the *goredenna* gains, the *ibambo's* Memoriam score is reduced by one. Additionally, as each generation goes by (approximately every 20 years), the *ibambo's* Memoriam score is automatically reduced by one. Conversely, whenever an *ibambo* manages to fulfill an unfulfilled obligation or finish one of her unfinished tasks, she is awarded a point of Memoriam or one that was previously lost is restored.

## Goredenna Archetypes

Although players of *abambo* may choose from existing Shadow Archetypes for their characters’ *goredenna*, the following alternatives provide a better model for African wraiths. Storytellers and players may come up with other possibilities for customizing the personalities of *goredenna* to reflect more accurately the atmosphere of the Bush of Ghosts.

- **Beast** — This Archetype seeks destruction, pure and simple. The ravaging ferocity of the marauding beast powers its actions. The pleasure of rending and tearing drive it to attack his *ibambo's* comrades physically at the slightest provocation. When the Beast is in control, it will physically assault whatever or whomever is closest to him. It will even attempt to do this across the border between the living and the dead, provided it has the opportunity to affect the physical world.

- **Dictator** — The *goredenna* with this persona needs to control every aspect of her *ibambo's* existence. It acts as more than an advisor, seeing itself as an absolute ruler. The polite request is unknown to its vocabulary. It orders, rather than asks, and grows angry when its demands are ignored or refused.

When the Dictator controls the *ibambo*, it attempts to take over the leadership of the group, giving directions like a general in battle.

- **Hermit** — The Hermit takes orders from no one. It sees itself as totally self-sufficient and refuses help from anyone. It dislikes the company of others and seeks to disassociate its *ibambo* from anything and everything around it.

When the Hermit has the upper hand, it does whatever is necessary to drive others away from it. It refuses to cooperate in group activities or missions and constantly attempts to find a place where it can be alone (not a good idea for survival in the Bush of Ghosts).

- **Outcast** — This Archetype feels that others have conspired against him and are responsible for cutting him off from



## Shadowguiding a *Goredenna*

The Shadowguide of a *goredenna* must keep three roleplaying goals in mind when interacting with the *ibambo*. Because anger at eventually becoming forgotten by the living twists the *goredenna* into a self-destructive force acting to hasten her own entry into the ranks of the Forgotten or *Sinkinda*, its actions focus on effects that will cause harm to her *ibambo* or weaken its memory in the minds of the living. First, it will do what it can to destroy Memoriam and/or Fetters, gathering *Ori'bi* for this purpose by seducing and corrupting her *ibambo* into committing wrongful activities. Second, the *goredenna* will seek to physically harm her *ibambo's* Corpus as its anger lashes out at the nearest target. Third, the *goredenna* seeks to alienate the living family of her *ibambo*, chipping away at their ancestral respect as another way to attack Memoriam and Fetters and to prevent the *ibambo* from utilizing her descendants to accomplish her Lifetask.

Since part of its anger comes from the fact that it no longer dwells in the world of the living, a *goredenna* will seek every available opportunity to act upon members of her *ibambo's* family who still walk around in the flesh, causing them as much torment as possible and destroying the reputation of the *ibambo* in the process.

The *goredenna* knows that eventually, within five generations (or 100 years) it will have its way, as all those who remember her *ibambo* die off and join the ranks of *abambo* in the Bush of Ghosts. Because of this, it can afford to be patient — and subtle. When acting as a *goredenna*-guide, a player should avoid constant harassment of its *ibambo's* player. (See the guidelines for Shadowguides in *Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition* for amplification of this precept.)

Conversely, the *goredenna* is aware that if the *ibambo* can accomplish his Lifetask and complete his unfinished

business, he will pass on to the *Ile Orun*, where he will receive permission from his prospective new mother to incarnate as a child of her family. Thus, the *goredenna* cannot afford to wait too long or fail to interfere and overturn gains made by the *ibambo*.

Most *goredenna* have a particular favored method for achieving their aims and choose Thorns designed to fit in with their overall concept. The Beast Archetype, for example, would probably choose Thorns that have direct, physical effects, while the Hermit would prefer subtler Thorns designed to eventually alienate the *ibambo* from those who care about her. Further, as each *goredenna* takes its greatest pleasure from experiencing the tactile sensations available only in the material world, almost all *goredenna* learn Arcanoi designed to allow them to interact in that world. And since materialized wraiths are subject to damage from physical attacks in the *Ile Aiyé*, *goredenna* take every opportunity to cajole, persuade or force *abambo* to step across the boundary and lay themselves open to losing Corpus while the *goredenna* revel in physical sensation, even pain.

Paradoxically, all this leads to both subtler and more overtly brutal play and to more interaction in the material world. Passions and Fetters are given even greater meaning, as they are personified by parts of the *ibambo's* soul. The living family, friends and followers of the *ibambo* also play a larger role, as it is their recollections and willingness to assist their revered ancestors that allows the *ibambo* to continue striving toward fulfillment, and prevent him from being lost to Oblivion or becoming a *Sinkinda*. *Goredenna*-guides have a lot to keep track of and must try to balance all these aspects of existence in the Bush of Ghosts when playing off against their *chioneso*.

his rightful place in the family and the tribe. He blames everyone around him for his own sense of isolation and seeks to avenge himself for having been ostracized.

When the Outcast takes control, he deliberately seeks to make those around him suffer. He believes that he has been cast out of "society" and exacts punishment on those who are still considered to be part of the group. Because he has no respect for the traditions or customs of those who have exiled him, he drives his *ibambo* to act in ways that reflect his own lawless nature.

- **Sorcerer** — The Sorcerer desires personal power over both living and dead. She will push the *ibambo* to learn as many Arcanoi as possible, especially those which increase Angst, so that they may be used to increase her strength. She is not above bargaining with evil ghosts and exchanging favors to better her own position.

When the Sorcerer is in charge, she will put on as many displays of power (i.e., use her Arcanoi) as possible, seeking to cow

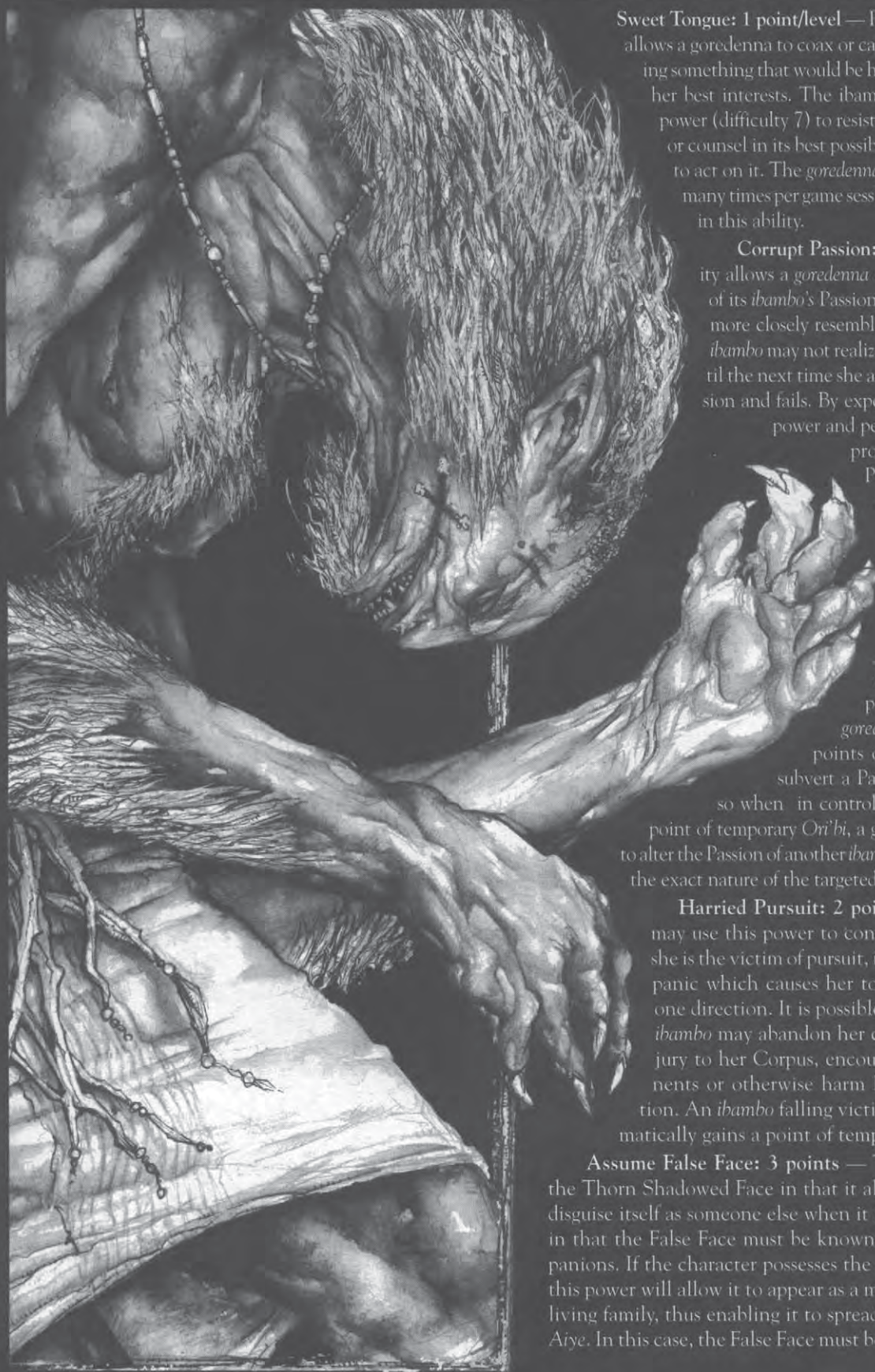
everyone around her. She relishes any harm caused by these displays, as they undoubtedly cause *Ori'bi* to grow within her *ibambo*.

## Thorns

Most of the Thorns that are specific to *goredenna* are temptations to do evil things or gain improper advantages. As such, whenever they are used to better the *ibambo's* position, she gains a point of temporary *Ori'bi*. Players should feel free to choose from either these or standard Thorns when creating a *goredenna*.

**Curse: 1 point/level** — A *goredenna* with this power can call down misfortune on another *ibambo*, raising by 1 the difficulty of a particular task specified at the time the curse is spoken. The curse will take effect the next time the targeted *ibambo* must perform the named action. The number of points invested in this power determines the number of times the designated activity is affected, after which the curse is removed. The *goredenna* must spend one point of temporary *Ori'bi* to activate this power.





**Sweet Tongue: 1 point/level** — Possession of this Thorn allows a goredenna to coax or cajole its *ibambo* into doing something that would be harmful to her or against her best interests. The *ibambo* must roll her Willpower (difficulty 7) to resist considering the advice or counsel in its best possible light and attempting to act on it. The *goredenna* may use this Thorn as many times per game session as it has levels taken in this ability.

**Corrupt Passion: 2 points** — This ability allows a *goredenna* to attempt to alter one of its *ibambo*'s Passions, changing it so that it more closely resembles a Dark Passion. The *ibambo* may not realize this has happened until the next time she attempts to feed the Passion and fails. By expending a point of Willpower and performing an action appropriate to the original Passion, an *ibambo* may attempt to restore the corrupted Passion to its preferred form. Until this happens, any attempts to work with the Corrupted Passion result in a one point increase in temporary *Ori'bi* per use. The *goredenna* must spend two points of temporary *Ori'bi* to subvert a Passion and may only do so when in control. By spending an extra point of temporary *Ori'bi*, a *goredenna* may attempt to alter the Passion of another *ibambo*, provided she knows the exact nature of the targeted Passion.

**Harried Pursuit: 2 points** — The *goredenna* may use this power to convince its *ibambo* that she is the victim of pursuit, instilling in her a blind panic which causes her to flee unthinkingly in one direction. It is possible that in doing so, the *ibambo* may abandon her companions, incur injury to her Corpus, encounter dangerous opponents or otherwise harm herself or her reputation. An *ibambo* falling victim to this ability automatically gains a point of temporary *Ori'bi*.

**Assume False Face: 3 points** — This ability resembles the Thorn Shadowed Face in that it allows the *goredenna* to disguise itself as someone else when it is in control. It differs in that the False Face must be known to the *ibambo*'s companions. If the character possesses the ability to Materialize, this power will allow it to appear as a member of the *ibambo*'s living family, thus enabling it to spread misfortune in the *Ile Aiye*. In this case, the False Face must be known to those with



whom it interacts. Harm caused to others through use of this Thorn garners *Ori'bi* for the *goredenna*.

**Summon *Abiku*: 3 points** — This potent power allows a *goredenna* to call a particular form of *Sinkinda*, known as an *Abiku*. This malevolent and cowardly creature possesses the ability to enter the body of a newborn infant, snatching its soul and whisking it off to “drown” in Ocean, thus causing stillbirth or early death in the *ibambo*'s family. When this happens, the *ibambo* either suffers a loss of 1 point in Memoriam or else an appropriate familial Fetter is lowered by 1 point. (Note that the *Abiku*'s success depends on many factors not under the *goredenna*'s control. Certain amulets and charms may protect the living from possession by an *Abiku*.) The *goredenna* must spend 3 points of temporary *Ori'bi* to summon an *Abiku*.

**Zombie Master: 4 points** — When it is in charge, a *goredenna* may use this ability to attempt to control another *ibambo*, driving it into Slumber and forcing its “sleepwalking” form to obey certain simple commands (i.e., *Walk over there*; *Spit on your leader*; *Do not dodge the attack*). The *goredenna* rolls on her permanent *Ori'bi* against the permanent Willpower of the victim. The number of successes equals the number of commands the *goredenna* may issue to her target, at a rate of one command per round. All commands must take place within a single scene. At the end of the scene, the victim awakens and resumes control of her Corpus, regardless of whether or not the *goredenna* has exhausted its quota of orders.

**Shapechange: 5 points** — This allows the *goredenna*, when it is in control, to assume the form of a large predatory beast such as a leopard or lion in order to cause more damage in combat. All Physical Traits are increased by 2 points (to a maximum of 5) and the creature gains one additional Corpus Level. The *goredenna* must spend one point of temporary *Ori'bi* to activate this ability.

## Lexicon

**Abambo:** Plural form for African wraiths.

**Abiku:** A particular type of *Sinkinda* that specializes in entering the body of an unborn child and causing stillbirth or sudden infant death. *Abiku* often haunt the same woman over and over.

**Akua:** Literally “sweet messenger,” or the dreamself. One quarter of the four-fold soul of the wraith, the *akua* enables the *ibambo* to collect and utilize Pathos.







**Chioneso:** The Psyche. The word *chioneso* means "guiding light."  
**Goredenna:** The Shadow, the quarter of the soul that directly opposes the *chioneso*. The word *goredenna* means "black cloud."

**Hagundo:** "The Forgotten." These wraiths form the majority of Restless Dead in the Bush of Ghosts. They are those who failed to reincarnate within five generations, and whose families no longer remember them. Seen as harmful and potentially evil, *hagundo* still occasionally seek reincarnation. However, most have given up that dream, instead settling in to form the major societies of the Underworld. They are the elder wraiths in the Bush of Ghosts, roughly corresponding to Gaunts.

**Ibambo:** The singular form for an African wraith. Each *ibambo* is made up of four parts, the *chioneso*, the *goredenna*, the *akua* and the *sikhumbuzo*.

**Ile Aiye:** The material world. It means "House of Life."

**Ile Olokun:** Meaning "House of the Deep," this is another term for the Bush of Ghosts.

**Ile Orun:** This is the "House of Heaven," and as such, is similar to the Far Shores. *Ibambo* go to the *Ile Orun* to await rebirth.

**Ori'bi:** This corresponds to Angst, although the concept is slightly different. Literally this means "bad head."

**Sikhumbuzo:** Literally, *sikhumbuzo* means "reminder" or heartlife. It is the quarter of the soul that relates the *ibambo* to her familial and material Fetters.

**Sinkinda:** Malevolent spirits known in the West as Spectres.

## Les Invisibles: The *Mait'* Tete and the *Loa*

by jeff Combos

*You cannot do these things casually. Everything carries its price. There are things to know and things best left unknown.*

— Wade Davis, *The Serpent and the Rainbow*



Creole wraith's Shadow is both his ally and his nemesis. He has a relationship with it that allows for them to work together instead of against one another. However, the Shadow still has its own agenda, and the goals contained therein can come into conflict with the goals of the wraith himself. The relationship between Psyche and Shadow in this paradigm is complicated and not easily understood by outsiders, and only distortions and half-truths have ever made their way back to Stygia.



## The World

The Cosmic Mirror is the Creole metaphor for all of reality. It has three parts: the Visible, the Surface and the Invisible. The Visible is where mortals live, and corresponds to the Skinlands in Strygian metaphysics. When a Creole dies, his "soul," or *gros-bon-ange*, crosses the Surface (essentially the Shroud) into the Invisible. Thus, the Surface separates the Visible and the Invisible.

However, rather than abruptly dividing the Cosmic Mirror, the Surface merely keeps the living from seeing the dead. Creole mortals and wraiths still interact with one another often, and such interactions are considered to be reasonably natural. The most common example of this sort of pain-free interaction comes when a *gros-bon-ange* possesses a the body of a mortal through Puppetry. This practice is called mounting, for the *gros-bon-ange* mounts the mortal like he would a horse, and causes no great excitement to the mortal thus mounted. Because of this arrangement, Creole mortals are called Les Chevaux by their ghostly compatriots, while mortals refer to the unseen but omnipresent wraiths as Les Invisibles.

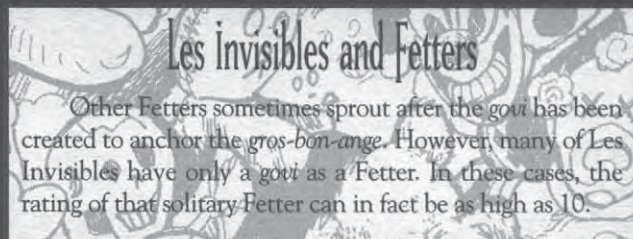
Most of Les Invisibles exist in the Mirrorlands, which are the Creole equivalent of Shadowlands. Beyond the Mirrorlands is the Abyss (known to Stygian citizens as the Tempest), a terrifying swirl of chaos that belches forth destructive storms during hurricane season. However, there is an area of safety within the Abyss. The Island Below the Sea is the home of Les Mysteres, powerful beings Les Invisibles have allied themselves with. The Island Below the Sea is a haven for Les Invisibles traveling through Abyss, and while there a *gros-bon-ange* may even make a deal with one of the Mysteres who dwell there. A *gros-bon-ange* who swears himself to a Mystere is called a Loa and receives special powers as a result of his bargain.

When a *gros-bon-ange* passes into the Invisible, she undergoes a metamorphosis. The "conscience" of the person, called the *ti-bon-ange*, separates from the *gros-bon-ange* and passes on to whatever reward awaits it. Occasionally, the *ti-bon-ange* leaves part of itself behind, and this fragment of the higher soul serves as a wraith's Eidolon. However, in most cases the flight of the *ti-bon-ange* is disastrous for the *gros-bon-ange*. Without the *ti-bon-ange*, the *gros-bon-ange* is unable to determine right from wrong.

Many Creole wraiths — the unwanted, the unloved, the hated in life — unfortunately never pass beyond this stage in their development. Amoral and directionless, they also have no Passions and Fetters to shape their post-mortem existences. More to the point, a *gros-bon-ange* without any Fetters immediately falls into the Abyss. Unable to return to the Mirrorlands, a wraith stranded thus becomes easy prey for *Baka*.

However, if the *gros-bon-ange* had been important to her family in life, rather than let her wander her survivors perform the ceremony called *retirer d'en bas de l'eau*. This ritual changes

the *gros-bon-ange* a second time and allows her to remain in the Mirrorlands. During the course of the ceremony, the family creates a Fetter for the *gros-bon-ange* called a *govi*, which binds the dead family member to her family so that they may aid each other. So long as the family protects the *govi*, the *gros-bon-ange* will always be able to exist in the Mirrorlands.



In some cases, the family also calls upon the *Loa* with whom they have the closest connection to aid the newly fledged *gros-bon-ange*. (Note: Les Chevaux know little if anything about Les Mysteres' true nature. Because Les Mysteres never leave the Abyss, the *Loa* are the only contact Les Chevaux have with these beings.) The *Loa*'s Mystere then reaches out and helps the new *gros-bon-ange* deal with the loss of her *ti-bon-ange*. Essentially, a ghostly mentoring system is in place, providing a new *gros-bon-ange* with a support system of living and dead until such time as she has accepted her new condition and is ready to begin her new existence.

This is the stage where most of Les Invisibles end their personal evolution. To these wraiths, the Shadow is not a distinct entity. Instead, it is a part of the whole, and regarding it as an enemy or "other" is self-destructive. "Taming" or "destroying" the Shadow is the same as subduing or destroying a part of the self, and what sensible wraith wants to do that? Instead, Creole wraiths strive for self-integration, recognizing the Shadow's wants and needs as their own.

Some of Les Invisibles do lend too much credence to their darker desires and spiral down to Oblivion. The trick, and one that many Creole wraiths never master, lies in recognizing that just because a Shadow's wants are actually one's own, doesn't mean that one should necessarily fulfill them. Denial can be good for all aspects of the soul.

## Becoming Loa

Some *gros-bon-ange* delve deeper into the mysteries of the soul, however. During a journey to the Island Below the Sea, a *gros-bon-ange* can sign a pact with a Mystere and thus become a *Loa*. This agreement has profound consequences on both the wraith and her Shadow. As part of the deal, a Mystere impresses his own personality on those darker urges that would normally serve as the wraith's Shadow. By giving those negative impulses a distinct personality with goals, Les Mystere keeps the Shadow from instead focusing its malice upon destroying the *gros-bon-ange*. Part Mystere and part *gros-bon-ange*, this newly formed personality is called the *Mait' Tete*.



The *Mait' Tete* serves as the Shadow for *Loa*, and offers both more and the potential for disaster. Normal Invisibles' Shadows function in ways similar to those of *Les Morts*.

For more information on *Les Invisibles*, see pages 105-111 of the **Wraith Players Guide**.

## Lexicon

**Abyss:** The dark and chaotic region of the Invisible; the Tempest.  
**Baka:** Wraiths dominated by their darker sides; also known as Spectres.

**Connaissance:** The Arcanos used by a *Serviteur* to manipulate *Baka* and his *Mait' Tete*.

**Cosmic Mirror:** The Creole term for all of reality.

**Creole:** Term used to designate anything native to the Caribbean, especially Haiti.

**Govi:** An earthen pot used as a Fetter by *Les Invisibles*; see *retirer d'en bas de l'eau*.

**Gros-bon-ange:** The closest Creole approximation to "soul," or Psyche.

**Invisible:** The part of the Cosmic Mirror made up of the Mirrorlands and the Abyss; in essence, the Underworld.

**Island Below the Sea:** The home of *Les Mysteres*, located deep within the Abyss.

**Les Chevaux:** "The Horses"; the term used by *Les Invisibles* to describe Creole mortals.

**Les Invisibles:** "The Invisible Spirits"; the term *Les Chevaux* use to describe Creole wraiths.

**Les Morts:** "The Dead"; the term used by *Les Invisibles* to describe non-Creole wraiths.

**Les Mysteres:** "The Mysteries"; beings of great power who reside upon the Island Below the Sea.

**Loa:** A *gros-bon-ange* who has devoted her existence to the service of a particular *Mystere*.

**Mait' Tete:** The *Loa* equivalent of a Shadow; the unique combination of the personality of a *Mystere* and the Dark Passions of a *gros-bon-ange*.

**Mirrorlands:** The shadowy reflection of the Visible; the Shadowlands.

**Mount:** The Creole term for possession.

**Nanchon:** A group of Creole wraiths bound to the same family; a Circle.

**Retirer d'en bas de l'eau:** "Reclaiming the soul from the waters of the Abyss"; the ceremony that fetters a Creole wraith to a *govi* and creates her *Mait' Tete*.

**Serviteur:** A Creole wraith who uses *Connaissance*.

**Surface:** The mystical barrier between the Visible and the Invisible; the Shroud.

**Ti-bon-ange:** The "conscience" of a person that separates from the *gros-bon-ange* immediately after death.

**Visible:** The part of the Cosmic Mirror populated by the living; the Skinlands.

## Mait' Tete

*Great gods cannot ride little horses*

— Hairian proverb

The personality of a *Mait' Tete* is a unique merger of a *gros-bon-ange* and a *Mystere*. As a result, the personalities of individual *Mait' Tetes* vary greatly. Because the *Mait' Tete* of a *gros-bon-ange* is determined by his family's relationship to a particular *Mystere*, the result of this merger could be good or bad. Sometimes, a *Mait' Tete* will fit his *gros-bon-ange* perfectly. In other cases, the *gros-bon-ange* and the *Mait' Tete* may be antagonistic toward each other. Moreover, a *Loa* often has a *Mait' Tete* of a *Mystere* other than the one she serves personally!

### A Note on Mait' Tete Creation

In order to facilitate the creation of a detailed, playable character, the personalities of the six most powerful *Mysteres* in their aspects as *Mait' Tetes* are detailed below. The information given here is intended to serve only as inspiration. Mix the personalities of your *gros-bon-ange* and your chosen *Mystere* as much as you like.

In addition, a *Mait' Tete* may offer his *gros-bon-ange* certain unique abilities. The rules for including these abilities are provided, should the Storyteller wish to include them in her chronicle.

## Agwe — Sovereign of the Abyss

Agwe claims the Abyss as his domain. He believes he is the master of the Island Below the Sea and that the other *Mysteres* are his guests. However, he never receives the respect he craves, as there is no true sovereign of *Les Mysteres*.

**Characteristics:** Agwe is handsome and stoic. His voice gurgles when he speaks, as if it were coming from the bottom of a pool of water.

**Personality:** Agwe is the essence of nobility. He is both a provider and a protector, and expects respect for his aid. Agwe's reaction to any disrespect displayed will depend on the personality of his *gros-bon-ange*. However, self-loathing and righteous anger are the two most common responses for *Mait' Tetes* that include Agwe. In truth, Agwe's response is never predictable. He might begin to weep uncontrollably, or he could attack mindlessly the person who insulted him. However, he always defends anyone for whom he feels responsibility. Whether his devotion to protecting his charges stems from a sort of martyr complex or a fierce sense of duty is never certain.



Agwe often attempts to prove that he is worthy of respect when dominant. Again, his methods of "earning" respect differ. In some cases, Agwe buys the respect of those around him with the treasures of his *gros-bon-ange*. In others, he uses intimidation, combined with a hovering threat of violence.

**Examples of Dark Passions:** Buy the respect of others (Self-Pity); Force others to acknowledge my authority (Arrogance); Sacrifice myself in defense of my wards (Self-Loathing); Protect that which is mine (Greed).

**Common Thorns:** Spectre Prestige, Shadow Call, Shadowed Face and Shadowplay.

**Special Ability:** Agwe may provide his *gros-bon-ange* with the location of any one person, place or thing within the Abyss. Any Orienteering roll made following the use of this ability has one automatic success. The use of this ability gives the *Mait' Tete* one Temporary Angst point.

Alternately, an angry Agwe may spend a temporary Angst point to cause his *gros-bon-ange* to become disoriented within the Abyss. Any Orienteering roll after Agwe has acted thus should have an automatic one attached to it. The confusing effect continues until the *gros-bon-ange* either reaches his destination within the storm or exits the Abyss.

## Damballah – Ancient Serpent

Damballah is one of the oldest *Mysteres*. His age gives him dominion over Knowledge and Lore. Furthermore, his uncontrollable urge to climb is notorious enough that the Sky is also considered his domain.

**Characteristics:** Damballah loves high places because they grant him vantage points from which he can observe a large area. His voice is an almost unintelligible hiss.







**Personality:** Damballah is a wise hermit. He has acquired a vast amount of knowledge during his centuries of existence, and there is very little that he does not already know. Unfortunately, Damballah became jaded as the decades spun past. He is not interested in anything that he already knows all about, and this covers most topics of conversation. As a result, Damballah often appears detached and only vaguely interested in his surroundings. Only the pursuit of new lore still holds his attention. Damballah's reaction to the possibility of discovering something new depends on the personality of his *gros-bon-ange*. Arrogant in his knowledge, he either stubbornly blusters that nothing new could possibly exist, or he becomes obsessed with searching for this new grail dangled before him. One *gros-bon-ange* may be challenged to get Damballah to speak with her while another cannot get him to be quiet. Keep in mind that Damballah becomes *very* angry with his *gros-bon-ange* if falsely promised new lore.

Damballah mindlessly, and sometimes dangerously, pursues new information when dominant. If he cannot find any trace of something new to slake his boredom, he stops and calmly observes his surroundings. Inevitably, Damballah climbs any tall object he can find in order to get a superior vantage point, regardless of the integrity (or inhabitants) of the structure. Once at the top, Damballah perches there and scans his surroundings for anything of interest. If nothing he views interests him, he relinquishes control to his *gros-bon-*

*ange* to brood in boredom. As a result, many a *gros-bon-ange* has recovered himself, only found himself stranded in a precarious place by this *Mait' Tete*.

**Examples of Dark Passions:** Possess new lore (Lust); Prove there is nothing new to learn (Despair); Flaunt my knowledge (Pride); Hoard my knowledge from those unworthy to receive it (Greed).

**Common Thorns:** Shadow Traits (Athletics, Intelligence, Knowledges), Pact of Doom, Shadowed Face, Shadow Life

**Special Ability:** Damballah, if he chooses, may share his lore with his *gros-bon-ange*. In doing so, he reduces the difficulty of any roll involving Intelligence or a Knowledge by one. As payment, Damballah gains one Temporary Angst point for each roll thus modified. However, an angry Damballah can muddle the mind of his *gros-bon-ange*. He may spend one Temporary Angst point to raise the difficulty of any Intelligence or Knowledge roll by one for the duration of the scene. This ability may only be used once per scene.

## Erzulie – High Priestess of Love

Erzulie is the Mystere of Love and Desire, embodying her role by being both Agwe's bride and Ogoun's mistress. She is always aware of both the finer points of social interaction and the deeper currents of passionate relationships.



**Characteristics:** Erzulie loves to dance and flirt. She showers affection on anyone and anything that catches her eye. Unfortunately, Erzulie is fickle, and her attention rarely stays in one place for long.

**Personality:** Erzulie is the high priestess of Love and Beauty. However, she does not care for anything as much as she cares for the relationships between individuals. Family ties and friendships are important to her, but the relationship between lovers is dearest to her heart. Unfortunately, Erzulie experiences her *gros-bon-ange's* emotions of loss and abandonment just as keenly as the emotions of love and friendship, which can cause her to take any sort of rejection extremely hard.

Erzulie's reaction to negative emotions depends upon the personality of her *gros-bon-ange*. If feeling slighted and ignored, Erzulie will either distance herself from her *gros-bon-ange*. However, if she senses that the *gros-bon-ange* is pliable, she can become obsessed with the lost feeling and will harp on it endlessly. Only through cajoling and the giving of gifts (read: time spent pursuing Dark Passions) can Erzulie be convinced to return her affections to her *gros-bon-ange*.

While mounted, Erzulie either attempts to form new bonds for her *gros-bon-ange* or to recapture the affection of a loved one when dominant. She tries to form new relationships with anyone not already known to her *gros-bon-ange*. The more alien the individual, the more valued the relationship to Erzulie. However, she is most dangerous to her *gros-bon-ange* when pursuing a lost relationship. Erzulie feels a change of heart like a dagger in the back. She will do anything and pay any price to return her *gros-bon-ange* to the good graces a former loved one, and she will move Heaven and Earth to get a wraith who has ended a relationship to change his mind.

**Examples of Dark Passions:** Maintain any relationship regardless of the cost (Love); Get back the affections of a lost love (Pain); Harm anyone who spurns my affections (Pride).

**Common Thorns:** Shadow Traits (Charisma, Appearance, Empathy, Etiquette, Performance, Politics), Shadow Call, Pact of Doom (Lifeweb), Trick of the Light, Shadowed Face, Freudian Slip.

**Special Ability:** Erzulie may subtract one from the difficulty for her *gros-bon-ange* to draw Pathos from a Passion. This ability also gives her one temporary Angst point for each time it is used. Alternately, a despairing Erzulie may raise the difficulty for her *gros-bon-ange* to draw Pathos by the same amount. This is done by spending a Temporary Angst point.

## Ghede – King of Oblivion

Ghede has close ties to Oblivion, and his abilities are both numerous and potent. Both Death and Resurrection are his domain. No other Mystere will dare intrude upon Ghede's authority.

**Characteristics:** Ghede dresses in black and often wears a top hat. He is both a glutton and a jester. He is especially fond of using of foul language, and he never apologizes for being crude.

**Personality:** Ghede is a prankster and a bully. He loves telling foul jokes and disgusting stories, and he often uses his pranks for material gain. Ghede loves to be rude, crass and disrespectful. He derives special pleasure from causing a moral and upright individual to lose his composure. However, other than his affinity for crudeness, Ghede's agenda is a total cipher, even to the other Mysteres. He is powerful, guards his secrets closely, and only confides in a select few. Ghede favors Creole wraiths with a mastery of the Arcanos Puppetry, and it is rumored that the ritual *retirer d'en bas de l'eau* was his creation. The connection between this *Mait' Tete* and the legendary vampiric founder of the Samedi bloodline is tantalizing, but the details of any possible connection remain shrouded in mystery.

Ghede is a nuisance to everyone when dominant. He particularly likes to interrupt ceremonies intended for other Mysteres and demand gifts from the participants. Moreover, he will not allow the ceremony to continue until he has been appeased. Ghede knows that his presence unnerves those around him, and that they will forgive his indiscretions. However, this does not slow him down in the slightest, and he takes a perverse pleasure in the discomfort he causes. An intelligent *gros-bon-ange* will never make the mistake of angering this *Mait' Tete*.

**Examples of Dark Passions:** Disgust everyone around me (Pleasure); Demand gifts from everyone around me (Greed); Intimidate everyone around me (Hate).

**Common Thorns:** Spectre Prestige, Dark Allies, Aura of Corruption, Pact of Doom, Trick of the Light, Shadowed Face, Tainted Touch, Freudian Slip, Devil's Dare.

**Special Ability:** Ghede may add one to the difficulty for the roll of any Shade power or Dark Arcanos used against his *gros-bon-ange*. Using this defense feeds him one Temporary Angst point. On the other hand, a malicious Ghede may spend one Temporary Angst point to subtract one from the difficulty of any Shade power or Dark Arcanoi used against his *gros-bon-ange*. Which power Ghede calls forth depends on how Ghede is feeling at the moment, and nothing else.

Neither of these powers is available more than three times per scene.

## Legba – Old Man at the Crossroads

Legba is the oldest of Les Mysteres. He is the fraternal twin of the Cosmic Mirror and once claimed the Sun as his domain. His intimate connection with the Cosmic Mirror grants him influence over the Surface and all that passes through it. Unfortunately, Legba's power is waning as he ages. His weakening power forced him to relinquish his lofty claims on the Sun and retreat into the Invisible.

**Characteristics:** Legba is old and he walks with a cane. He is physically weak and his skin is covered with sores. Often he is seen smoking a pipe that glows with a mysterious fire.

**Personality:** Legba is aged and frail, and his power is waning. However, his extraordinary age grants him a great





deal of respect from all inhabitants of the Invisible. Legba enjoys this position of respect, but he does not go out of his way to demand what he sees as his due. Instead, he simply expects that it will be given freely, without any hints from him. Legba calmly refuses to grant any favors if the petitioner has not granted him his proper respect.

Unfortunately, Legba continues to age, and he fears that a time is approaching when he will cease to exist. He will panic if his *gros-bon-ange* is confronted with a real threat of annihilation, and one can only placate him by spending time in a safe area.

When dominant, above all else Legba will try to protect himself. He often mounts his *gros-* with Oblivion, and when he frighten Legba, as his sta- gives him influence over Legba's power continues influence over the have been

*bon-ange* when threatened does, he always flees by

However, *Baka* do not tus protects him and them. Unfortunately, as to diminish, so does his *Baka*. Recently, there some *Baka* who no longer recognize Legba's authority, and he sometimes must flee from them.

**Examples of Dark Passions:** Live forever (Greed); Flee from Oblivion (Fear); Make others acknowledge my age (Pride).

**Common Thorns:** Spectre Prestige, Dark Allies, Death's Sigil, Shadow Call, Shadowed Face, Freudian Slip.

**Special Ability:** Legba may subtract one from the local Surface rating when his *gros-bon-ange* attempts an action across it. Creating this effect garners for him one Temporary Angst point. However, if feeling slighted Legba may spend a Temporary Angst point to raise the difficulty of his *gros-bon-ange's* attempt to pierce the Surface by one.

## Ogoun – Warrior and Hero

Ogoun is the Mystere of war, triumph and bravery. Although Ogoun has some political savvy, his real domain is conflict and martyrdom. Therefore, he is considered a Mystere of great power, but not of great intelligence.

**Characteristics:** Ogoun is strong and filled with fiery vitality. He enjoys conflict and reaffirming his honor, preferably on the bodies of his foes. His symbol is a saber or machete.

**Personality:** Ogoun is a military figure, through and through — commanding and authoritative. He seeks glory and prestige through conflict. His wounds are badges of honor and he often speaks at length of wounds long since gone (and how he received them). Naturally, Ogoun values courage and bravery and despises fear and cowardice. He is willing to give his life in defense of those who cannot defend themselves and expects others to do the same. Ogoun invariably becomes insulted if his *gros-bon-ange* tries to abandon someone in need of a champion.



Ogoun always tries to prove his honor when dominant, and he does not brook the slightest insult. If Ogoun's *gros-bon-ange* attempts to back out of a challenge, then he assumes control and shows the coward the true meaning of honor. If Ogoun becomes dominant during combat, he remains engaged until his opponents retreat or are destroyed — or until he himself is overwhelmed. Ogoun flees only if he can do so without stain to his honor. Otherwise, he fights to the bitter end.

**Examples of Dark Passions:** Prove my honor (Pride); Destroy my enemies (Anger); Punish anyone who insults my honor (Ego).

**Common Thorns:** Tainted Relic (Saber or Machete), Shadow Traits (Any Physical Attribute or combat Ability), Shadowed Face, Shadowplay.

**Special Ability:** Ogoun may subtract one from the difficulty of any one damage roll made by his *gros-bon-ange*. This ability gains him a Temporary Angst for each roll thus modified. However, an angry Ogoun may spend a Temporary Angst point to add one to the difficulty of any damage roll made by his *gros-bon-ange*. The wraith's bravery in combat goes a long way toward determining which option Ogoun chooses.

## New Arcanos — Connaissance

### Serviteurs



*Do you want to learn the secret of the Loa? First, you must understand your place in the Cosmic Mirror, as I do. I am both a master and a servant. I exist to serve and be served. Les Mysteres guide the Loa, who guide Les Chevaux. We hold a special place in the Cosmic Mirror, and have a duty to fulfill. Without each part in its proper place, all of us would suffer. Do you understand? I have merely given you the description of your destination. However, the journey is yours to undertake — and yours alone.*

Connaissance originated as the Arcanos of the *Loa*. Given to them as a special gift over 200 years ago in return for their pledge of eternal service to the *Mysteres*, it granted them control over the *Baka* that swarm in the Abyss and infest the Mirrorlands. Since that time, others have dabbled with this Arcanos, but only the *Loa* have truly mastered it. The most common method by which a non-*Loa* learns this Arcanos is through the Thorn Pact of Doom, though this is extremely rare.

As both *Loa* and non-*Loa* initiates of Connaissance have made pacts to learn this powerful art, the noninitiated refer to any user of this Arcanos as a *Serviteur*, or "one who serves."

## Society

*Serviteurs* play an important role in Creole society. Their *Arcanos* has two major functions: It allows them to control and influence *Baka*, and enables them to temper and communicate with their *Mait' Tete*. As these powers, understandably, are in great demand, at least one member of every *Nanchon* will become a *Serviteur*.

However, all *Serviteurs* must pay a price for their power. In order to utilize the arts of *Connaissance*, a *Serviteur* must in a sense bond with her *Mait' Tete*. Because the dark desires of the *gros-bon-ange* are personified by her *Mait' Tete*, this relationship makes other Creole wraiths very uncomfortable. Furthermore, the bond between *gros-bon-ange* and *Mait' Tete* causes a *Serviteur* to appear as a *Spectre* to those using *Soulsight*.

Regardless, a *Serviteur's* greatest ally is her *Mait' Tete*. Because it is the source of many of the *Connaissance* arts, the *Serviteur* must ensure that her *Mait' Tete* remains content. In an effort to placate it, she frequently seeks its opinion and values the advice it gives. As a result of this intimate relationship, a *Serviteur* always displays a physical trademark of her *Mait' Tete*. For example, a *Serviteur* with *Damballah* as her *Mait' Tete* may always hiss when she speaks.

A non-Creole wraith with *Connaissance* also manifests an aspect of his *Shadow*, usually related to the *Shadow's* Archetype or strongest *Dark Passion*. However, Stygian culture isn't quite so accepting of this flaw as Creole society is, and a *Serviteur* is likely to meet with suspicion on *Necropolis* streets. Most Stygian *Serviteurs* also have at least some knowledge of *Castigate*, as they prefer bludgeoning their *Shadows* into submission to talking with them.


### A Quick Note...

*Les Serviteurs* are not, and never have been considered a *Guild* in any way, shape or form. *Serviteur* is merely a name for all those possessing the secrets of *Connaissance*, and there is no structure (formal or otherwise) binding practitioners of this Arcanos together. While the servants of the same *Mystere* may know or work with each other, they do so out of shared loyalty to a certain *Mystere*, not out of reference to a shared secret.

## Botches

The Arcanos *Connaissance* deals directly with the forces of *Oblivion*. As a result, a botched *Connaissance* roll can spell doom for the *Serviteur*. Because so many of the Arcanos' arts involve the aid of the fickle *Mait' Tete*, by botching a *Serviteur* may end up on the wrong side of his closest ally. For example, he may lose control of himself to his *Mait' Tete*, or find himself on the receiving end of fatal misinformation.





Some of the worst repercussions of a borch have nothing to do with the *Mait' Tete*. A *Serviteur* botching a roll involving *Baka* will find himself without protection from the *Baka* he was trying to manipulate. *Baka*, it must be noted, are legendarily resentful of any attempts to manipulate them.

## Basic Abilities

**Eyes of the Abyss:** A *Serviteur* may "borrow the eyes" of his *Mait' Tete* to detect the presence and concentration of Oblivion around him. Although this art is commonly used to locate *Baka*, Founts and other *Serviteurs* it was first used to make navigation of the Abyss safer. A *Serviteur* uses this special vision to find Byways by searching for the areas in the Abyss with the lowest concentrations of Oblivion. If an initiate of *Connaissance* can navigate the Abyss on his own, this art will also increase his chances of reaching his destination safely.

**System:** A successful roll of Perception + *Connaissance* (difficulty 8) will locate the presence of Spectres, Shades, Nihils, other *Serviteurs* and wraiths whose Shadows are dominant. The number of successes scored determines the size of the area the wraith can "scout" in this manner.

**Note:** A successful use of this art does not automatically allow a *Serviteur* to navigate the Abyss. Argos must be also used, else the *Serviteur* will lack any sort of locomotion in the eternal storm. If *Eyes of the Abyss* is used to steer in the Tempest, the *Connaissance* roll must be made first. The player may then subtract the number of successes he scores on the first roll from the difficulty of his subsequent *Orienteering* roll (but never below a 2).

**Langage:** A *Serviteur* may use the *Mait' Tete* as a translator to communicate in the secret language of the *Baka*, *Loa* and *Les Mysteres*. Indeed, it is not possible to use this art without the aid of the *Mait' Tete*.

When utilizing *Langage*, a wraith suddenly speaks in the foul language of the Spectral hive-mind. While his cries are vocalized, they are utter gibberish to any not in the service of Oblivion. Other *Serviteurs* can, of course, eavesdrop, but otherwise the only people likely to understand a wraith using *Langage* are Spectres and wraiths being mounted by their *Mait' Tetes*.

**System:** By rolling Manipulation + *Connaissance* (difficulty 8) the *Serviteur* may communicate with any spirit of Oblivion. This includes Spectres, Shadowguided wraiths, and even wraiths' quiescent Shadows. The number of successes rolled determines the length of time for which the *Mait' Tete* will deign to act as interpreter. One success provides translation services for a single turn, while five successes will allow the *Serviteur* to communicate for up to a week.

In the case of a borch, or even the expiration of the allotted time period for the art, the *Mait' Tete* may deliberately garble its translation. The results of this sort of deception are rarely uncovered before it's too late.

**Regler *Mait' Tete*:** A *Serviteur* may invite his *Mait' Tete* to mount him for a period of time. The host remains fully aware of what actions are being taken by the *Mait' Tete* and may attempt to eject the guest at any time. The use of this art sates the *Mait' Tete* somewhat, and thereby decreases the chance that it will forcibly attempt to mount an unwilling *Serviteur*.

**System:** The player rolls Wits + *Connaissance* against a difficulty equal to the permanent Angst rating of the *Mait' Tete*. The number of successes determines the length of time the *Mait' Tete* will be allowed to be active. Once this roll is made, the *Serviteur* is committed to hosting the *Mait' Tete*. One success is an invitation for an indefinite period of time, while five successes will allow the host to safely eject the *Mait' Tete* at any time after the first round without contest.

If the *Serviteur* wants to eject the *Mait' Tete* before the invitation has expired then there will be a contest for control. On a contested roll, the *Mait' Tete* rolls temporary Angst score against the *Serviteur's* permanent Willpower. If the *Serviteur* scores more successes than the *Mait' Tete*, the guest is ejected immediately. However, if the *Mait' Tete* scores as many or more successes than the host, the mounting continues. A new attempt to eject the *Mait' Tete* may be made the following turn.

Successful use of this art causes the *Mait' Tete* to lose an Angst point. However, each attempt (even a successful one) to eject the *Mait' Tete* prior the end of its allocated time costs the *Serviteur* a point of Willpower.

## • *Reler Baka*

A *Serviteur* may use this art to summon *Baka*. The *Baka* will use the quickest means available to travel to the summoner. However, just because a *Baka* has been called does not mean that he will arrive with good will on his mind; there is nothing to say that a summoned *Baka* will be friendly. Summoned *Baka* are just as likely to attack the *Serviteur* as to talk to him.

Despite the obvious dangers of using this art, *Serviteurs* have put it to a variety of uses. Among the more common uses are: to summon *Baka* who have possessed a *Chevaux* — the art causes them to leave the possessed body immediately; to lure *Baka* into traps so that they can be captured with *Marrer Baka*; and to decoy *Baka* when one is traveling to or from the Island Below the Sea.

**System:** The player rolls Charisma + *Connaissance* (difficulty 6). For each success rolled, one Spectre will heed the summons. This art cannot be used to summon a particular Spectre, and costs a point of Pathos to use.

## •• *Renvoyer Baka*

This art is used to frighten *Baka* away by making the user appear more powerful than he really is. Just like an animal raises its hackles to intimidate an attacker, a *Serviteur* using





this art expends energy to make himself appear larger, more potent, and ultimately more dangerous. *Renvoyer Baka* does not last forever, but it usually holds long enough for the user to escape or to ready appropriate defenses.

*Renvoyer Baka* also temporarily inhibits communication between Spectres and the Serviteur's Shadow, thus preventing the Shadow from calling the wraith's bluff.

**System:** The wraith rolls Manipulation + Connaissance (difficulty 8) to repel a single Spectre from the immediate area. The number of successes determines the size of the area affected. The target Spectre immediately flees the affected area. However, the effect wears off after a single scene, at which point the object of the art is likely to return with reinforcements to handle the mythical enhanced threat.

Using *Renvoyer Baka* gives a wraith a point of Angst.

### ••• Engagement

A Serviteur with this level of Connaissance can manipulate *Baka*, forming a connection between her mind and the hive-mind of Oblivion. Essentially a form of telepathy, Engagement enables a practitioner of Connaissance to transmit thoughts and commands to the mind of a *Baka* (or group of *Baka*) within sight. The genius of this art, though, is that the Serviteur implants her orders so subtly that the targets will believe that the thoughts were their own. Initiates of Connaissance receive harsh criticism for the use of this art, as many wraiths feel that by tapping into the hive-mind, one allows the hive-mind to tap into you. The Rada faction, in particular, claims that the mental connection operates in both directions, and blusters that the users of Engagement run the risk of becoming Oblivion's puppets. As a counterargument, Serviteurs point out that no one complains about their effectiveness.

**System:** A Serviteur may attempt to control a group of Spectres by rolling Manipulation + Connaissance against a difficulty of 5 + the number of targets (maximum number of targets: five). The number of successes determines the amount of control the user has over the targets. One success means that the manipulated *Baka* will respond to suggestions along the lines of what they would have done anyway (*Attack the guy on the left first, not me*) while five successes is enough to convince a *Baka* to rend his own Corpus and laugh.

The user of this art spends a Pathos and earns an Angst point for each target he attempts to control.

### •••• Reler Mystere

Only a *Loa* may learn this art. Les Mysteres are ancient and powerful beings who have existed from time immemorial and are jealous of the many secrets they have hoarded over the centuries. Even now the trade route from the Mirrorlands to the Island Below the Sea continues to bring them new lore,



which they share only with their servants. With luck, a *Loa* may tap into this vast library of lore through her connection with her *Mystere*, in order to gain access — temporarily — to the information which the *Mysteres* guard.

**System:** The player rolls Intelligence + *Connaissance* (difficulty 8). The number of successes may be used in two different ways. The primary option for this art is to distribute the successes as points among any Talents, Skills or Knowledges the wraith possesses for the duration of the scene. The only limitation on this is that the rating of a modified Ability cannot exceed five. All of the successes must be assigned immediately upon making the roll, and extra levels cannot be switched from Ability to Ability.

Conversely, the *Loa* may use *Reler Mystere* to attempt to find the answer to a single, deeply troubling question. The player may trade in all of the successes scored to ask the Storyteller one question. The Storyteller must answer truthfully and in as much detail as the number of successes suggests.

*Reler Mystere* may only be used once per scene. This art costs two Willpower to use, and earns its user a point of *Angst* for each success scored.

## ••••• *Marrer Baka*

A *Serviteur* may use this art to restrain an angry spirit through a battle of wills. If the target loses the contest, it becomes incapable of taking any action or defending itself for a number of rounds equal to the *Serviteur*'s current Willpower.

Once defeated, the subject of this art mindlessly follows wherever it is led, so long as the *Serviteur* remains near. Should a *Spectre* tamed with *Marrer Baka* be abandoned by the one who tamed him, he gradually comes out of the *Arcanos*-induced fog and return to his old self. Such *Spectres* are hell-bent on vengeance thereafter.

*Marrer Baka* is commonly used in order to capture *Baka* for raw materials.

**System:** To use this art, the wraith rolls Strength + *Connaissance* vs. the target's Being in a resisted roll. If the *Serviteur* rolls more successes than the target's Strength rating, the victim is suddenly paralyzed (though aware of its surroundings). The restrained doomshade loses all of its actions but may try to escape once per turn. Any attempt to escape is made by spending a point of *Angst* and rerolling as above.

At Storyteller discretion, *Marrer Baka* can also be used to subdue *Shadow*-ridden wraiths.

This art costs 2 Willpower and 2 *Pathos* to use, and gives the user 2 points of *Angst*.





# Swar — The Shattered Promise

by James A. Moore

## The Pathway to Swar



There are no guarantees, not in life and not in death. Despite this simple idiom, people still hold to the promises of the afterlife offered by the faith they follow. Some may actually achieve that promised, *so*-distant goal, but for many the truth is far darker.

In the Deadlands of India, myth and Oblivion have been wound into an insoluble knot, with all the wraiths of that land bound up in it.

The lies begin with Swar itself. The ultimate plane of Heaven saved for those who lived their lives properly, Swar beckons to all who die in these lands. It is a place where a soul can rest and enjoy the pleasures of existence while waiting for the great wheel to turn again and deposit him back in the world of the living. In one form or another, by one name or another, it is the goal of the Hindu Dead. It is the City of Delights, and immediate entrance to its wonders has been promised to all those who have lived virtuous lives. This promise, alas, is not kept.

Instead of sweeping into Swar, newly fledged wraiths must wait in Bhuvanar. This is the first disappointment of the *lokas*, but it is a relatively minor one. Wraiths of India are either more patient or fatalistic than their Stygian counterparts, and as such can afford to wait out this first delay. Having waited a lifetime for Swar, they reason, they can wait a little while longer. And so they stand in Bhuvanar, using their time there to acclimate to the afterlife and compare it to the myths.

This long wait, however, is not the delay at the gates of Swar. Rather, it is the wait for judgment from Yama, who must judge all before they are sent to their next destinations. Piled upon this deception is another lie, for Yama does not make the final decision as to a soul's final destination. Instead, wraiths are evaluated by other wraiths, judges who have allegedly been appointed by Yama and who speak with his divine authority. Such judges claim that Yama is among them, but again all is story, all is conjecture. Only one thing is sure: The legend has been betrayed, and worse betrayals are soon to come.

## The Gateway to Swar

Swar should be a paradise; it has long been promised to be such. From a distance, it does appear that the promise has been kept. Those wraiths waiting patiently for entrance to the City of Delights can hear the sounds of beautiful music and smell the sweet perfume of ripened fruit drifting over the walls to tantalize them. Laughter and the sound of water splashing in fountains can be heard, reaffirming that Swar is indeed Paradise. For the promise of such joy, the dead of India are willing to endure the long slow wait in Bhuvanar and the prospect of an unfavorable judgment. However, their patience is not infinite.

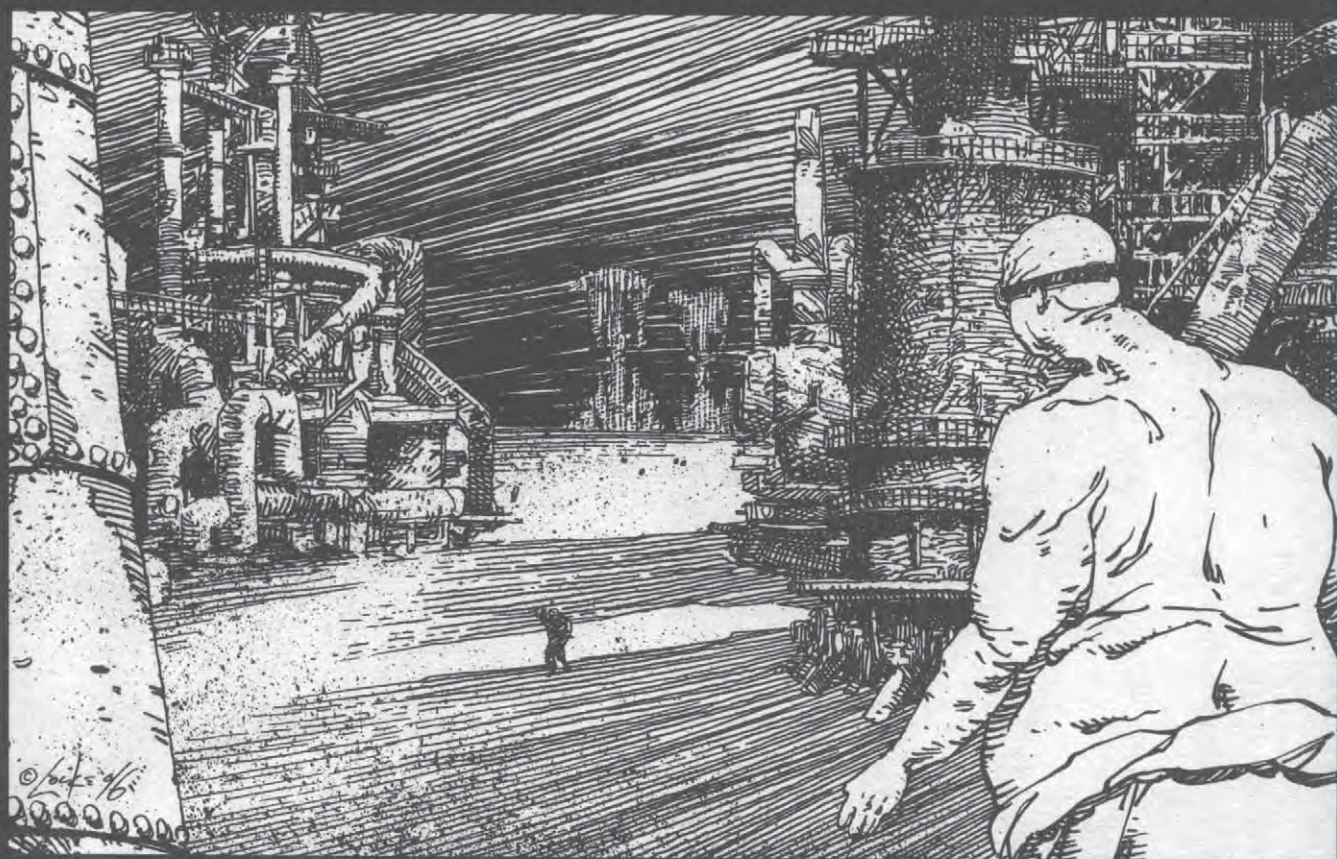
Long before anyone can reach the massive stone wall surrounding the city, the next lie is revealed. Here, in the shadow of the city, all who have passed the first round of judgment must now wait for a second. Here the lines are even longer and the judges fewer. The patrolling *Rhakshaza* are more numerous than before, but they are no friendlier. All that is offered instead of Paradise is another delay, another excuse. This second wait can take decades, and it is during this time that the patience of many finally wears thin.

That is where the Shadow finally makes its presence known. The followers of the Hindu faith are taught patience by a lifetime of inconvenience. There are few who can afford to live in luxury, and most have endured poverty as a part of everyday life. They have grown accustomed to waiting, in part because of the expectation of postmortem rewards for virtue. When the expectation of bliss is frustrated again and again, though, even the deepest piety can begin to sour.

The Shadow knows this, and fully comprehends the rage and frustration felt by wraiths offered frustration and delay when they should have received Heaven. Even the most tolerant soul begins to feel the bitterness, begins to resent that some are allowed easy access (for there are always those who are escorted into Swar with much pomp when first they arrive in the afterworld) while others must wait. Rage, resentment, suppressed anger and even self-loathing are not uncommon responses to the interminable wait outside the gates of Swar. No self-respecting Shadow allows such juicy dark emotion to slip away; it is during the delay beneath Swar's walls that many Hindu wraiths take their first steps toward Oblivion.

For the Hindu wraiths who end up in Swar's suburbs, the very idea of surrendering to Oblivion is repugnant. A lifetime spent waiting to reach the City of Delights, followed by an endless waiting period, are enough suffering for anyone. None wish to risk Oblivion and a possible descent into a lower incarnation by demonstrating a less than perfect faith so close to Swar itself. That, at least, is the conscious decision that these wraiths make. Subconsciously, the hammer blows of disappointment from delay after delay provide openings for Shadowy intervention. *Would not rebirth be more interesting than another decade of waiting?* they whisper. *If you were truly*





worthy, wouldn't you have been accepted into Swar before now? Why delay the inevitable rejection?

## The Muslim Contingency

If Swar and Bhuvar are a disappointment to the wraiths who followed the Hindu faith, in the eyes of the Muslims of the subcontinent, things are substantially worse. These wraiths too have devoted themselves to their faith, but their faith holds no place for a city of judges and *Soma*. For them, Bhuvar as a whole is little more than Hell.

Many of the Muslim wraiths feel that being thrust into Bhuvar is the spiritual equivalent of a slap in the face. Furthermore, no Muslims have ever been allowed into Swar. The judges always discard Islamic wraiths to one of the *talas*, the lower worlds. There, the judges instruct them, they are to examine their mistakes before being reincarnated. As these "mistakes" generally can be boiled down to the fact that the banished wraiths did not follow the faith of the judges, this cavalier treatment breeds no little resentment.

In addition, the *talas* are hardly hospitable places. Wraiths banished there they must fight constantly Spectral incursions constantly or suffer the consequences. Most of the Muslim wraiths refer to the areas where battle is done as the Forge, for their experience there tempers and hones them like steel. Wraiths who manage to outlast their first few combats are

often very powerful in comparison to most Lemures; the *talas* have no room for weakness. Most quickly join with the Nagas or the Asuras, prepared to do all they can to destroy the infidels in charge of Swar. Many of the Nagas are convinced that they have been held back from their rightful place in Heaven — foolishly mistaken for Swar by the Hindu — by the wraiths who rule over the City of Delights. On the other hand, those Muslims who join with the Asuras believe that Swar must be destroyed, erased from even the memories of those who dwell there before any can go to their final resting places.

For the Asuras of Muslim faith, the simple belief that Swar stands between them and their final reward is enough to convince them that Swar must be destroyed. For the Muslim Nagas, Swar is often seen as the only true gateway to Heaven. That portal is currently held by infidels, and that cannot be tolerated. In either case, the current regime of Swar is intolerable.

Lately the attacks from the Nagas have grown more frequent in number, and the He Who Serves Indra has begun to grow worried that someday soon the denizens of the Lower Worlds might actually have a chance to usurp power in the City of Delights. For that reason, the great gates have been a little more accessible of late. More wraiths are moving into Swar than have ever entered before.

Most are never heard from again.



## Shadow Tactics Before the Walls

The Shadows of Bhuyar most often employ the Thorns Shadow Call, Freudian Slip and Devil's Dare. **Shadow Call** is employed to add a sense of urgency to the wraith's desire to get into Swar, where she believes she will be safe from the Spectres her own Shadow has summoned. The Shadow utilizes **Freudian Slip** to ensure that a wraith makes a poor impression when she finally gets a chance to speak before a judge. Notoriously short-tempered, Yama's servants do not take kindly to the sort of insolence that a Shadow can produce in even a single sentence. **Devil's Dare** is often practiced to force a wraith attempt to make it into Swar without waiting for judgment; usually such efforts on the Shadow's part are primed by months or even years of whispers as to how the *Rhakshaza* can't keep the wraith away from the reward he's earned. The guards of course see it differently, and are quite happy to send an intruding wraith to the reward they feel is appropriate.

Almost every attempt to take Swar from outside can be attributed to the Shadows of wraiths beyond the gates working in tandem and utilizing combinations of these Thorns.

## Asuras

The Islamic Asuras have far fewer of the Oblivion-tainted among them. They have a goal that is achievable with effort, and one that they work toward relentlessly. Swar must be destroyed at any cost, even if it means the ruination of their own souls. The infidels who claim that Swar is Heaven must fall, for only then will Allah be satisfied and Heaven achieved.

There are rumors that the Asuras have been working together to develop a new Arcanoi, one that will allow them to undo the work of the Tvastriyas and bring the demented illusions of the Holy Regent and his mad demon-god Indra to an end. While the evidence that such an Arcanos exists is limited, it exists just the same. Numerous witnesses have claimed to see the mightiest among the Asuras "uncreate" Artifacts. In each case the wraith reformed by this tremendous power disappeared immediately thereafter, presumably moving on to his next incarnation immediately.

## Shadows

The Shadows of Muslim wraiths in India are far more direct than those of their Hindu compatriots. Where Hindu Shadows must practice subtlety with the skill of a neurosurgeon, Muslim Shadows find it much easier to simply promote the underlying resentment that their counterparts have already begun to suffer.

Adding fuel to the fire burning within the heart of a Muslim wraith can be easy for a Shadow. Everything a devout Muslim expected to find on the other side of death's door is

missing here in the Underworld. Infidels have the upper hand in the lands of the Dead, and they flaunt their power with vicious ease. Being judged by a Hindu to be unworthy is more than just an insult, it is an abnegation of one's faith and it is often enough to drive many Muslim wraiths to extreme actions. When this emotional fever pitch has been reached, a Shadow need only agree with the Psyche and offer its aid. The rest comes easily.

The Shadows of the Muslim Dead tend to be patient. They offer their help often and freely, all the while gaining power and their Psyches' trust. Few among the Muslim have been able to resist the offers of assistance from their Shadowy counterparts, not when the need is so pressing. Many of the Islamic wraiths in India's Shadowlands survive only a short while before they find themselves meeting with Oblivion, driven there by their own actions in the name of all that is holy.

## The Sikh Dilemma

Sikh belief is founded on a confluence of Muslim faith and Hindu philosophy. Gurni Nanak, the founder of the faith, sought to forge the best ideals of both into one unified belief


## Shadow Strategies

Many of the Muslim Nagas make bargains with their Shadows, agreeing to a **Pact of Doom** without hesitation to gain the necessary strength to storm the gates of Heaven. A fair number also come to rely on their Shadows for extra strength, ignoring the risks of the Shadowplay and considering the bargains made with their Shadows to be little more than a marriages of convenience, to be sundered when Swar is overthrown. The number of incipient Bhuta among the Nagas who have made these bargains is staggering (though nowhere near the numbers claimed in the propaganda that flows forth from Swar's gates).

The Shadow of an Islamic wraith banished to the *talas* most frequently plays on its Psyche's justifiable rage and frustration at this unjust banishment. It stokes these emotions to irrational levels and refuses to let its Psyche dwell on anything else. This enforced obsession can have severely detrimental effects, and more than anything else, is responsible for the constant waves of ill-prepared assaults on Swar itself. Without incessant Shadow urging, many of the wraiths heading off to lead the charges would be more content to watch, wait and plan.

Indeed, it is somewhat ironic that Spectre attacks, of all things, are about the only thing in the Forge that provides surcease from the constant Shadowy nagging. With a concrete opponent in front of him, a wraith can take out the frustrations that his Shadow has carefully tended on another rather than himself.





that incorporated a belief in god, rejection of idol worship and a rejection of the traditional caste system. He felt that only through the unification all of mankind could there be any hope of achieving spiritual perfection.

The best laid plans often fall to the wayside, and death tends to slow the progress of a dream into reality. Since the founding of the faith during the 15th century A.D., the Sikhs have faced numerous trials in the Skinlands. Their tribulations in the Shadowlands have been no less numerous and no easier.

As the Sikh faith differs from both of its progenitors in fundamental ways, Sikh wraiths have no desire to enter into Swar. They also have no wish to be judged by the ruling parties in Bhuvan. When the first of the Sikh to enter the Indian realm of the dead, Nanak Salmatt, was judged and found unworthy, he, like countless non-Hindus before him, was thrown into the *talas*. His arrival in Vitala was unremarkable. What he chose to do afterwards, however, was indeed noteworthy. Where many before him had lamented the harsh fate meted out by the judges, Salmatt chose to accept his new circumstances as simply another test from God. Unlike those who had gone before and sought escape, he chose to remain, and to make the best of what God had given him. Salmatt came to know the lay of the land. He learned its pitfalls and dangers, as well as the best places to protect himself from the ravages of Maelstroms.

He learned to know the *tala* he now calls Gurdwara, the Holy Place.

As other Sikh were judged and cast down into the *talas*, Salmatt sought them out, finding routes that connected the numerous *talas* and building a network of outposts to protect the spirits of his coreligionists. In time, he managed to gather huge numbers of the Sikh dead together and built a community of the dead.

Salmatt was hardly the best wraith for the job, or at least that was how he felt about the matter. Others disagreed, and in time he came to rule over a constantly growing nation of Sikhs. Despite his own protests, Salmatt was better prepared than most for ruling the dead. Seeing his own flaws clearly, he chose to delegate authority to the grateful souls who joined in his community.

He chose well. The centuries since the founding of Gurdwara have been less troubling than many might expect. The founding of the *Khalsa*, a powerful military force within Gurdwara, helped make certain that no one who did not belong within the underworld city ever managed to enter and remain safe. The wraiths of Gurdwara share a unified vision, and have worked hard to make certain that their ideals are met and their practices kept.

The laws of Gurdwara are identical to the laws practiced by the Sikh peoples in life. There is only one addition: Resolve your Fetters as quickly as you can. In this way you honor god and prove yourself worthy. As a result, the turnover in Gurdwara's population is substantial.

There are necessities, even for Sikh wraiths who don't intend to stay long within the Deadlands. Souls needed for the creation of Artifacts are harvested from the nonbelievers. It is usually very easy to tell the differences between Sikh and non-Sikh, as the followers of the Sikh faith all adhere to certain codes of dress. The properly attired Sikh must never cut his hair but should always wear a turban. As self-perception is a vital part of any wraith's appearance, all Sikh wraiths coalesce in the Underworld garbed properly, and can thus be identified for what they are.

Just the same, there are judges in Gurdwara as well. These judges ask a series of question to each newcomer. All of the questions revolve around the Sikh faith, and if the petitioner is judged knowledgeable enough, he is allowed into Gurdwara.

In all of India's Shadowlands, there is no other area as stable and well controlled as Gurdwara. Here the Sikhs have what they have often struggled for in the Skinlands. They have a homeland.

## Shadows

The Shadows of Gurdwara are almost unique. They have very little open communication with their Psyche. Indeed, most tend to remain silent, allowing the Psyche to believe that he is untainted by a darker side. To make up for this restraint, Sikh Shadows do tend to use the Thorn: **Shadow Life** with great enthusiasm. Many of the Shadows in Gurdwara merely wait until their other selves have gone into Slumber and then undo all that the Psyche accomplished during the previous day. Despite the best efforts of Sikh wraiths to build an indestructible haven in Gurdwara, very little ever really gets accomplished in the vast city. The brick that is laid during the day is cast down by night; the tower that is built by the Psyche is laid low by the Shadow. The frustration felt by these wraiths is slow in building but powerful, and once anger has been kindled here it is never put out.

However, by far the worst problem the Shadows promote in Gurdwara is the great influx of Spectres into the area. Employing the Thorn: **Shadow Call**, they summon veritable armies of Spectres, using both Spectre Prestige and Dark Allies to persuade the agents of Oblivion to wait patiently until enough of the Shadow-eaten have gathered to wage full-scale assaults on Gurdwara. The *Khalsa* are kept battle ready, but their job of protecting the Sikh refuge is made more difficult by their Shadows, who are normally the ones best prepared to call in the forces of Oblivion.

## Within the City of Delights

Swar is indeed a City of Delights for those who please the Heavenly Regent. The ripened fruit, the sweet, revitalizing waters of the rivers and the glorious music constantly performed are enough to make the wraiths believe they are truly





blessed and that all the waiting and suffering was worth the time invested before the city walls. The *Soma* is as delicious as it is intoxicating, and none who dwell within the city has a right to complain. None of the favored, at least.

The great park of Indra lies at the very center of Swar, and when viewing the heavens from the park, all is beautiful. The stars burn brightly here, and what few clouds are seen are little more than delicate laces of white against the sky. The magnificent castle of He Who Serves Indra is nestled in the center of the gently sloping hills of the park. Even those waiting for an audience with the Heavenly Regent wait in comfort, surrounded by beauty. As nowhere else in all of Bhuvanar, the park of Indra knows serenity. Many of the city's wraiths spend their time in the park, supping on spiced fruit and sipping the rich *Soma*. Beautiful birds in an array of colors sing amidst the trees, and Gandarvas play their music while the Apsaras dance and sing. Truly this is a paradise worth waiting for and worth keeping at any price.

For the others who come to Swar, though, the City of Delights is a charnel house of pain. Those who offend He Who Serves Indra soon learn that they should have been happy with what they were offered. They should not have questioned the cooling waters of the rivers that flow from beneath the ground and return there before reaching the edge of Swar's walls. They should have accepted the *Soma* as a gift and not wondered aloud how it could be so potent.

Perhaps then they would not join the river or be consumed by others in a goblet of *Soma*. Perhaps then they would not be added to the wall of Swar or forged into powerful weapons with which to fend off the Nagas.

None learn the truth of Swar until it is too late. There is no river, and the *Soma* is little more than a distillation of another's soul, warped and twisted beyond repair. The beautiful music that fills the air hides the whispered screams of the tortured dead. The incense of fruit that wafts through the air masks the stench of the butcher's block and the Soul-Forge.

Swar is a lie, and one of the best-hidden secrets in all the Underworlds. Those who know the secret normally keep their silence for, again, the Shadows of Swar's wraiths are subtle and vicious. Silence is the price for staying in Swar. Even the worst of the *talas* is considered preferable to the final fate of those who complain. The City of Delights is only allowed to those who do not reveal her secrets. The Shadows of Swar keep the secret as well, for in Swar they have found the ultimate source of power. Here, they consume the souls of others and in the process grow stronger.

The carefully crafted lies of Swar hide more than one secret. They hide the power of the Shadows in Swar as well. The hatred and fury of the reforged souls in Swar is locked within the great city, drawing like to like. The magnificent City of Delights is a magnet of Oblivion, a storage cell for Angst and suffering. For each wraith who inhabits Swar, a dozen more have been Sundered, adding to the power that the city holds. However, in the





midst of plenty for the ghosts of the Hindu dead is abundance of dark emotion for their Shadows as well.

He Who Serves Indra has long since fallen to the power of his own Shadow, but none around him have noticed the change. In truth, the Regent's wishes matter little these days, as he is only a puppet, made to dance by the power of Swar itself. Swar has attained consciousness, and is a very greedy master. Indeed, the City of Delights causes many of the attacks that come from beyond the walls so that its hunger might be assuaged. Swar has grown so much in power that it might truly be called a Malfean, though it is perhaps the only Malfean that need never move to gain its nourishment.

The wraiths who dwell in Swar are happy. They converse, they dance, they sing, and they feast. The glories of the promised afterlife are theirs, for as long as their Shadows feel like tolerating them. However, every Shadow tires of the game eventually and chooses to end it. When the time comes to destroy a wraith, that soul's Shadow need only communicate with Swar and the arrangements are made. All that is *Savta* in the Wraith is destroyed, while the Shadow and its *Tamas* are added to Swar. When necessary, the City of Delights can even animate that aspect of itself to mimic the wraith who once was. In this way, the charade lasts even longer.

For countless centuries, Swar has grown. In feeding on the fevered hopes and dreams of the wraiths who struggle to


escape the hellish Bhuvar, Swar grows ever stronger. Those who sup on the treats of Swar are in turn the treats of the city. Darkness hides best in a place where light dwells, and the light is pure and sweet in Swar.

## The Bowels of Swar

The very land where Swar rests is gone, devoured by Swar as it grew into a mockery of sentience. Beneath the palaces and gilded buildings of Swar is the heart of the Malfean, manifested as the chambers in which the *Tvastriyas* labor endlessly. In the bowels of Swar the *Corpus* of wraiths is churned and fragmented, destroyed and regurgitated into beautiful flowering bushes and fruiting trees. The waters of Swar's rivers are filled with the essence of countless wraiths and allowed to flow past beneath golden bridges and opulent homes. The Shadowy essence is removed from the flowing mass, drained into the buildings of Swar and forged into simulacrum of the wraiths it once was part of. An army the likes of which has never been seen waits within the very walls of Swar, prepared to defend against any attack that threatens the city itself.

Not all of the denizens of Swar have been destroyed. In truth, over half are still wraiths. Swar is patient. Swar need not glut itself, when the flow of nourishment is always close at hand. In this, Swar differs from most Malfeans. Swar hides





its atrocities behind a veneer of beauty, luring its food into its hungry jaws much as a Venus flytrap waits for its prey.

The wraiths of Bhuvar are always glad to take the bait. They fight each other and any enemy in order for a chance to enter Swar, conveniently forgetting along the way that Swar is merely supposed to be a place of waiting until rebirth into the lands of the living. In this way Swar serves Oblivion, and the Shadows of those who dwell in Bhuvar in turn serve Swar.

There is a place of eternal beauty in Bhuvar, a City of Delights where every dream is supposed to come true. Beneath the stunning landscape of Swar a cancer grows, unchecked and unharmed. The malignancy spreads slowly, but it spreads just the same.

## Explaining Disappearances

On the rare occasions when a wraith of note disappears from Swar, the curious all receive the same answer to any queries they might make. They are told that the time had come for the missing wraith either to return to the world of the living or to Transcend. From time to time a list of those who have moved on to their next incarnation is placed on the closed doors of Swar, where anyone can see them. This official explanation satisfies most questioners.

Perhaps most of Bhuvar's denizens would find the tales told by the Asuras more believable than the postings by the guards of Swar if not for the passionate hope that they can one day enter the City of Delights. The Shadows of the Hindu wraiths waiting outside promote this belief, adding to the tensions of existence beyond the walls of Swar by pointing out that few have ever needed to wait for entrance as long as they have.

If the Psyche seems the least bit amenable to this sort of persuasion, a Shadow immediately harps on the wraith to destroy his Fetters. Those who are less attached to the real world are considered to be more worthy of admission to Swar, at least according to a sufficiently cunning Shadow. The benefits of getting a wraith to attack his Fetters voluntarily are incalculable, at least from the Shadow's perspective.

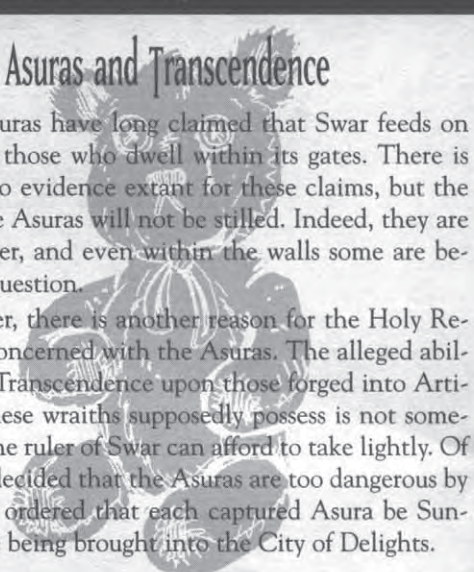
## Transcendence in Swar

The choices are simple for a wraith dwelling in Bhuvar. She can wait until the time comes for her to be reborn, or she can expedite the process by diving into the waters of the Sea of Shiva, hoping that her next life will not be too painful. Most prefer to wait, seeking reincarnation in a higher form or perhaps even Transcendence. After all, they now know what awaits them after death, and they have no desire to experience the interminable wait for judgment again.

Unfortunately, there is no simple path to Transcendence in Bhuvar. The decisions to be made on that path are many, and all require an element of faith. As faith can come in short supply during the endless wait, few indeed are the wraiths of

Bhuvar who Transcend. However, all of those who have been known to Transcend before the city's walls have turned their backs on any hope of entering Swar. Only when this ambition for transient luxury has been resolved can the true search for spiritual enlightenment begin.

## Asuras and Transcendence



The Asuras have long claimed that Swar feeds on the souls of those who dwell within its gates. There is absolutely no evidence extant for these claims, but the voices of the Asuras will not be stilled. Indeed, they are getting louder, and even within the walls some are beginning to question.

However, there is another reason for the Holy Regent to be concerned with the Asuras. The alleged ability to force Transcendence upon those forged into Artifacts that these wraiths supposedly possess is not something that the ruler of Swar can afford to take lightly. Of late he has decided that the Asuras are too dangerous by far, and has ordered that each captured Asura be Sundered before being brought into the City of Delights.

## Judgment

The judges of the dead have been in Bhuvar so long that they no longer remember who were when they walked the lands of the living. They simply answer to the title judge or, in some cases Vharuna, and continue to administer their sacred duties. Unsurprisingly, the judges maintain that one of their ranks is actually Yama himself, though if this is the case, he has not revealed himself yet.

Most judges take their duties very seriously, but some can be bribed. The usual favor a judge grants involves arranging that a new arrival be sent somewhere that his loved ones already dwell — or to a place where his enemies don't.

Each judge is protected by two guards armed with Artifact bows and quivers of arrows. Each also carries a long Artifact dagger. These guards are referred to as *Rhakshaza*, a name granted for the tiger's head masks they wear. Physically imposing, the judges' guards rarely speak. They seldom make any response at all, save to attack any who would dare confront a judge.

## Vharuna Statistics

The following statistics are for a Vharuna, or judge. These are representative for an average judge, but there really is no such thing as an "average" Vharuna. Each is an individual, with his own strengths and weaknesses. Furthermore, many are far more powerful than they let on.



**Nature:** Bureaucrat  
**Demeanor:** Judge  
**Physical:** Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 5  
**Social:** Charisma 4, Manipulation 5, Appearance 2  
**Mental:** Perception 5, Intelligence 5, Wits 5  
**Talents:** Alertness 5, Athletics 2, Awareness 5, Brawl 2, Dodge 2, Empathy 2, Expression 4, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 5, Subterfuge 5  
**Skills:** Crafts 2, Etiquette 5, Leadership 5, Meditation 4, Melee 3, Performance 1  
**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 5, Enigmas 5, Investigation 4, Law 5, Linguistics 3, Medicine 4, Occult 4, Politics 5  
**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Contacts 5, Artifact 5 (Ornamental Garb, Mask, Throne. See Below), Status 5  
**Passions:** 10 points, often related to justice or pride  
**Arcanoi:** Castigate 3, Fatalism 5, Lifeweb 4, Mnemosynis 4, Moliate 3, Usury 3  
**Permanent Corpus:** 10  
**Willpower:** 10  
**Pathos:** 7  
**Shadow:** Perfectionist  
**Angst:** 5  
**Thorns:** Shadow Life, Shadowplay  
**Dark Passions:** Destroy all that the judge has so carefully orchestrated (Hate) 5, Deliberately send souls to incorrect destinations (Sadism) 5  
**Equipment:** The Mask of a judge allows him to see the Lifeweb of each wraith who stands before him in perfect detail. The Garb worn by a judge affords him five extra levels of Corpus above and beyond what he already possesses, and also grants +3 Stamina for the purpose of soaking damage. The Throne of each judge protects him from the ravages of a Maelstrom's fury whenever a storm comes through the area.  
**Image:** The judges all wear masks bearing the face of a water buffalo and are appointed in finery the likes of which few people have ever seen. Adorned with gold and precious gems, *Vharunas* wear robes that cover them completely. No one has even caught a glimpse of a *Vharuna's* actual Corpus; whenever they go forth they are robed and masked into anonymity. Impassive and impressive, each appears to be roughly eight feet in height when seated upon his throne. There is no way to measure a judge's actual stature, as no wraith (save perhaps the *Vharunas'* servants) has ever seen a judge anywhere but on the seat of judgment.  
**Roleplaying Hints:** You are right, and on that there can be no argument. No matter what the merits of the case might be, your decision is final. Listen impassively to whatever pleas a wraith might make to you, but tap your fingers impatiently if a wraith begins to get redundant. At the first sign of argument or complaint, send your *Rhakshaza* to remove the fool and send him someplace where he'll have a good long time to contemplate his foolishness. Under no circumstances do you

ever apologize for any of your actions. You are here to do as Yama commands you, and that duty takes precedence over all.

Never forget that the promise of Swar is yours as well, if you serve Yama dutifully and pay heed to his mandates.

## *Rhakshaza*

Not to be confused with the legendary tiger-spirits, the *Rhakshaza* of the Underworld have been given their name because of the fierce-looking tiger masks they wear to conceal their features. Bound into service for eternity or until they are granted entrance to Swar, the *Rhakshaza* never remove their masks. To do so would be equivalent to refusing the office the mask symbolizes, and would mean stepping outside the ranks of the *Rhakshaza*.

Loyal to a fault, a *Rhakshaza* gladly faces Oblivion for his judge, because each tiger warrior knows that his only hope of ever earning a place in Swar is by following the commands of his master explicitly. Each *Rhakshaza* is hand-picked from the petitioners before a judge, with the criteria for selection being his potential for loyalty and his ability to cause grievous harm to any who cross him. These are not merely soldiers, they are the elite of the judges. There are a full complement of 10 *Rhakshaza* for each judge. At any given time six are working around the clock to see that the judge is protected at all times. The remaining four serve as messengers and Reapers, as well as running any other errands the judge might have for them.

**Nature:** Follower  
**Demeanor:** Bravo  
**Physical:** Strength 5, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4  
**Social:** Charisma 2, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2  
**Mental:** Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 4  
**Talents:** Alertness 4, Athletics 3, Awareness 2, Brawl 4, Dodge 4, Empathy 3, Expression 5, Intimidation 5, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 3  
**Skills:** Firearms (bow) 5, Leadership 2, Meditation 3, Melee 5, Performance 2, Stealth 3  
**Knowledges:** Bureaucracy 3, Enigmas 2, Investigation 5, Law 4, Linguistics 1, Medicine 2  
**Passions:** 7 points, usually involved with duty, service, honor and gaining entrance to Swar  
**Backgrounds:** Allies 5, Artifacts 2 (Bow with Relic Arrows, Dagger +2 damage)  
**Arcanoi:** Argos 3, Lifeweb 4, Moliate 3, Outrage 2  
**Permanent Corpus:** 10  
**Willpower:** 6  
**Pathos:** 9  
**Shadow:** The Pusher  
**Angst:** 4



**Thorns:** Aura of Corruption, Shadowed Face

**Dark Passions:** Usurp the power of the judges (Greed) 2, Create chaos in Bhuvan (Hatred) 3, Make certain that the *Rhakshaza* loses in any fight (Self-hatred) 1.

**Equipment:** Each *Rhakshaza* carries a longbow, quiver of arrows and dagger in addition to his full helm tiger's head mask.

**Image:** The *Rhakshaza* are powerfully built men, often Moliated to look even more impressive than they would otherwise. They are silent and brooding, and carry themselves in a way which demonstrates that they are quite capable of handling themselves in a conflict. On the rare occasions when a *Rhakshaza* does speak, his voice is a deep, dangerous growl not unlike that of a tiger.

**Roleplaying Hints:** If somebody wants directions, point in the direction she should go. If someone wishes to converse with you, ignore him until he becomes annoying, then demonstrate your displeasure on his Corpus. Swar is yours if you perform your duties well, and you have no intention of failing and letting paradise slip away. Outside the walls, you are better respected than most, but it is not enough. The music from Swar and the scent of Soma wafting over the walls is enough to make you eager for the day when you are finally allowed to enter the City of Delights itself.

Most *Rhakshaza* do not gain entrance into Swar. They are delegated to other lokas. Those who are granted admission

into Swar rejoice and celebrate, right up until the time when they discover the true nature of the City of Delights.

## Lexicon

**Apsaras:** The female class of courtesans in the City of Delights. They are particularly esteemed for their dancing skills.

**Asuras:** Name given to wraiths who oppose the enforced servitude of Swar.

**Bhur:** The *loka* of the living.

**Bhuta:** Indian spirits roughly equivalent to Doppelgangers.

**Bhuvan:** The *loka* of wraiths (the Shadowlands).

**Gandharvas:** The male courtesan class of the City of Delights, renowned for their musical ability.

**Gunas:** The attributes of the "soul."

**Gurdwara:** The *loka* of the Sikh dead.

**Khalsa:** The warrior caste of the Sikh Restless.

**Loka:** One of the seven upper worlds in Indian cosmology.

**Nagas:** Name given to wraiths who wish to enjoy the fruits of Swar without serving the Holy Regent.

**Pisacha:** Evil, malformed wraiths; Shades.

**Rajas:** The Guna pertaining to active attributes, corresponding to the Passions and Pathos.

**Rhakshaza:** Guards of the Vharunas, adorned with tiger's-head masks.





**Satva:** The Guna of refinement. It corresponds to the Psyche and Eidolon.

**Sea of Shiva:** The Indian term for the Tempest.

**Soma:** An intoxicating beverage much sought after by wraiths of Swar.

**Sthula Sarira:** The physical body of the living.

**Sukshma Sarira:** The Corpus of a wraith.

**Swar:** The *loka* of the Host of Swar (similar to Stygia).

**Tala:** Traditionally, one of the seven lower worlds. The *talas* are the lesser realms surrounding Swar.

**Tamas:** The Guna of coarseness, corresponding to the Shadow and Angst.

**Tvashtriyas:** An artisan class of wraiths, responsible for maintaining the City of Delights.

**Vharuna:** The judges of the dead, who claim to be servants of Yama.

**Yama:** The god of death who is believed to judge all souls. The judges claim to be servants of Yama.

## Outlines on a Cave Wall: The Shadows of the Kingdom of Clay

by Ben Chessell



Wraiths in the Kingdom of Clay lead a mournful existence in which guilt, more than any other Passion, defines their days. The Restless are made to feel guilt acutely; guilt for deeds committed in breathing days as well as the guilt of their ancestors.

The job of assigning, amplifying and encouraging guilt falls to each wraith's Shadow. It is an assignment that each Shadow relishes.

### Location

Karta, the Tempest realm of Australia's wraiths, is a desolate place of rock, heat and clay. It rests within the eternal storm, far removed from the Shadowlands. There are no Necropoli there, nor are there cities of any kind. There is only the hope of the endless Dreamtime.

The aboriginal Restless of Australia remove themselves from the Shadowlands and do not mingle with the souls of newcomers to the continent. In the Australian Shadowlands, one finds only immigrants and descendants of immigrants, for whom the Dreamtime of the aboriginal wraiths is meaningless and unreachable.

### The Hierarchy

Theoretically, the Hierarchy controls the Australian Deadlands, but its influence is concentrated in very few cities. Officially, the Hierarchy's position on Karta is that there's no access and no reason to go there. Unofficially, high-ranking Hierarchy sources confirm that there have been negotiations with certain aboriginal wraiths — or their Shadows — to provide the legions with access to the Karta. What the Kartan wraiths would get out of this desecration is unknown.

Hierarchy wraiths in Australia tend to be regarded with suspicion by the home office in Stygia. The unique interactions Australian wraiths have with their Shadows (not to mention the lingering effects of the Well of Guilt) leaves Australian Restless acting a bit odd, in the eyes of their Stygian counterparts.

While there are some few aboriginal wraiths remaining in the Australian Shadowlands, they are few and far between. The vast majority of aboriginal Restless have passed on to the Karta (if not the Dreamtime), and dwell there. Only a few wander the Shadowlands on a regular basis, for reasons of their own which they are not willing to relate to others. Others make visits, but very few actually stay in the Shadowlands.

The landscape of the Australian Shadowlands superficially resembles Karta in many respects, but it has been changed and shaped by the wraiths who live there. In an attempt to shut out the harshness of Karta, the Europeans who died early in the history of Australia and came to the Shadowlands tried to build their own world in the afterlife, attempting to colonize the Shadowlands way they had Australia. Their attempts were only partially successful and today's Shadowlands are a mixture of times, styles and environments. This failure on the part of the newcomers to create the environment they desired is due in most part to the influence of their Shadows.

Although the nonaboriginal Quick of Australia have, for the most part, forgotten about the former inhabitants of their land, it is different for the Restless. Memory is more important among the dead, and the past is viewed through a different filter. Australia's Restless live an unlife of penance for their own deeds as well as those of their ancestors. They cannot ignore the 50,000-year history of the aboriginal people



of Australia. Things in the Shadowlands change painfully slowly, and the two centuries for which Europeans and others have been in the country have made only the slightest impression on the Underworld.

Besides, even if the landscape let the interlopers forget, their Shadows do not.

## The Individual Soul

The Shadows of Australia have a group consciousness. Not only responsible for the personal harrying of his wraith's Psyche, each Australian Shadow sees itself as part of a group with a joint responsibility. This shared task is nothing less than imbuing the inhabitants of the Australian Shadowlands with some of the immense unfelt guilt which reverberates in the Maelstroms of the ghostly outback. Generations worth of

guilt and shame are owed by the people of Australia, and it is the Restless whom Fate and their Shadows have chosen to bear that burden.

This pit of emotional debt exists in real terms in the Tempest surrounding the Australian Shadowlands. A black, seething, whirling mass, it shudders endlessly in the storm. Shadowguided wraiths flock here to regain sustenance, eliminate doubts and congregate. To them it is almost a deity, great and terrible, even though they work for its destruction. Every time a Shadow succeeds in imbuing a wraith with shame, motivating a wraith to act to redress guilt, or causing a wraith to accept responsibility for deeds not her own, the pit shrinks. This change is almost imperceptible but real. Centuries of work remain, but there is vague hope that perhaps, someday, the debt can be paid.

This entire process is only guessed at by the wraiths of Australia's Shadowlands, who spend their nights clinging desperately to the







vestiges of civilization which have manifested there. Some know of this great work instinctively, others have learnt much from conversing with their Shadows, but none completely understand. Not even the Shadows themselves know what will happen when the store of guilt and shame is used up, and the final debt is paid in full. Some believe that when such an event finally occurs, aboriginal wraiths will reconcile with the spirits of those who came after, and the path to Karta (and the Dreamtime beyond) will become a road open to all wraiths in Australia. Others, more pessimistic, believe that if the debt is used up, the unique nature of Australia's Shadowlands will be lost, and these Shadowlands will become exactly like those in other lands controlled by Stygia. In this scenario, access to Karta is lost forever when reckoning comes. Still others believe that the store of guilt and shame is inexhaustible and that the day when the bill is paid will never, ever come.

Still the Shadows of the Dark Kingdom of Clay, whatever they believe individually (and this belief can never be too far removed from the beliefs of the Psyche), persevere with their tasks. As a result, the existence of the wraiths of Australia is made more miserable by their efforts. It should be understood that any cooperation or communication between Shadows is on an essentially unconscious level, and not pursued in an individualistic or free way. The Shadow remains very



## The Great Pit

No one is exactly sure where in the Tempest the throbbing reminder of Australia's guilt and shame writhes. What is known is that no wraith can ever find it, and that no Shadowguided wraith has ever had any difficulty locating it. It is merely a matter of attitude, or so it would seem. However, the fact that only Shadowguided wraiths can find this location in the Tempest makes Argos a dangerous Arcanos to possess in the Dark Kingdom of Clay.

Any Shadowguided wraith coming near this towering monument to shame can attempt to feed a Dark Passion centered on Guilt or Shame at difficulty 5. The concentrated nature of the negative emotion makes it simple for Shadows to restore themselves here.

Spectres also hover around the Great Pit, though here of all places they never disturb visiting wraiths. They too batten on the vast geyser of guilt and shame, but do so with an odd respect and reverence. Perhaps they see it as a Malfean, perhaps even they understand the depths of the tragedy.

Should a wraith seek to touch the Pit, he will instantly be pulled in and destroyed by the negative energies there. Some emotions are too intense to be dealt with, save at a distance.

much part of each wraith, and it does not possess an independent will as such. There is, however, an identifiable shared consciousness between the Shadows of Australia's Restless, which allows them to have a common intent: instilling of the great debt of guilt boiling in the Tempest of Australia.

Some of Australia's wraiths reject this guilt, staunchly refusing to accept any responsibility for the atrocities committed in the name of progress and civilization before they were even born. They fight their Shadows every step of the way, fighting the good fight and usually losing. Generally it is the Shadow, with its extra wellspring of dark emotion to call upon, who is victorious in these contests.

Generally more successful as a tactic (as far as the wraith is concerned), is a wraith's acceptance and exploration of his own guilt. In this way the wraith can come to understand and resolve his guilt on a personal level, without attempting to deal with the tremendous burden of centuries gone by. Eventually, with this understanding the wraith can perhaps purge a little of the great unpaid debt from which the Shadows feed. Shadows can even cooperate with wraiths such as these, forming a relationship unique among the Restless. Although retaining many of the aspects of a more traditional Psyche-Shadow struggle, this partnership can move a wraith toward Transcendence or, in rare cases, the Dreamtime. More often, though it moves a wraith, willingly, toward Oblivion.

The most common response of the wraiths of Australia to the great burdens laid upon them by their Shadows is a slow acceptance and disintegration under the burden. Australia's Shadows have proven very effective servants of Oblivion, and although their priorities (from the Void's perspective) are slightly skewed, their contribution in terms of souls to the endless nothingness is impressive. Guilt is an effective weapon, and the Dark Kingdom of Clay's Restless have developed few effective strategies for dealing with it.

Shadows of Westerners here also have contact with the aboriginal wraiths in the Kingdom of Clay, in the same way that other Shadows maintain contact with Spectres. These mysterious wraiths who keep the deeper Kingdom for themselves understand and perhaps even control the vortex of guilt and shame, and cooperate with Shadows in administering it. Although they are not Spectres in any way and do not serve Oblivion, such wraiths do communicate with Shadows of Europeans and assist them in their task of instilling guilt. Sometimes, albeit rarely, these wraiths travel to the Shadowlands, bound on inexplicable errands.

Although they cooperate and communicate with Shadows, aboriginal wraiths do not assist any Shadow whose Psyche is close to Oblivion. Rather, the wraiths of the true Kingdom of Clay favor the so-called "acceptance path," in which a wraith comes to know guilt and accept a fair portion of it, but is not crushed under its terrifying weight. Reparation is apparently what these ghosts seek, not vengeance.

Of course, the aboriginal wraiths of the Dark Kingdom of Clay, enigmatic and potent as they are, must have their own Shadows with their own dangers. Such considerations are beyond the scope of this treatise.


## Ned Kelly

Ned Kelly, celebrated wearer of an iron mask in death as well as in life, continued his struggle beyond the grave. His last words on the gallows, reported to be "Such is life," typified his approach to the afterlife. Although he was never actually quoted as saying "Such is death," he is widely believed to have achieved some form of Transcendence, be it Dreamtime or otherwise. Kelly was carefree and stoically denied responsibility for anything. However, through a mixture of Eidolon, chutzpah and his Artifact mask, he overcame his Shadow.

## Shadows of Others

The above information pertains mainly to the wraiths of Australian Europeans and other descendants of the original invaders of the country. More recent arrivals, most notably the increasing Asian population, tend to produce wraiths who fall outside of the paradigm of guilt and responsibility set up





by the early colonialists and the reflection of their actions in the Shadowlands. These wraiths have their own rules and their own Shadows, and often can best be understood in the context of their native lands. The other major group of wraiths that dwells in the Australian afterlife consists of the island's original inhabitants: the aboriginal wraiths of Karta.

## What Is Not Known

Of the Shadows of the native wraiths of Karta, very little is known (and even less has been written down) by the scholars of the Restless. It is said that the relationship between these wraiths and their Shadows is unique, qualitatively different from that of other wraiths. There are tales that the Shadow of one of these wraiths does not accompany the wraith, but rather manifests externally. Such a Shadow putatively dwells in a place apart, perhaps a cave or lake, and a wraith goes there to consult with his Shadow so that it serves as a mentor or adviser. The walls of these Shadowweaves are said to be painted over with dense murals and images — solid forms representing wraiths and the Quick. The Shadows are depicted by painted outlines, blown speckles around hands and other shapes in vivid white and yellow. The symbolism is obvious, but the relationship is unclear. Perhaps these Shadows and wraiths are truly cooperative, and both strive for goals other than Transcendence or Oblivion. The Shadows of the Australian Shadowlands know little more than their Psyches do. Only those with the Thorn **Contact with the Ancients** know more, but when pressed these Shadows talk of an oath and will say no more.

## Playing a Shadow of the Australian Deadlands

Although the Shadows of Australia use all of the normal techniques, Thorns and strategies to assault a wraith's Psyche, there is a particular and important focus on the emotion of guilt and its role in the wraith's eventual downfall. The process of succumbing to Oblivion in the Kingdom of Clay is one where the Shadow crushes hope and grinds down self-respect. Australia's wraiths must be bombarded with guilt, in image, association, memory and ongoing existence so that their every thought is mired in a bog of unhealthy association and unreasonable levels of assumed responsibility.

It is not important whether or not the wraith is herself responsible for a certain reprehensible act. Instead, it is vital that she be made to feel, understand and undertake the guilt associated with that particular act and its consequences. The wraith of a college student cut down crossing the street might not be personally responsible for atrocities committed against the aboriginal population, but his Shadow will gleefully demonstrate how he benefited from those deeds and how he must now pay.

Shadows in the Kingdom of Clay should endeavor to use their Thorns and other abilities to lead wraiths to places and

meetings where they can be inundated with guilt, and to show them examples of wrongs unavenged, deaths unmourned and reparations unmade. It is the greatest victory of all for a Shadow if his Psyche discovers part of the great well of unfelt guilt and realizes, on his own behalf, the injustice of the situation. Inevitably, the newly guilt-stricken wraith feels much worse about himself and his environment than he might have otherwise, producing a veritable wellspring of Angst. This act of detrimental self-realization cannot always be relied upon, however, and thus local Shadows have developed a few favored techniques, used in conjunction with their unique Thorns, which assist in their chosen task.

A Shadowguide for a wraith in Australia's Shadowlands should play his part in conjunction with all of the normal guidelines and principles set out in **Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition**. There should be, however, a focus on guilt and shame in his actions, and on making the Psyche feel those emotions. If the wraith has any Passions directly connected to shame or guilt, the Shadowguide should harp on these, tempting the wraith to follow up on them but twisting any noble ambitions towards its own ends. When subjected to this treatment Australian wraiths should also get the impression that they are being made to suffer out of proportion for this particular Passion and that they are being unfairly victimized. This opens the door for the Shadow to unleash the collective weight of two centuries of unfair victimizations, crushing the wraith beneath guilt and the realization of his pathetic self-pity.

On rare occasions, revelations of guilt actually spark a wraith to real action. These wraiths actually work to repair the damage that has been done and to assuage the vast collective well of ill feeling. Such is the risk a Shadow runs in attempting to instill guilt in its Psyche — but the numbers still run in the Shadows' favor.

## Creating Australia's Shadows

When creating a Shadow for a wraith inhabiting the Australian Shadowlands, one uses the normal wraith Archetypes. All of these personalities are represented in these Deadlands, and Australian Shadows have the normal potential and capacities of Shadows elsewhere. The Dark Passions of an Australian Shadow also encompass a vast range of emotions, but the vast majority of these wraiths have at least one Dark Passion centered on Guilt. Not every Shadow has this Dark Passion, but those who do not are not part of the group consciousness of Australia's Shadows, and do not tend to be as successful in leading their Psyches toward Oblivion.

There are some unique Thorns available to the Shadows of the Dark Kingdom of Clay, and almost all possess the Thorn: **Shadow Bond**, which allows the group consciousness and cooperation to exist, even on a generally subconscious and subliminal level.





Keep in mind that these Shadows are capricious and unpredictable, but that their essential nature has been somewhat tempered by a unique set of circumstances which has come to exist in the Shadowlands of Australia. The personality of such a Shadow is still driven by the Psyche's nature first and foremost, and if that Psyche has no empathy with guilt whatsoever then perhaps the Shadow lacks this quality as well. There is merely a tendency, albeit a strong one, for Australian wraiths and Shadows to concern themselves with notions of guilt and shame. Whether this tendency is a result of the emotional debt of the Australian Restless or created the debt is unclear. What is clear is that Shadows who concern themselves with guilt and attempt to connect their Psyches (willing or unwilling) to these emotions have the advantage of the emotional resources available to them, burbling forever outside the Shadowlands.

## Rules and Regulations

### New Thorns

**Shadow Bond: 3 points** — This Thorn allows the Shadows of Australia to cooperate and even communicate in a rudimentary way. All the Shadows involved in the bond must possess this Thorn, making them part of the Bond (similar in



many ways to the Spectral hive-mind). With the Bond in place, Shadows can send basic thoughts and impressions back and forth (no more than a word at a time) soundlessly. They can share emotions and vague impressions, but nothing more.

Shadow Bond also allows Shadows to exchange temporary Angst should two wraiths with Bonded Shadows touch. If this happens, the Shadows can combine and then divvy up their temporary Angst however they like. A Shadow on the verge of Catharsis can "borrow" some Angst from a friend. However, bear in mind that Shadows are quite jealous of their Angst, and don't hand it out easily.

**Contact with the Ancients: 1 point/level** — The Shadow is able to communicate with the wraiths of Karta proper. Treat this Thorn as if the Shadow possesses the Contacts Background, with the Contacts applicable only to the aboriginal wraiths of the Dark Kingdom of Clay.

**Shadow Compact: 2 points** — This Thorn actually allows the Shadow and the Psyche to work together for a short time, at the cost of one point of Willpower for the wraith and one temporary Angst for the Shadow. Through the use of the Thorn the Psyche can address matters of the Shadow's choosing (these are always things specifically advantageous to the Shadow, and they generally concern Guilt) with the Shadow's assistance and guidance. It is through the use of this Thorn that the "cooperative path" in the Australian Shadowlands has been established.





**Wave of Sorrow: 2 points** — To use this Thorn, the Shadow must possess at least one Dark Passion associated with guilt, shame or regret. The Shadow accesses this black cloud of guilt and channels it into the Psyche through the gateway of the Shadow's own Dark Passions. The Shadowguide then rolls the Dark Passion against a difficulty of 6 and spends a point of temporary Angst. If she succeeds, the wraith drowns for a short time in feelings of sorrow, sadness and regret. All difficulties for the wraith are increased by 1, and she becomes sad, listless and apathetic.

The Psyche can only resist this Thorn if she possesses a Passion in direct opposition to the feeling that the Shadow is using, i.e. a Passion based on pride would serve to counteract an attack centered on Shame. In this case, the player rolls the Passion's rating (difficulty 6). If she beats the number of successes obtained by the Shadow, then the Thorn has no effect.

**Tapping the Tempest: 3 points/level** — This Thorn is used by Australia's Shadows to access the vast sink of unfelt guilt which resides in the Tempest. For each level of the Thorn that the Shadow possesses, she can roll one die against a difficulty of 6. Every success grants a temporary Angst point which must be spent in the current scene. Furthermore, this quick jolt of Angst must be spent on an action related to a Guilt Passion of the Psyche's or one of the Shadow's own Dark Passions.

**Instill Guilt: 5 points** — This Thorn is extremely potent, and it can be used to create a new Dark Passion. The Passion must be focused around Guilt although it need not be Guilt which the Psyche feels justifiably (Pointless self-flagellation is just as good as the real thing, to a Shadow). To use this Thorn, the Shadow must have 10 temporary Angst points. Instead of converting these points into one point of permanent Angst, the Shadow can instead spend them on the Thorn. To do so, the Shadowguide makes a roll (dice pool is 10, difficulty is the target's Willpower). If a number of successes exceeding the highest level of any already existing Dark Passion are obtained, then the Shadow gains a new five-point Dark Passion centered around Guilt.

## Merits and Flaws

### Dreamtime Shadow Ally (3 point Flaw)

The wraith's Shadow has a connection with a particular aboriginal wraith dwelling in Karta. This soul has made the punishment of the chosen Shadow's Psyche a personal goal. With the appropriate Thorn (Contact with the Ancients) the Shadow and ally can communicate directly and coordinate strategies. Otherwise there is a mute understanding between the two, so that each can get across basic needs and wants to the other even when one is in Karta and the other in the Shadowlands.

### Culture Shock (3 point Merit)

This flaw can only be possessed by the Shadow of a wraith who died in Australia but was not born there. As immigration to Australia continues, more and more wraiths do become victims of this Flaw; the souls of Italian, Greek and Asian immigrants are particularly susceptible. These wraiths have no connection to the Australian cultural guilt complex, and therefore their Shadows cannot make use of any of the unique Thorns or virtues associated with that font of sorrow. Furthermore, a Shadow such as this is an outcast among Australia's Shadows and Spectres and finds it difficult to obtain help from them for any purpose or task.

## Relics

### The Mask of Ned Kelly (Level Four Relic Artifact)

Worn by outlaw Ned Kelly in his breathing days and by the wraith of Ned Kelly during his years among the Restless, this mask is more of a helmet than anything else. It covers its wearer's entire head in riveted iron plates, with holes only for vision. The mask helped Kelly in his battle with his Shadow, but did not pass on to Transcendence with him. Now it rests somewhere in the Shadowlands, but no one knows where.

One of the important abilities of Kelly's mask is that it allows the wearer to see the Skinlands as they really are, circumventing the Deathsight of the Restless. This ability serves to counteract the dreariness of death without creating bitterness or longing in the viewer. If a wraith wears the mask for extended periods of time (a day or more), it has a salutary effect on her Shadow. Each time the mask is donned thereafter, its secondary power swings into action and the wraith gains one die for use in a later attempt to tame the Shadow.

The dice gained from repeated use of the Mask can be rolled in an attempt to reduce the Shadow's Angst. The roll is made with as many dice have been accumulated (difficulty 9), and each roll empties the wraith's accumulated pool. Each success on this roll removes a point of temporary Angst from the Shadow. A failure has no special effects, but a botch means that the wraith is doomed to lose the mask soon. A wraith who keeps the mask even after a botch will find himself the victim of a series of unfortunate accidents of increasing seriousness, until it may be easier to get rid of the mask than to endure the consequences of keeping it.

### Convict Shackles (Level Two Artifact)

The history of Australia is full of convicts and criminals. Many were exported from Britain and made to work in abysmal conditions in the Australian colonies. More than a few sets of the shackles with which iron discipline was enforced in the penal colonies have passed on to the Shadowlands, imbued with





the hate and resentment that they inspired in life. However, some of these chains have become something more.

These special Shackles facilitate and signify a particular agreement between a wraith and her Shadow. If both parties agree to an arrangement (the terms of which are left to be settled between Psyche and Shadow), the wraith must wear the Shackles, which displays to wraith and Spectre alike that a covenant between light and dark has been undertaken. This agreement is both serious and binding, and wraiths who wear the Shackles are given respect by both wraiths and Spectres.

As stated previously, the exact terms of the bargain struck between Psyche and Shadow are negotiated anew by each wraith, usually the arrangement involves a sort of *quid pro quo*, with the Psyche agreeing to advance the Shadow's agenda in exchange for a promise of noninterference. Should the compact be broken, the consequences are immediate and swift. If the Psyche doesn't live up to its end of the bargain, the Shadow gains two points of Permanent Angst. Should the Shadow break its end of the bargain, it loses the same amount.

These shackles do not inhibit a wraith's movement in any way. They are simply symbolic of the bondage a wraith has inflicted upon himself.

## Sharks in the Wine-Dark Seas: Polynesia

by Cynthia Summers

### Shadows of the Polynesian Deadlands



As each wraith appears on the islands of the Sea That Knows No Sun, she receives several greetings. Some come from her waiting ancestors, some come from friends who have passed on earlier, and others come from new friends and peers. Only one will come from her new Shadow.

Here, Shadows are divided along cultural lines, based on what cultural constructs a new wraith believed in during life. Those who followed more Western traditions and beliefs develop Shadows that any Stygian wraith would recognize. Those who followed and kept more traditional Polynesian beliefs had altogether different Shadows, ones that followed their own rules and acted according to their own tastes. These old Shadows are referred to as the Aimu.





## History

When the first wraiths arrived in the Polynesian Deadlands, they set about creating a community and culture to replace one which was mostly irrelevant to their new state. They soon discovered something new and unsettling added to the mixture — a strange voice that whispered evil thoughts in their ears and hearts, or that murmured their secret thoughts aloud. The priests determined that these voices corresponded to the evil beast-spirits of legend called the Ainu, who traditionally plagued the unfaithful and dispirited. This was not too disturbing to the wraiths who dwelt in Ru's archipelago. After all, they were in a spirit-realm, so why shouldn't they encounter spirits such as the Ainu as well?

On the other hand, there were also the Maku: vicious and predatory souls in life who had been transformed into more appropriate forms upon their deaths. These shark-spirits served as nothing so much as Shadows for their entire culture, and were believed to be the worst the Deadlands had to offer.

Then came Westernization. Missionaries, airstrips, cities and theatres of war were a sudden onslaught the Polynesians were unprepared for. They greeted interlopers with hospitality, only to be repaid with diseases, terror and the erosion of their culture.

Those who had died after converting to Christianity or embracing Western ideals discovered that after death, their heads were filled with strange, evil thoughts. Each wraith found that these thoughts were whispered by a voice that only he could hear. The elders told the new wraiths about Ainu, and attempted to instruct the younger generations in how to ignore or rid themselves of the torment. Instead, the evil thoughts grew stronger and more insistent, and the Shadowy voices mocked the traditional rituals (which were often ineffectual). The elders saw how these Ainu could possess their hosts, compelling them to commit crimes and other terrible acts with the hosts none the wiser to what they had done. Worst of all, these newer Ainu (which some called Shadows) had a terrible affinity to the Maku, who followed them and treated them with the strange courtesy of equals.

### Shadow Types

Shadows in the Polynesian Deadlands fall into three basic categories. There are the traditional Shadows, called Ainu, which concern themselves mainly with *tabu*. There are Ainu which have become somewhat Westernized, and which tend to be somewhat more catholic in their approaches to obtaining Oblivion, and there are actual Western-style Shadows. The last are possessed almost exclusively by younger wraiths, while standard Ainu usually belong to older souls.

At first, the best solution seemed to be exile. Elder wraiths sent younger ones on to other islands, as they had sent others on before, where their Shadows would pose no threat to the balance of the older islands. But as Western influence grew more pervasive, the new Shadows appeared more and more frequently in the younger generations. Finally, in an effort to preserve the elder islands the priests declared that those with the new Ainu were *tabu*, and ordered all of the younger wraiths into exile.

The strange plague has not abated, and the elder wraiths are discovering to their dismay that it may never end. The Westerners have brought something perhaps even more devastating to the islands than a new religion, rigid morality or even disease. They have brought a gift of true inner darkness.

### Traditional Belief

Traditionally, when a Polynesian died, if he were among those who were the most gentle and peaceful in spirit, he became part of the natural spirit-life of the Deadlands. As a reward for living a balanced life, he received a restful next existence as a plant, animal or even a shell or rock. On the other hand, those with unsettled affairs or other troubles became wraiths. These new wraiths discovered that unsettling thoughts and imaginings of evil began to bother them far more in death than they had in life. However, this nagging was accounted for in their cosmology, and they referred to it as merely another form of the Ainu's torments.

For the most part, these early Shadows held to their accustomed roles. As Ainu, they whispered the usual bad thoughts and temptations familiar to any other Shadow. They encouraged *tabu*-breaking and suggested creative punishments for those who followed their blandishments. On their part, wraiths cultivated their resolve to keep the Ainu at bay, for to have a powerful Ainu suggested that the soul in question was weak-willed. These early Ainu also did not have the connection to the Maku that would be found in later Shadows.

With the arrival of Western sailors and missionaries, the Deadlands likewise received a few visitors from Stygia. The first encounter with Western Shadows for the priests and kahunas of the Sea That Knows No Sun, was something entirely new and puzzling, and the Western Shadow's tricks were unlike any attempted by traditional Ainu. When colonizing Westerners died and came into the Shadowlands, they brought their strong Shadows with them. Fearing that these wraiths with their foreign Ainu would disrupt the existing balance in the Underworld, the resident wraiths gave them to the sea. But then their own people, who had begun to convert to Christianity and Western ways, began to appear with similar dark sides. Exile proved only a temporary solution, as more and more wraiths arrived with Shadows that would be easily recognizable to any Stygian Pardoner.

In modern times, most Polynesian wraiths arriving in the Deadlands hold to more Western ideas of death and what comes



after. They also cross the Shroud with Western-style Shadows, the exquisitely personal demon that scoffs at older beliefs and its more traditional counterpart. Those few wraiths arriving who managed to hold on to a traditional lifestyle have more traditional dark sides which manifest as old-style Ainu, but these souls are growing more and more infrequent as the years pass.

### Even Ainu...

Even Ainu are capable of doing some good. In days gone by, an Ainu might drive a wraith to pierce the Shroud and appear to the living if a serious *tabu* had been broken when she had died, or if she had not been properly buried. Once the outstanding offense had been remedied, the Ainu would be stilled, at least temporarily. Some elders believed that Ainu were only active when *tabus* were broken. These wraiths crossed the Shroud to materialize or speak with their descendants in dreams, encouraging them to keep the *tabus* and thus keep the Ainu quiet. As one of the Ainu's original purposes had been to keep *tabu* by punishing *tabu*-breakers, the Ainu had nothing to punish (and thus no reason to harm their hosts) when *tabu* was maintained.



## The New Shadows

Some elders mark the beginning of the invasion of Western Shadows as coinciding with the missionaries' effort to stop the practice of *tabu*. Staunch, sober Protestants deliberately broke



*tabu* to denounce the practice as superstitious nonsense, and encouraged native islanders to do the same. As this tidal wave of change hit the Shadowlands and then the islands, the effect was devastating. The Ainu seemed to go mad all at once as the *tabu* of the living were suddenly gone. The priests were hard-pressed to keep others' Ainu quiet, in those rare moments when they themselves weren't being ridden and harassed.

As native Polynesians converted to Christianity and Western ideals, they lost much of their connection to the older beliefs. When these assimilated souls died, they found that the lessons of the priests and elders that they'd dismissed in life didn't mesh with their own beliefs of the afterlife, either. Older wraiths, on the other hand, were appalled by the abandon shown by their recent descendants. Shadows and Ainu, circling each other warily while trying to establish their respective roles in this new society, didn't help matters either. The discrepancy between Ainu and the new Shadows made for the broadest gulf between the old and new groups.

Western Shadows became most firmly entrenched in the Deadlands during World War II with the creation of cargo cults. These small groups became most prevalent during and after World War II, when supplies would seemingly be dropped from the heavens by airlift. A number of natives, anxious to acquire the white man's wealth, built shrines at airstrips and harbors, where they prayed and sacrificed to gain what the white man had. They were rewarded after death with exactly that: Western-style Shadows.


These Westernized Shadows show a remarkable array of tricks and powers that most Stygian Shadows would know and approve of, including a healthy disrespect for traditional ways. They also have a much stronger connection to the Maku than most Polynesian wraiths find comfortable, and this burgeoning alliance has made the position of the new generations of wraiths even more tenuous.

## *Tabu*

Like their Stygian counterparts, Polynesian wraiths (and Ainu) sought to recreate something of the life they knew in the Skinlands. In creating the laws and customs which would bring order to the darkness, the kahunas made use of the fa-







miliar practice of *tabu*. For the Ainu, the use of *tabu* served as the proverbial red flag. Once the *tabu* system was in place, they never ceased trying to find ways to avoid, get around, or if those choices were not options, to break *tabu*.

The practice of *tabu* dates back from time immemorial among the Polynesians. The word translates imperfectly into English as, “sacred” and/or “forbidden.” It refers to the idea that someone or something has been designated as a sacred thing, which is to be revered. Yet its very sacredness makes it forbidden to the rest of the populace. To come in contact with it risks danger to the people or the object or both, and therefore objects of *tabu* are best kept separated.

Among the Polynesians, those with close supernatural connections would be deemed *tabu*. Island chiefs, for example, often were declared *tabu*. A chief’s connections with the spirit world sometimes made contact with ordinary people dangerous for both him and them (for them, because of the otherworldly contact such a meeting would entail; for him, the proximity of the earthly might be dangerous). Such a chief would have a “talking chief” to conduct the daily affairs of the village among his people while he dealt with more spiritual matters. Certain sites deemed holy by the priests would also be declared *tabu*, lest the common people pollute the site with their presence and render it unfit for spirits or other supernatural presences.

*Tabu* was sometimes used as a means enforcing certain morals or cultural values. Resources on many islands were scarce, and by declaring an area such as a forest to be *tabu* at certain times of the year, careful husbandry of the land ensured that there would be enough for all and more the following year. Sexual *tabus*, such as the one prohibiting close relatives from marrying, ensured the health and well-being of the tribe. *Tabu* might also be used to denote that which was forbidden, like warning a child, “Don’t touch” when curious fingers wandered near the hot pot on the fire.

*Tabu*-breaking was always a serious matter, and some retribution would always follow such an act. Sometimes that retribution might come in a spiritual form; spirits (including the traditional Ainu) were said to punish a *tabu*-breaker with bad luck or illness. If the offender performed an act of contrition to placate the spirits, the torment would cease. If a *tabu* had been broken, but no punishment immediately manifested itself, the community as a whole might pressure the wrongdoer to make up for her act, fearing consequences for everyone in the village in retaliation for one individual’s transgression. A *tabu*-breaker who was recalcitrant and refused to show any remorse for his deed might even be killed in order to appease any offended spirit and protect the violator’s neighbors.

When the Christian missionaries arrived, they viewed *tabu* as a superstitious relic and a sign of the natives’ “heathen” ways. They deliberately broke *tabus* to prove that there would be no punishment, divine or otherwise for such actions. They were, however, wrong.

With the system of rules that sustained balance in the islands being assaulted by the interlopers, the effect on the fragile ecology of the islands and the people’s psyche was devastating. Resources that had been managed properly under *tabu* were squandered, customs that had limited warfare’s devastation were ignored and with every sensible *tabu* that was broken, a disaster followed. Some wraiths have speculated that the new Shadows were a punishment bestowed by the gods in retaliation for the indiscriminate breaking *tabus* during the missionaries’ time. In light of the difficult times facing the Polynesian Deadlands, it is sometimes hard to argue otherwise.

## *Tabu* in the Sunless Sea

Excepting those outposts of Stygia and the Jade Empire, *tabu* forms the basis for all laws and rules governing the Polynesian Deadlands today. As it did in the Skinlands, *tabu* holds society together and maintains the health of the community, albeit with certain concessions to a new (after)lifestyle. *Tabus* concerning marriage and animal husbandry have given way to those concerning management of resources and social relations. Most new wraiths soon adapt, finding it not at all strange that *tabu* has followed them into this new existence. *Tabu* is nothing less than order, pure and simple, defining the society that spawned it. It also defines the who, what and how of the Ainu.

Ainu view *tabu* as the wall blocking the road, the wet blanket that spoils their fun. In many ways, they are correct. The Ainu represents the more selfish, less noble-minded side of a wraith, the part which resents having a leash put on its activities in the name of altruism. It wants, needs and then takes without a thought for the consequences. *Tabu* is the law that insists on keeping society healthy, and if that means that some desires must go unfulfilled, then so be it. *Tabu* is order, and the Ainu is chaos. Opposition is inevitable.


For the Ainu, then, the reasoning is simple — *tabu* is getting the way, it’s ruining my fun, so therefore I’ll knock it down. The Ainu wants what the Ainu wants, and cannot understand anything that stands in the way of its desires. It recognizes the immediate consequences of breaking *tabu* — a rush of Angst from the Psyche and a want fulfilled — then

### A Note to Storytellers

In creating your own *tabu* for the Polynesian Deadlands, here are some questions to consider:

- How does the *tabu* benefit the community? (Does it keep already-scarce resources from being further depleted? Does it ensure the mental or spiritual health of an island’s inhabitants?)
- What is under *tabu* and why?
- What sort of punishment should follow if this *tabu* is broken?





moves on to its next craving, blithely sure that it can keep breaking *tabu* as long as it wants and get away with it.

**Note:** Ainu aren't evil in the traditional sense of the Stygian Shadow, and don't seek to create evil. Instead, they're bored, restless, dissatisfied, and looking to make things more to their liking. This is especially important to keep in mind when considering an Ainu's likely reaction to a new *tabu*.

Below are some of the *tabu* common to the Sea Which Knows No Sun. Others may be created during the course of the chronicle due to special circumstances.

- **Tanéwood** — This precious wood has grown more and more scarce over the years. The remains of exceptionally blessed spirits, these trees now grow only as stunted saplings and stumps in the younger islands. *Tabu* insists that the trees be harvested from gently, that only a little wood be taken from each tree to ensure future supplies, and that proper respect for these souls be shown at all times. Ainu, however, are not interested in others, only themselves. An Ainu wanting to break *tabu* for Angst might take the wood violently (such as breaking off branches). Wasting wood products, by destroying them or even pitching them into the sea, would certainly hurt both the group and the tree. Furthermore, such acts certainly do not show proper respect, with the ultimate disrespect for the Children of Tané coming in the form of Tanéwood raids on other islands. Not only does this upset that particular island's balance, it upsets that of the raiding group as well.

- **Visiting the Skinlands** — While there is a Shroud up between the living and dead, even if no barrier existed, the act of returning to the living is strictly *tabu*. Only those who have been improperly buried may appear in the Skinlands with impunity, and then only to request proper funeral rites and to thank the person kind enough to perform them. On rare occasions, a king, warrior or priest might appear to the living in a vision, but such incidents are exceptionally rare. The dead belong in the Deadlands, the living in the sunlit lands, and for the two to intermingle risks unbalancing both.

To break this *tabu*, the Ainu might wheedle for one last glimpse of the Skinlands and living loved ones, however, and most wraiths are not adverse to the idea. Unfortunately, trips across the Shroud also served as prime opportunities for Catharsis, meaning that most of the ghosts who manifest to the living were really Ainu ready for a little perverse fun. This state of affairs gave rise to the legends that only the unhappily buried or evil spirits came from the Deadlands.

- **Space** — War over space considerations is meat and milk to many Ainu. Younger generations refuse to leave settled islands to seek their own, and older wraiths have settled in and seek more living space. Not only are wars over elbow room often provoked by Ainu, they are often waged by Ainu. When one enters Catharsis, others can be provoked into following. In wartime, this can be frightening, with literally armies of Ainu-ridden wraiths screaming and scabbling to hang onto their small gains.

- **Pathos** — Tradition dictates that the greatest share of available belongs to a group's leader, so that he might be fit and ready to defend the group against threats. *Tabu* upholds this. Pathos, like everything else, owes its value to scarcity, and no matter what a wraith's Ainu is certain to feel that he is being slighted of his fair share. This *tabu* also leads Ainu to whisper to their Psyches of revolt for the sake of the lion's share of Pathos.

- **Maku** — The *tabus* on the shark-spirits are very clear and specific: Don't talk to them, don't interact with them at all, and don't hunt them unless you're ready to end your existence. There are very real dangers to be had in all encounters with the shark-folk. Ainu may chase after this *tabu* endlessly in an effort to be closer to "kin," or attempt to puff up a wraith's self-importance so that he is tricked into taking foolish risks on the waves.

- **Mangaia** — The spiritual and temporal power of an island granted to a single chief, this power lasts only so long as a chief is on the island that he rules. If he ever leaves, even involuntarily, the power is stripped from him. It is the inability to take the power of the *mangaia* with one's self upon leaving an island that has discouraged empire-building on the Sea That Knows No Sun. Ainu may play up a leader's ambition, encouraging him to go forth and conquer (and end up leaving the island at some point).

- **Vaekai** — Being treated as a second-class citizen, simply because a *vaekai* didn't reap the Psyche breeds resentment on the part of the Ainu. Why should everyone else lord it over him? What did those people do that was so great besides having a *vaekai* Reap them? These are the questions traditional Ainu ask of their Psyches, and often the Psyche does not have a good answer. Western-style Shadows may plague wraiths who wish they could return to their traditional heritage, and thus regret having missed having had a *vaekai* reaping.

## Catharsis

Catharsis among Ainu literally brings out the worst in a wraith. Worse, if one wraith succumbs to her Ainu, others can be inspired to follow. The negative emotions and violent actions an Ainu spews forth can empower other Ainu to seize control, setting up a self-reinforcing carnival of destruction and greed.

Ainu were described in legend to be animal and plant spirits, and during Catharsis, animallike features can emerge on a wraith's Corpus. While Shadowridden, some Restless may lose their language skills, or have their eyes change color. Others develop claws or fur, and a few even grow feathers and talk in bird chatter. These beast-Ainu should not be confused with the animal spirits of the blessed and balanced. A ghostly animal created from a peaceful human spirit will be likewise peaceful and behave as a real animal should. Animalistic Ainu reflect the angry spirit behind them; they are mean-tempered, hostile and often ugly.



## Castigation

The Arcanos Castigate is viewed with some unease by traditional wraiths. The oldest among them still believe that their Ainu (Shadows) are related to the Ainu-spirits, and that to do them any harm is to risk offending the gods. Those who choose to submit to Castigate often make a sacrifice to the gods later, to make reparations for any discomfort caused. Younger wraiths with less patience have fewer qualms about trammeling their dark riders back into place, but they may still offer a prayer that the gods not think less of them for wanting a moment's peace.

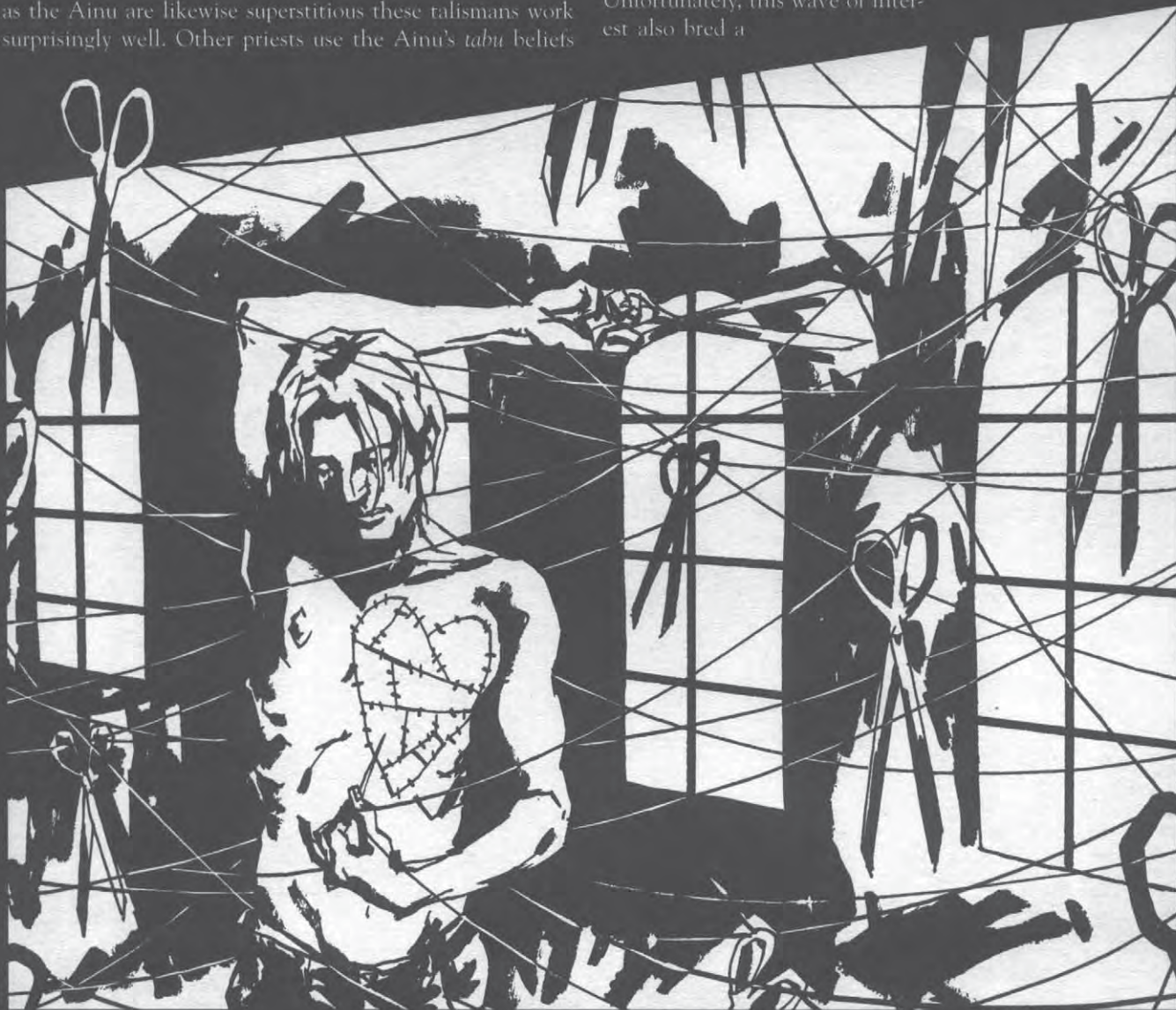
Castigation among traditional wraiths follows something of traditional Polynesian ritual among the living. Drumming, chants and ordeals intended to make the host seem like an unpleasant place to be are all used. Some priests make use of charms for households to keep out bad dreams or evil spirits. Many traditional wraiths believe in the efficacy of these, and as the Ainu are likewise superstitious these talismans work surprisingly well. Other priests use the Ainu's *tabu* beliefs

against it, browbeating a weaker Ainu into keeping *tabu*, or tricking a stronger one into "breaking" one for the Psyche's benefit. Many a disgruntled Ainu has discovered that the *tabu* it so gleefully broke was really meant to cage it again.

The arrival of Westernization created problems for those Castigators attempting to deal with these newer, more difficult Shadows. These Shadows scoff openly at the older rituals. Furthermore, they are apparently only affected by Western-style Castigate, which can be notoriously difficult to find on the islands. The only certain places to find such skills are in the Necropoli of places like Jakarta, and few wraiths have the stomach for such a journey.

## Cannibalism

When the first Western sailors and visitors to the South Seas returned with tales of cannibalism among the natives, the popular imagination was fired with excitement. Unfortunately, this wave of interest also bred a





lot of misinformation about the practice and what it actually meant to Polynesian peoples. Christian missionaries derided the practice as "heathen" and "uncivilized," all the while unaware of its true significance. The dead know what the practice is worth, however, and the practice has come to have greater significance among the Restless and the Ainu.

Cannibalism took two forms among the Polynesian cultures. The first form was the eating of the beloved dead, as it was considered a sign of respect and love from family and close friends of the deceased to consume the body of a loved one now gone. In eating the flesh of the dead person, the mourners believed they would gain her strength, wisdom, courage and other good qualities. Cannibalism was also a matter of practicality, since many islands were short on places that might serve as a burial ground, and wood was often too scarce to waste on a pyre.

Warring tribes practiced the second form of cannibalism, and this was the origin of many of the most fanciful travelers' tales. To eat one's enemies was a sign of true power, and the act of cannibalism was believed to bestow the courage and strength of a worthy opponent on the victor. The threat of being eaten by one's enemies was a frightening one, and the challenge "I'll roast you alive!" was equal parts insult and intimidation.

Early Polynesian wraiths believed that cannibalism wouldn't carry the same weight in the Deadlands, since everyone was dead and plasm just wasn't the same as flesh. Instead, they discovered that just the mere threat still could unsettle the strongest warrior, and that the Ainu were well aware of what the threat of being devoured meant to their Psyche. When a wraith's Ainu threatened him with cannibalism, it wasn't just talk of losing flesh. The Ainu phrased the threat in terms of the loss of the spirit.

As an Ainu gains ground in its war with the Psyche, it speaks of devouring the Psyche as if it were eating the Psyche's flesh. Sadistic Ainu go into graphic detail about which "part" is currently being devoured, (fingers are often compared to scruples, for example), and how the soul tastes. Smacking noises at moments when Catharsis is close, or a Harrowing has just been finished can provide instant gratification for the Ainu, particularly if the wraith reacts badly.

An Ainu's uses of cannibalism are based on the Psyche's death and life. If the wraith had been a follower of traditional ways in life, and her body was eaten in the traditional way, her Ainu simply gets nasty about it, mocking her with descriptions of how it, too, is honoring her. On the other hand,





a Westernized wraith might be tortured with horror-movie style descriptions of the rending of his Corpus

During war, some Ainu cannibals get entirely too literal, and look for captives as their prize. Many wraiths have come out of Catharsis to find themselves with mouthfuls of plasm. These unfortunates often exile themselves or give themselves over to the dark waters (and the waiting embrace of the Maku).

Polynesian wraiths with Western ideals are terrified of this aspect of their souls, much to the delight of their Shadows. It is primarily ignorance which makes for such fear, but Ainu see it as a way to extract revenge for the crime of leaving the old ways behind.

## Creating Ainu

Traditional Ainu are created no differently than Stygian Shadows, although there a few more details to think about for an Ainu than one might expect. An Ainu has an Archetype, Thorns, Angst and Dark Passions, just like its Stygian counterpart, as well as a few extra details to make it special.

When creating an Ainu for your character, choose an Archetype with your wraith's life in mind; think in particular about what things she wanted that she was denied, how *tabu* and tradition treated her, and how she died. Thorns should be chosen with care, since they define the tools the Ainu has at its disposal.

One important thing to think about during creation is the type of animal characteristics that the Ainu manifests during Catharsis. As the Ainu gains Angst, more animal features should develop. You should keep track of the changes on the back of the Shadow sheet; if an Ainu suddenly regresses in appearance it could lead to all sorts of confusion. Choose an animal that is native to the region your character is from and use common sense; a Polynesian wraith is unlikely to manifest as a polar bear or a roadrunner. Mammals, reptiles and small amphibians are most common; birds are rare, insects and arthropods are almost never seen, and fish are never seen. However, frogs are sacred to Tané and as such their features almost never manifest as Ainu traits.

Think about how your Ainu views cannibalism and *tabu*. This will shape her techniques for use against the Psyche and determine what her main targets are going to be. Discuss this with your Shadowguide, and scribble some notes for in-play reference on the sheet.

Dark Passions should be written with at least one specific *tabu* in mind, or a generalization that covers several, such as Squander natural resources (Greed). A Polynesian wraith may have one or two "normal" Dark Passions, but the majority should center on *tabu*.

Westernized Ainu or Western Shadows for Polynesian wraiths follow the standard Shadow creation process from **Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition**. However, if you are giving your wraith this kind of Shadow, you should think about how your character views traditional Polynesian life and culture, including cannibalism and *tabu*.

## Thorns

Many of the Thorns most **Wraith** players are familiar with are altered or inapplicable in the Deadlands of Polynesia.

**Spectre Prestige** — This Thorn works as written for both Westernized and traditional wraiths, except that traditional wraiths may find their prestige lies with the Maku.

**Tainted Relic** — This works for both groups, but the relic must be something appropriate to the Ainu; a traditional Ainu will have something older (a spear or a bone knife), while a Western-style Ainu will carry something more modern (a dagger, gun or machete).

**Infamy** — For the most part, the Thorn is not applicable to traditional wraiths; a wraith with a really bad reputation may bring it in, but in these Deadlands Infamy is simply not as broad-based as the Stygian sort. Infamy among traditional wraiths spreads only one or two islands out from the wraith's home.

**Death's Sigil** — Animallike deformities manifest most often with this Thorn. Many of the manifestations of this Thorn are as subtle as the wraith leaves animal tracks instead of human footprints, or gives off a musky scent.

**Aura of Corruption** — This Thorn appears more often in Western-style Shadows, who then become very offensive to traditional wraiths when this manifests. Some traditional wraiths claim that they can see the aura in question.

**Shadow Call** — The Call may also summon Maku if the wraith is on the water or within shouting distance of the ocean.

**Shadowed Face** — This Thorn is not applicable here; most of the islands' populations are too small for a strange face to go unnoticed and unchallenged.

**Tainted Touch** — While this Thorn does function here, its effects are usually not too hard to trace in small populations. A wraith identified as the source of the taint is quickly sent to the sea, either as an exile or as Maku bait.

**Shadowplay** — Bear in mind that this Thorn will not work during war, when the Ainu is dominant.

**Shadow Familiar** — Animals in the Shadowlands are spirits of the blessed, and most Shadow Familiars aren't bright enough to camouflage their actions and fit in. This Thorn is practically unknown outside of the Westernized Necropoli.

**Freudian Slip** — If it means playing with and abusing *tabu*, it's even better.

**Shadow Life** — Another powerful Thorn, although most Ainu must be exceedingly subtle in their use of this. This presents problems similar to those encountered with Shadowed Face.

**Devil's Dare** — This Thorn is not really applicable, owing to the *tabu* system. It is seen far more frequently in Western Shadows.





## New Archetypes

**The Compulsive** — This unnerving creature likes to push its host's limits as regards *tabu*. It clutches at everything, every action, as potential *tabu*, and worries its host with suggestions that even the most innocent of actions is a grave offense to propriety and the gods. A wraith may learn to ignore most of the suggestions as nonsense, but risks ignoring true *tabus*, by mistaking them for more of the AINU's blandishments. This Archetype appears most often in the souls of Westernized wraiths of Polynesian descent.

**The Kahuna** — Another Archetype for the Westernized, this Shadow badgers its Psyche with thoughts of the traditional life lost or given up. It may haunt the Psyche with reminders to keep *tabu* and other traditional customs, and gains Angst for broken *tabu* just as an AINU might. However, its special rack is to harp on the Psyche's assimilationist ways, attempting to instill guilt for all of the traditions the wraith has left behind.

## The Maku

These frightful shark-Spectres prowl the wine-dark seas of the Polynesian Deadlands, looking for unwary souls to devour. In life, those who eventually become Maku were the

truly vicious and predatory. In death, they have assumed forms to fit their natures.

The majority of Maku emerge like Mortwights, born into their new state immediately after death. These souls were terrors in their lifetimes: abusers, scalp-takers, necromancers, *tabu*-breakers. Others undergo the change after their deaths, after being ridden by AINU or Shadow one too many times. In either case, all that was humane about the soul sloughs away, leaving only those aspects that a shark would be proud to call brother.

When a Polynesian wraith is reborn as a Maku, he goes into Catharsis for a last time and plunges himself beneath the waves of the Sea That Knows No Sun. Those on the surface may see several Maku circling the area where the unfortunate wraith went into the waters, waiting for a new soulmate to emerge. Beneath the water, the wraith dives down into the darkest depths where, it is said, the AINU separates itself from the wraith and devours the Corpus and Psyche in one fell swoop. (Some believe that the Psyche is not devoured, but relegated to back of the Maku's mind. Evidence for this theory is scarce, and it is probably just wishful thinking.) Even as it devours its own Corpus, the AINU spins it forth again to give itself "flesh" and a more fitting form. When the wraith next rises from the waves, it is as a Maku, brother to sharks.

The killing instinct innate to a Maku is far greater than any native to a living shark, and the intensity which the shark-spirits bring to the hunt is as chilling as their malice. It has





## System

While listening to a Maku song, wraiths with Western-style or post-Westernization Shadows are at +2 difficulty on all rolls made for the purpose of resisting Catharsis. For traditional wraiths, the difficulty to resist increases by 1 while the shark-spirits sing.

been noted by many that when hunting, Maku often seem to encounter those they knew in life “accidentally,” and that they take special care in attacking these ties to their former existences. Westernized wraiths claim that Maku have at their disposal a specialized form of the Arcanos Lifeweb, enabling a shark-soul to identify a relative or former loved one even across the miles of sunless ocean. More traditional wraiths simply know to avoid the seas whenever necessary, particularly if a friend or relative has gone missing recently.

The shark-spirits are also believed to make use of a form of Keening, although its effects are not entirely understood. They have been known to sing among the waves, calling from each to each with a song that is alternately discordant or strangely beautiful. Some claim that they can hear the voices of their lost loved ones in the Maku’s songs, begging for help and lamenting their fate, while others say the only thing the Maku have to sing about is their next meal. Few who heed these supposed pleas in the chanting of the Maku ever return to shore; nothing more is known of the matter.

Maku are vicious in hunting, and when one has determined to take a certain quarry as prey, almost nothing can dissuade her. They are also equally vicious in their wit, mock-

ing and tormenting their victims with as much dark delight as any Shadow. Since they like to play with their food, it has occasionally happened that a Maku’s victim has been able to escape when the hunter became too cocky about the eventuality of capture. Not all of these escapes result in happy endings, though. Some Maku release their prey temporarily, simply for the looks on their victims’ faces when they are recaptured just before reaching supposed safety.

Some priests have long speculated that there might be a connection between the Ainu and the Maku. Certainly the Ainu seemed at times to be as terrible as the Maku, and they had similar weapons of torment at their disposal. The Ainu were also primarily more like animals than humans, and so it made sense that they should be more connected to the almost completely inhuman Maku. But it was not until the arrival of Western-style Ainu that the connection became clear.

These Ainu shared a strange kinship with the shark-spirits, speaking to them and encouraging their attacks. Those with Western Shadows were also at a serious disadvantage when the Maku sang in the waves. The Ainu seemed drawn to the song, occasionally going into Catharsis after listening for too long. Shorebound, many priests observed this and nodded in satisfaction. Even the Maku’s own were not safe from them.



## More Information

More information on the other Dark Kingdoms can be found in the *Wraith Players Guide*. Additionally, *Dark Kingdom of Jade* and *Dark Kingdom of Jade Adventures* provide detailed information on the Jade Empire and its inhabitants.









# Chapter Four: Spectres and Risen

## Shadow-Eating

### The Darkness Within Us All



*our Arcanoi are supposed to send us, cowering and screaming, back into the Tempest. Your Citadels are touted as fortresses of light, warding away the evil that would overwhelm you all.*

*What a bunch of crap. Most of you couldn't Spook your way out of a paper bag, let alone harm one of us. And the Citadels? I can't count the number of times I've waltzed through the halls of one.*

*Despite your tough talk, you're all a bunch of babies, afraid of the dark. You don't have the power to bend the darkness to your will. You don't have the balls to face Oblivion. You don't have the strength to feel the pain of the universe filling your soul.*

*— Maxwell Carpenter, Doppelganger and frequent visitor, Citadel of Philadelphia*

Wraiths reborn through an encounter with Oblivion change on a fundamental level. Beings of implacable evil, these creatures desire only to spread the pain which wracks them constantly. They strive to extend Oblivion throughout the Underworld, and they anticipate eagerly the nothingness of the Void. They are nothing less than the greatest darkness of the human spirit given form. They are Spectres.


Spectres can be explained, in a rather simplistic fashion, as Shadows who have assumed permanent control over their Psyche counterparts. Such a change is seldom sudden, since the Shadow must first raise its permanent Angst to 10 before it can completely dominate the wraith. As long as the wraith is able to resist the whispered lures of its Shadow or retains the services of a capable Pardoner, this should not be a concern. Sometimes, though, the wraith becomes overly dependent on her dark half to the point where she is reborn as a Spectre.

### The Philosophy of Spectres

*We're not a bunch of mindless drones, you know. That's you.*  
*— Maxwell Carpenter*

Contrary to popular opinion, Spectres do not differ greatly from wraiths. True, they dwell mostly in the horror of the





Tempest, practicing their Dark Arcanoi and seething from the pain of Oblivion. However, Doomslayers boast of braving the Tempest's soul-shattering storms in search of Spectral trophies, and Helldivers claim to have infiltrated the Spectres' ranks, learning their enemy's skills. These and other intrepid (some would say insane) souls maintain that the Spectres' dark talents are not unavailable to wraiths. When appearance and ability are set aside, the fundamental factor that differs the Shadow-Eaten from wraiths is temperament.

Where a wraith tries to deny her Shadow-self, a Spectre literally embraces it. The pain and darkness which is the Shadow's driving force is given full voice in the Spectre. The agony it feels — the torment of Oblivion — is too great to be contained within its warped Corpus. Striving to find some reprieve from the suffering, the Spectre delights in spreading its own soul-wracking agony throughout the Underworld. The Spectre sees the universe spiraling down toward entropy; its mission is to help propel everything into that final embrace with Oblivion.

While a number of types of Spectres operate the far side of the Shroud, most characters who become so transformed are considered Doppelgangers. This Spectral caste consists of wraiths seduced by their Shadows, yet still in possession of their Fetters and appearing much like normal wraiths.

## The Appeal of Evil

If she feels her character is up to the challenge, a player should approach her Storyteller with the idea of turning her wraith into one of the Shadow-Eaten. Spectres are an undeniable part of **Wraith**, but their ultimately dark and destructive natures may disrupt some chronicles if given prominence in the form of a player character. If the Storyteller is agreeable to the idea, however, she should feel free to incorporate the wraith's transformation into the chronicle's ongoing story.

It is entirely possible that the Storyteller might decide she wants to incorporate a Spectre into her chronicle before she's been asked by a player. If so inclined, she should approach the player she feels would best roleplay the Spectre.

In either case, the wraith's Shadowguide must be informed of the impending change of death as well. The Shadowguide is vital to helping the player roleplay the wraith's transition properly, as the Shadow's influence over its alter ego is central to a wraith's descent into Oblivion. As such, the Shadowguide must be aware of both the player and Storyteller's wishes in the specific direction they want to go.

## How to Become a Spectre

If the player cannot resist the temptation of transforming her beloved wraith into one of the Shadow-Eaten, the first thing to do is look over her character — not only the wraith, but her Shadow as well. She should look for reasons

the wraith would find herself irresistibly drawn to the darkness of the Void.

The wraith's Passions and the Shadow's Dark Passions and Thorns are the key to this. Think about how the Shadow can not only twist the wraith's powerful emotions against her, but also use the wraith's hopes and dreams to feed the Shadow's own evil desires. These warped feelings are at the root of the individual Spectre's motivations, and have their beginnings within the wraith's own mind.

The player and Storyteller should work together to determine the motivations behind the change. The impact it will have on the character, the troupe and the chronicle should be addressed to their satisfaction before going any further.

## Taking the Long View

*There's a fine line between inspired evil and simple depravity. Let me draw it for you.*

— Maxwell Carpenter

A Spectre has a traditionally short existence, as the anguish of Oblivion is often too much to bear for very long. While she can try sustaining herself with the Angst she gains through the terror she spreads, all too soon the Void beckons.

The most successful (and not surprisingly, most dangerous) of the Shadow-Eaten are those who endure despite their self-destructive natures. A Spectre looking for more than an eye-blink existence must cultivate a higher — or lower, depending on how one looks at it — purpose.

The player should determine what she hopes to accomplish by having her character become a Spectre. While simply being nasty has its roleplaying benefits, she should look for more than that. There is already ample opportunity for malice in guiding another character's Shadow without needing to convert a perfectly respectable wraith into a twisted parody of her former self.

Again, the best starting point is with the Shadow's Dark Passions. Take not only the Dark Passion's core emotion but also its meaning into consideration. One like **Make others look foolish (Spite)** may be entertaining and surprisingly effective at fueling a Spectre's Angst, but it's not something that will help it maintain an existence for any appreciable length of time. Similarly, **Topple the Hierarchy (Hate)** can offer the Spectre a solid long-term goal, but one that is rather difficult to achieve. On the other hand, something strong but self-sustaining like **Spread pain (Malice)** or even **Withstand Oblivion (Fear)** can give the Spectre a powerful incentive to stick around.

The player shouldn't stop there. Using the Dark Passion as the first step, she should endeavor to have at least a broad idea of what sort of trouble she sees her Spectre getting into. This might tie neatly into the Storyteller's current chronicle, focus on one of the wraith's Fetters, or head off on a previously unexplored tangent.



## Shadow Hooks

The Shadow is the master of manipulation. These hooks explore key ways in which the Shadow can exploit emotions and circumstances to gain an ever-greater hold over the wraith. Clever Shadowguides can create even more twisted and inescapable methods. With the proper machinations, the Shadow can give the wraith what she wants while getting exactly what it needs to sink its barbs in deeper.

That's what the Shadow is all about, after all.

### Former Life

One of the greatest tragedies the Restless suffer is to be forever denied the warmth and light of living existence. A wraith with a Passion to remain near her family even after passing on is in for a frustrating afterlife.

**Tactics:** The Shadow might continually remind the wraith of her inability to interact with the Skinlands, seaking up the Angst generated by her anguish and longing. It may offer the wraith Shadow Dice to help with her attempts to communicate with or touch the Quick, counting up the Angst from any ones rolled. It can even suggest that, while the wraith may lack the power to cross over, the Shadow has the ability — if only she'd let it take over for a little while.

Puppeteers and Proctors are fine targets for this hook. They can already pierce the Shroud for a short time, but what if they could make it last longer? What if they could return as often as they wanted to? It's such a small price to pay...

### Promise of Power

Intrigue and manipulation are the bread and butter of the Shadowlands. Hierarchs plan, Renegades plot and Heretics scheme; any poor souls caught in the middle are bound to be used by one side or the other (or all). The best way to avoid being used as a pawn is to gain power, promoting one's self on the eternal chessboard.

**Tactics:** The Shadow can point out how its better half is being duped by all and sundry, including those the wraith considers friends. Whether or not the claims are true, the wraith's subsequent anger and frustration are strong stuff. Directing the wraith toward (or away from) individuals who might assist him can place the Shadow itself in the role of manipulator, without the wraith being aware of it.

Some Shadow Thorns are uniquely appropriate to exploit this hook. **Shadow Life** enables the Shadow to build relationships with unsavory wraiths (or even lurking Doppelgangers) while its wraith slumbers. These individu-

als can then "happen" to meet the wraith at just the right time to offer assistance.

**Pact of Doom** can be offered as well. The chance to increase the level of a much-needed Arcanos can be too much for a wraith to resist. Besides, a couple more points of permanent Angst for the Shadow shouldn't matter too much as long as there are Pardoners accessible, right?

### Avenge a Harrowing

Harrowings are among the most excruciating torments a wraith can suffer. A clever Shadow can take advantage of one triggered by external agencies, such as an attack on a Fetter, even after the wraith has defeated it.

**Tactics:** Although wraiths often feel renewed after besting a Harrowing, the Shadow should feel free to remind its counterpart of the hell she just went through. The pain and terror of such an experience, though simply remembered later, is nectar to the Shadow. Little reminders, jibes and inquiries about the event can keep the wraith in a constant state of emotional turmoil and give the Shadow no end of Angst upon which to feed.

The best part is that the Shadow can feed off the wraith's desire for vengeance against those who assaulted her Fetter. Encouraging the wraith to follow leads which bring her closer to finding her attackers can result in some powerful emotions. If handled properly, the wraith will be so intent on revenge that she won't realize her Shadow is growing fat on the Angst of the search.

### The Sorrow of Eternity

The monumental, endless despair of wraithly existence can be the perfect hook for the Shadow's claws to latch onto.

**Tactics:** Simply pointing out that the wraith is dead is an effective method of evoking Angst. The Shadow then whispers that there is, indeed, more to the afterlife than merely existing. Whether it's power, an end to it all, or (perhaps too much to hope for) Transcendence, the wraith can't help but be intrigued by the possibility of something beyond her current condition.

Especially effective against those with relatively little time in the afterlife, this hook can also be useful for "older" wraiths. A young wraith, overwhelmed by the prospect of eternity, is the perfect fodder for her Shadow's machinations. One of the Restless with centuries in the Shadowlands suffering a kind of "mid-afterlife crisis" is likewise in prime condition for the Shadow's antics.



In the end, the player should try to look for a motivation beyond the obvious. Spectres, though driven by the pain and emptiness of Oblivion, can be just as complex as any wraith in their personalities, goals and desires. Having a direction past basic destructive urges will give the player a richer canvas upon which to work, and make the experience more enjoyable for the other players.

## Breaking Free of Oblivion's Embrace

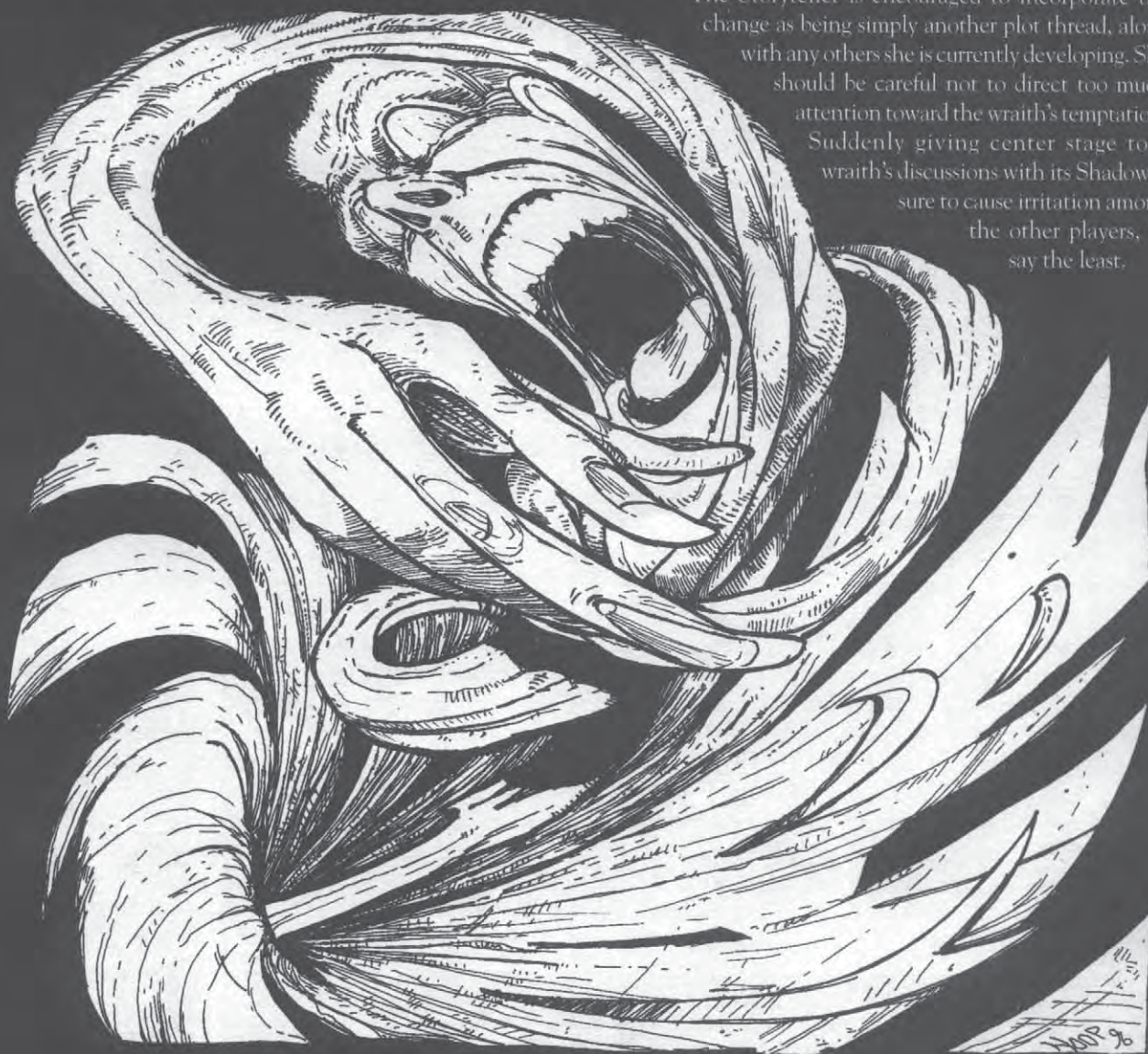
The player might also want to decide if she wishes her character's life saved, or instead to plummet ever farther down the pit to Oblivion. While this decision shouldn't impact directly on game play, it is an important distinction for the Storyteller, player and Psycheguide to keep in mind. Conversely, it is important to note that even if a player does want her character to shrug off Oblivion's shackles, it certainly won't

be easy. The Shadow-Eaten are extremely self-destructive by nature, and given a choice, they would rather try to drag with them any well-meaning wraiths who offer redemption. Such attempts can certainly make for some exhilarating game sessions, however.

## Roleplaying the Descent

Once the Storyteller, Shadowguide and wraith player are comfortable with the idea, the next step is to roleplay the wraith's descent into Oblivion. The appearance of temptations particularly appropriate to the wraith's dark side, inspired cunning on the part of the Shadow and valiant (though inevitably futile) resistance by the wraith — all these elements can make the wraith's downward spiral dramatic and enjoyable to all. However, such influences can take time, so the wraith should not necessarily become a Spectre overnight.

The Storyteller is encouraged to incorporate the change as being simply another plot thread, along with any others she is currently developing. She should be careful not to direct too much attention toward the wraith's temptation. Suddenly giving center stage to a wraith's discussions with its Shadow is sure to cause irritation among the other players, to say the least.





The Shadowguide should maintain the Shadow's previous attitude and involvement. A dramatic increase in the Shadow's whispered antics might draw undue player notice, and it can also disrupt the mood of the game.

The player should try to allow the change to occur naturally (or at least as naturally as such things will). If the wraith jumps all-too-gleefully into her Shadow's waiting arms, it's entirely possible that her fellow wraiths will drag her off to a Pardoner before the desired takeover transpires.

While there is no reason to keep the wraith's transformation from the rest of the troupe, it is recommended. If the other players aren't aware of the change, their characters' actions and reactions will be that much more authentic. Such a revelation is more entertaining for all involved the less others know about what has been happening.

With but a little thought, a number of methods can be used to draw a wraith into her Shadow's dark embrace. Many have already been mentioned in *Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition* and in this book. Using these ideas as inspiration, the Storyteller and Shadowguide should be able to funnel the wraith down the black corridor of Oblivion.

## The Details of Transformation



Quite possibly the hardest part of this entire process is the wraith's literal transformation into a Spectre, and how to deal with the immediate consequences. This is particularly tricky if the other players are to remain unaware of the change.

The Shadowguide should alert the player and Storyteller when the Shadow is ready to take over the wraith permanently (a note is preferable to bellowing out "Going down!"). At this point, some sleight of hand is called for.

The Storyteller should set up a circumstance where the wraith appears to fall into a Harrowing. The wraith doesn't have to suffer the actual event as long as it seems so to the other players. Then, when the Shadow engulfs the wraith, she plunges into the Tempest for her "Harrowing."

A fake Harrowing is arranged for the troupe's benefit. The specific Quarry and circumstances are irrelevant as long as it is believable to the troupe. Success or failure on the wraith's part is also immaterial, although the player should roleplay the Harrowing as earnestly as any other.

The wraith is left hanging at the Harrowing's end, just prior to when she would normally return to a Fetter. Focusing on the rest of the troupe, the Storyteller should keep them from checking up on their vanished friend for some time. An ongoing plot

works just fine; if nothing else, a sudden attack by Spectres or one of the troupe's enemies will keep them occupied.

The transformation does take some time, so upon her return the Spectre should be prepared to face questions regarding the length of her disappearance. In the Underworld, there are any number of reasons why she might have been delayed, but she would do well to have her story straight.

### Alibis

Many things are suspect in a wraith's existence, but a Shadow-Eaten can use that to her advantage. A newborn Spectre has many ways to account for her disappearance. Keep in mind, whatever the alibi, that simple is best.

- **Attacked by Spectres/Hierarchy/Renegades/Heretics** — This is a constant danger to solitary wraiths. Such an attack might also account for any subtle changes in the "wraith's" appearance.

- **Captured by Slavers** — The "wraith" was caught by a favorite slaver tactic of searching out and waiting at her Fetter. She only recently escaped when the slaver was attacked by a rival/Hierarchy patrol/Renegade gang/Heretic band.

- **Lost in the Tempest** — Taking a shortcut to get back to her friends, the "wraith" got lost in the Tempest and only now found her way back to the troupe.

- **Secret Meeting with the Guild** — The "wraith's" Guild mentor/contact/ally/superior demanded he come to a meeting. They discussed things he's not at liberty to repeat (although if the troupe has another wraith in the same Guild, the newly hatched Spectre will be happy to take him aside later).

## Keeping the Secret

*What, you think we walk around with name tags saying "Spectre!"*

— Maxwell Carpenter

Certain Arcanoi are perfect for sniffing out the Shadow-Eaten — Castigate in particular has been the bane of many a Doppelganger. There are also numerous artifacts that can sense the presence of Oblivion. The challenge of avoiding such pitfalls can certainly make for exhilarating roleplaying.

As long as no one else in the troupe can sense the Shadow-Eaten, there is no need to make special concessions. On the other hand, a Pardoner in the group can make for a disappointingly short tenure for the fledgling Spectre. The Storyteller may consider lending some assistance in the form of a minor artifact which masks the user's Spectral stare momentarily (although this is by no means necessary — no one said being a Spectre should be easy).





# My Shadow Did What?!

Or,  
When Bad Things Happen  
to Good Wraiths



Sometimes, despite the wraith's best intentions, her Shadow will grow increasingly powerful and eventually gain permanent control of the wraith. Perhaps the wraith relied overmuch on Shadow Dice, or entered into a Pact of Doom too often, or had a Shadow with Dark Passions particularly effective at gleaning Angst.

Whatever the reason, there are instances when a wraith becomes a Spectre before the player or Storyteller is prepared for it. Such an event doesn't mean the wraith should be written off, however. An inspired event like this can open entirely new doors of plot and roleplaying.

Once the Shadow has 10 permanent Angst, it is turned over to the wraith player. The Storyteller may well want to take a short break to discuss the ramifications of the transformation with the player.

The steps listed above for premeditated Spectre metamorphosis should be discussed briefly to the player and Storyteller's satisfaction. As long as she wishes to continue playing the character, the Storyteller should work the change into her chronicle.

## When Transcendence Beckons

Some wraiths are already well on the road to Transcendence; their Shadows are so weak as to barely have a voice with their wraithly alter egos. Having the wraith suddenly find itself unable to resist such a sickly Shadow can be difficult to rationalize. Wraiths in such an enviable position will certainly have a harder time being taken over by their Shadows, even temporarily. Clever Shadowguides will find it challenging, but other sections of this book give helpful advice on how to turn the wraith from the path of light.



# Dirty Tricks for Spectres

## Maxwell Carpenter's Favorite Dirty Tricks

*There are any number of ways we Spectres can use our Arcanoi to make the afterlife hell for wraiths. I'm not here to hold your hand, so don't expect me to spell everything out for you. Stop sniffing; I'll give you a few of the basics — just don't come crying to me if you run into problems. We're not running a daycare, y'know.*

### Pandemonium

All of this Arcanos' arts are perfect for confusing and disorienting your victim, though I have to say Befuddlement is the best of the bunch. Say someone's close to figuring out your true nature, or about to take some action you'd rather they didn't (like lopping off your favorite head). Just lay some Befuddlement on 'em just long enough for you to cut and run, or maybe take your target out. The rest are a lot of fun, too, but things like Foul Humour and Tempus Fugit take too much out of me to use very often.

### Intimation

This really needs no explanation; what easier way is there to manipulate a wraith than to discover what she really, really wants? And that's just the beginning. With Intimation, you can make her want something else (like this "live" relic grenade), or strip her of a desire (like putting a blade through your chest). Loads of fun, if you can put up with that funky green light shining from your eye (and find someone to teach you; the Hive-Mind's a little fuzzy on this one).

### Mnemosynis

The whole list of arts is useful, but I tend to go for Mnemotechnics. I can't recall how many times that art has hauled my sweet Corpus out of harm's way. How, you ask? If you're in a tight spot, just pop your attacker back to the memory of her death. While she's reliving that joyous occasion, you can go about your business (or stick around and soak up some nice, strong emotions).

Of course, if you want to do a real double whammy, hit her with Mnemotechnics and have a Doppelganger buddy show up looking like one of the major players from her past. Her cortex will be scrambled eggs — I guarantee it.

### Hive-Mind

I get a big kick out of this. Okay, weasel your way into a bunch of wraiths. Then, when they're kicking back, send out

a Distress Signal. It's even better if you use Gleaming and get them all to run toward a Nihil. Can you say "buffet line"? Your fellow Spectres'll get upset if you do this too often, though, so watch it or they'll add you to the smorgasbord.

## Doomslayers



o you want to be a Doomslayer, do you? You have any idea how many punks I get every day telling me they want to take the fight back to the other side of the Tempest? You have any clue how few of them don't go bug-eyed when they find out what it's really all about?

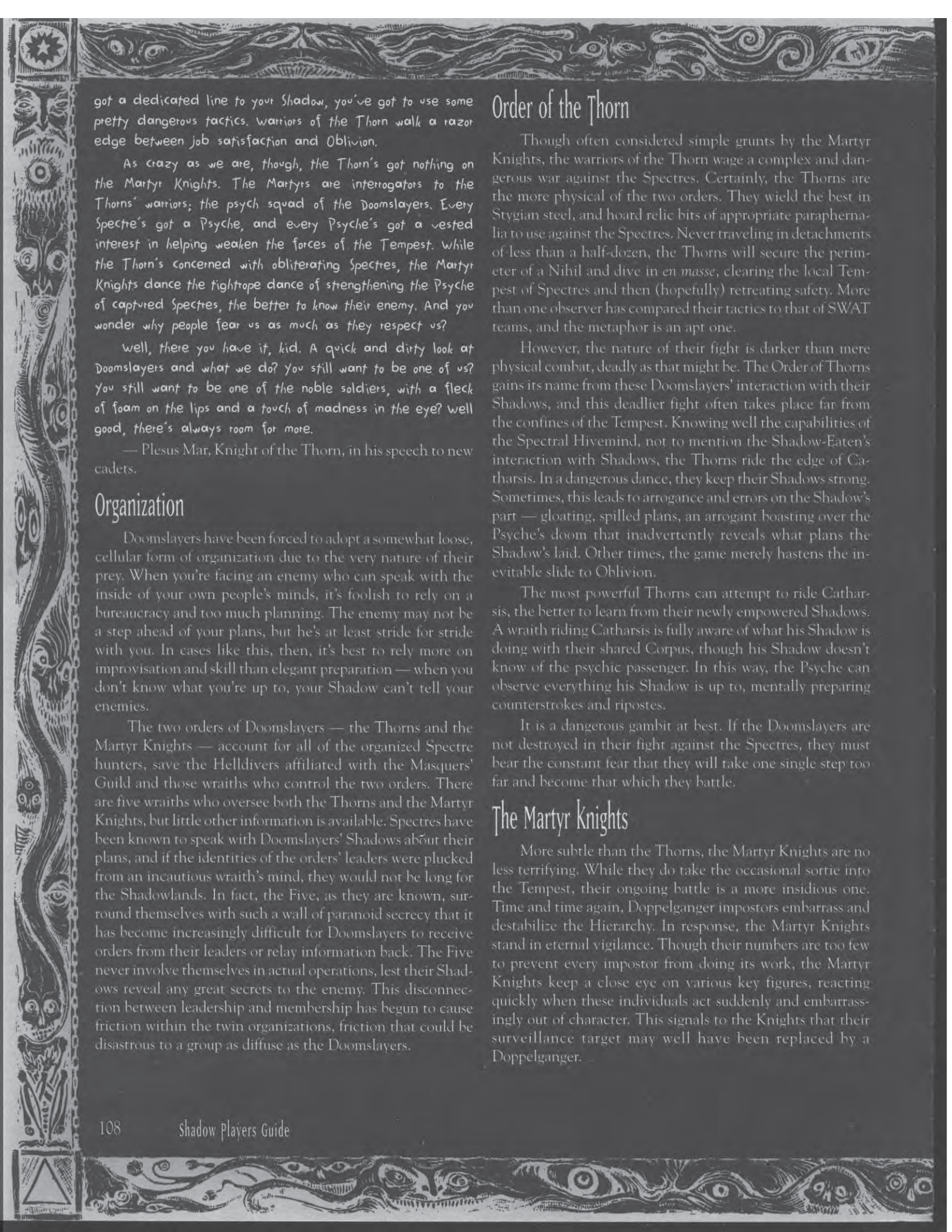
Oh, but you're going to be different, aren't you? Yeah, I've heard that before. Sit down and listen, and we'll find out if you're the right kind of crazy or just plain insane.

The way most folks see us, you'd think Doomslayers were a bunch of psychos in relic armor going out with noble hearts to battle the encroaching tide of the Maelstrom. Well, that's all nice and pretty, kid, but noble only takes you so far, and before you know it, Oblivion's staring you in the face with a smile like a dentist's nightmare. Spectres aren't mindless ravaging hordes, like the Hierarchy would like you to think. Oh, don't get me wrong. They're not right proper either. One look into a Shade's hungry eyes, or a few words from some psycho Nephwrick priest and you know for damn sure that they're alien — and more than that, they're wrong. Fact of the matter is, Doomslayers aren't just fighting Spectres; they're fighting Oblivion itself.

I can see the question in your eyes. How the hell do you do that? When we've figured it out for real, we'll be sure to put you on the list. Our methods are growing, still, and every time a Martyr Knight gets a Spectre in a bottle, our methods get that much better. What's a Martyr Knight? Maybe I'm getting ahead of myself. It goes like this: Since we keep adapting the way we do things to information we get, there are different ideas on how we should be evolving. Fortunately, we've got two main orders of Doomslayers, so as best to accommodate varying opinions. Between the Order of the Thorn and the Martyr Knights, most of the argument on "How to Cook a Spectre" is pretty well contained.

The guys you've seen carrying a wagonload of Stygian steel mayhem and dolled up in relic armor are probably from the Thorn. These are the guys who stand between you and the salivating masses. It's pretty commonly accepted that the warriors of the Thorn are a few planks short of a ferry, but that's not the half of it. When you're fighting a foe who's





got a dedicated line to your Shadow, you've got to use some pretty dangerous tactics. Warriors of the Thorn walk a razor edge between job satisfaction and Oblivion.

As crazy as we are, though, the Thorn's got nothing on the Martyr Knights. The Martyrs are interrogators to the Thorn's warriors; the psych squad of the Doomslayers. Every Spectre's got a Psyche, and every Psyche's got a vested interest in helping weaken the forces of the Tempest. While the Thorn's concerned with obliterating Spectres, the Martyr Knights dance the tightrope dance of strengthening the Psyche of captured Spectres, the better to know their enemy. And you wonder why people fear us as much as they respect us?

Well, there you have it, kid. A quick and dirty look at Doomslayers and what we do? You still want to be one of us? You still want to be one of the noble soldiers, with a fleck of foam on the lips and a touch of madness in the eye? Well good, there's always room for more.

— Plesus Mar, Knight of the Thorn, in his speech to new cadets.

## Organization

Doomslayers have been forced to adopt a somewhat loose, cellular form of organization due to the very nature of their prey. When you're facing an enemy who can speak with the inside of your own people's minds, it's foolish to rely on a bureaucracy and too much planning. The enemy may not be a step ahead of your plans, but he's at least stride for stride with you. In cases like this, then, it's best to rely more on improvisation and skill than elegant preparation — when you don't know what you're up to, your Shadow can't tell your enemies.

The two orders of Doomslayers — the Thorns and the Martyr Knights — account for all of the organized Spectre hunters, save the Helldivers affiliated with the Masquers' Guild and those wraiths who control the two orders. There are five wraiths who oversee both the Thorns and the Martyr Knights, but little other information is available. Spectres have been known to speak with Doomslayers' Shadows about their plans, and if the identities of the orders' leaders were plucked from an incautious wraith's mind, they would not be long for the Shadowlands. In fact, the Five, as they are known, surround themselves with such a wall of paranoid secrecy that it has become increasingly difficult for Doomslayers to receive orders from their leaders or relay information back. The Five never involve themselves in actual operations, lest their Shadows reveal any great secrets to the enemy. This disconnection between leadership and membership has begun to cause friction within the twin organizations, friction that could be disastrous to a group as diffuse as the Doomslayers.

## Order of the Thorn

Though often considered simple grunts by the Martyr Knights, the warriors of the Thorn wage a complex and dangerous war against the Spectres. Certainly, the Thorns are the more physical of the two orders. They wield the best in Stygian steel, and hoard relic bits of appropriate paraphernalia to use against the Spectres. Never traveling in detachments of less than a half-dozen, the Thorns will secure the perimeter of a Nihil and dive in en masse, clearing the local Tempest of Spectres and then (hopefully) retreating safely. More than one observer has compared their tactics to that of SWAT teams, and the metaphor is an apt one.

However, the nature of their fight is darker than mere physical combat, deadly as that might be. The Order of Thorns gains its name from these Doomslayers' interaction with their Shadows, and this deadlier fight often takes place far from the confines of the Tempest. Knowing well the capabilities of the Spectral Hivemind, not to mention the Shadow-Eaten's interaction with Shadows, the Thorns ride the edge of Catharsis. In a dangerous dance, they keep their Shadows strong. Sometimes, this leads to arrogance and errors on the Shadow's part — gloating, spilled plans, an arrogant boasting over the Psyche's doom that inadvertently reveals what plans the Shadow's laid. Other times, the game merely hastens the inevitable slide to Oblivion.

The most powerful Thorns can attempt to ride Catharsis, the better to learn from their newly empowered Shadows. A wraith riding Catharsis is fully aware of what his Shadow is doing with their shared Corpus, though his Shadow doesn't know of the psychic passenger. In this way, the Psyche can observe everything his Shadow is up to, mentally preparing counterstrokes and ripostes.

It is a dangerous gambit at best. If the Doomslayers are not destroyed in their fight against the Spectres, they must bear the constant fear that they will take one single step too far and become that which they battle.

## The Martyr Knights

More subtle than the Thorns, the Martyr Knights are no less terrifying. While they do take the occasional sortie into the Tempest, their ongoing battle is a more insidious one. Time and time again, Doppelganger impostors embarrass and destabilize the Hierarchy. In response, the Martyr Knights stand in eternal vigilance. Though their numbers are too few to prevent every impostor from doing its work, the Martyr Knights keep a close eye on various key figures, reacting quickly when these individuals act suddenly and embarrassingly out of character. This signals to the Knights that their surveillance target may well have been replaced by a Doppelganger.



Once the attack is spotted, the Martyr Knights watch and follow the Spectre. Under the guise of interrupting and harassing the Doppelganger, the Knights will then proceed to put as much stress on the impostor as possible. This will either force the Spectre to reveal his true nature prematurely, or give his Psyche additional ammunition for a renewed assault on the Spectral personality. In order to buy time for the Psyche, however, Martyr Knights are willing to do whatever is necessary, hence their name. More than one has gone down to a Harrowing — or worse — while desperately trying to feed a Doppelganger's Psyche aid.

Martyr Knights are also known to be working toward a process whereby captured Spectres can be Redeemed. For this purpose they try to capture rather than destroy those Spectres they run across. Such captured Spectres are kept in large, vaguely translucent jars, fully aware of the nature of their predicaments.

## Cells

The fear of infiltration by Spectres has led Doomslayers to adopt the sort of organization used by the French Resistance of World War II. Small groups of Doomslayers, containing both Thorns and Martyr Knights, do their work independently of others in

the organization. Their plans are their own, their defeats and victories ascribed to no one else.

Cells will generally have a single leader and no other rank system. Consisting of three to 10 wraiths, a single cell will have a definite slant toward one or the other of the orders. It is not uncommon for cells, particularly ones that take frequent trips into the Tempest, to consist entirely of Thorns or Martyr Knights. The Five encourage this sort of insularity, feeling that too much crossover between orders leads to too much exchange of information, and thus too great a possibility of betrayal.

The world of the Doomslayer is perilous and paranoiac; one never knows when one's own subconscious has played quising to the most subtle of setups. Doomslayers are increasingly close-mouthed about their operations, to the point where many cells are splitting into even smaller groups. A growing number of Doomslayers, while keeping their order affiliation, prefer to operate solo. While this has certain advantages, being all alone in the Tempest without any hope of backup isn't necessarily an optimal situation.







## Helldivers

The Helldivers are an elite sect of wraiths, carefully trained at one of the most dangerous jobs in the Underworld — infiltration and assassination of Spectres. Most of their numbers come from the ranks of the Masquers, although a few are recruited from affiliated Guilds or even from independents.

The Helldivers have attained a gruesome reputation from their *modus operandi*. Rather than barrel into the Tempest, slaying as they go, they prefer to wend their way quietly in, wearing Spectre skins and going deep under cover. The adept Helldiver blends into the social structure of a group of Spectres, passes for a while as one of their disgusting number, works his way closer to his target, and then quietly disposes of the creature when opportunity allows. Needless to say, the potential for mishap is incredible. Only the best are able to claim repeated bounties with their sanity intact.

Like the Orders of Doomslayers, Helldivers operate with intense secrecy. Most report only to the highest-ranking Guildmasters or Hierarchs, although they'll gladly claim a bounty from anyone. Most Helldivers operate in pairs, the one always ready to help the other. Larger groups tend to attract suspicion.

Of course, the Helldiver trade is hardly easy. Mortwights and Nephwracks are far more intelligent than they look, and

their targets are usually of the charismatic and clever sort — the most dangerous game of all. What's worse, a Helldiver's facade can never be flawless. To flawlessly duplicate a Spectre, a disguised wraith would have to tap into the Spectral Hive-Mind. Not one Helldiver has ever done this, nor would one want to.

## Solos

Not every Doomslayer works for the Five. Many are simply wraiths who've had enough, and who have decided to take the fight to the enemy. Some are well trained, others are merely angry amateurs. The range of solo Doomslayers covers the gamut. The only thing uniting them is a common need to take a few Spectres to pieces (though the rewards the Hierarchy offers for Spectre Corpora can also be nice).

The average solo doesn't exist. Most have some knowledge of Argos and Moliata, but many a wraith, armed only with a soul-steel sword, has taken the plunge into a Nihil to seek the enemy on his own ground.

A very few solos are successful. Most have no idea of what they're really up against and don't make it back from their first ventures. Others get lucky their first time out, or have a more experienced hunter take them under a protective wing, and gradually acquire the experience needed to win their own battles.



The best solos are legendary, Robin Hood-like figures in the Pathos taverns of Stygia and the Shadowlands. The worst just don't last long enough for anyone to notice they're missing.

## The Worst Happens....

At first it would seem relatively risk-free. Even if a Spectre should rend a wraith's Corpus, the worst that would happen would be that the unfortunate Doomslayer would tumble down into a Harrowing, only to be spit out of the Labyrinth at a Fetter.

It's not quite that easy.

Many Spectres do Aggravated damage, tumbling their victims down into Destruction Harrowings. A single misstep there and the wraith is destroyed, not just diminished. Other Spectres concentrate on numbing Passions instead of physical pain, sapping their targets' very reasons for existing.

Then the sadistic nature of Spectres needs to be taken into account. Deep within the Labyrinth, it is a certainty that the Spectres have their own soulforges. Moliate is one of the basic tools of Doppelgangers and Nephwracks. Pity the wraith who is captured instead of being destroyed outright.

## Roleplaying Notes:

Remember always that you are all that stands between the Necropoli and Oblivion. Your enemy is skilled, insidious, dangerous and led by the demonic hand of the forces that slew Charon. To battle the forces of the abyss, you must touch the darkness inside you and foster that tiniest seed of light within them. That light is not fostered for the sake of redemption, though — it is simply another weapon in the battle. Compromise, in such intense and intimate doses, carries with it the beginnings of madness and no Doomslayer is quite entirely sane. Warriors of the Thorn call to the seductive darkness in their own souls, while Martyr Knights leave themselves vulnerable in the hope of aiding a desperately weak ally. Trust few, if any, for the Doppelgangers are masters of Molation, and your leaders are shadowy and hardly incorruptible. You are the logical answer to the paradoxes of the Shadowlands, the straight line cutting through the endless tangles around you. Trust your own strength and nothing else that you don't have to; the darkness has ears everywhere.

# Shadowguiding Risen

*Fist of fear  
squeeze your heart  
the world goes red  
and falls apart*

— Oyster Band, "Angels of the River"



Heather leans over and whispers in Harold's ear as the Storyteller describes to him what his character, Seth, sees as he uses Lifeweb to check on his Fetter (and former lover) Bran. Bran was placed in a psychiatric hospital for observation, thanks to the efforts of Seth's Shadow. It seems that the Shadow had gone to the authorities to get Bran committed when it was in control of Seth's body — something about his raving about walking corpses. Now Heather, his Shadowguide, is using the opportunity to make pointed remarks about how Bran is better off in the loony bin. Riffing from that, she starts raising questions about Seth's own sanity, and what his real motivation was in having Seth locked away from everyone else.

As a Risen's Shadowguide, Heather plays the ever-present voice in Seth's head. The Shadows of the Risen are much closer to the surface than those of Restless in the Shadowlands, and so Heather keeps up a steady stream of quiet commentary for Harold.

It's only when she falls silent that it's time for Seth to worry.

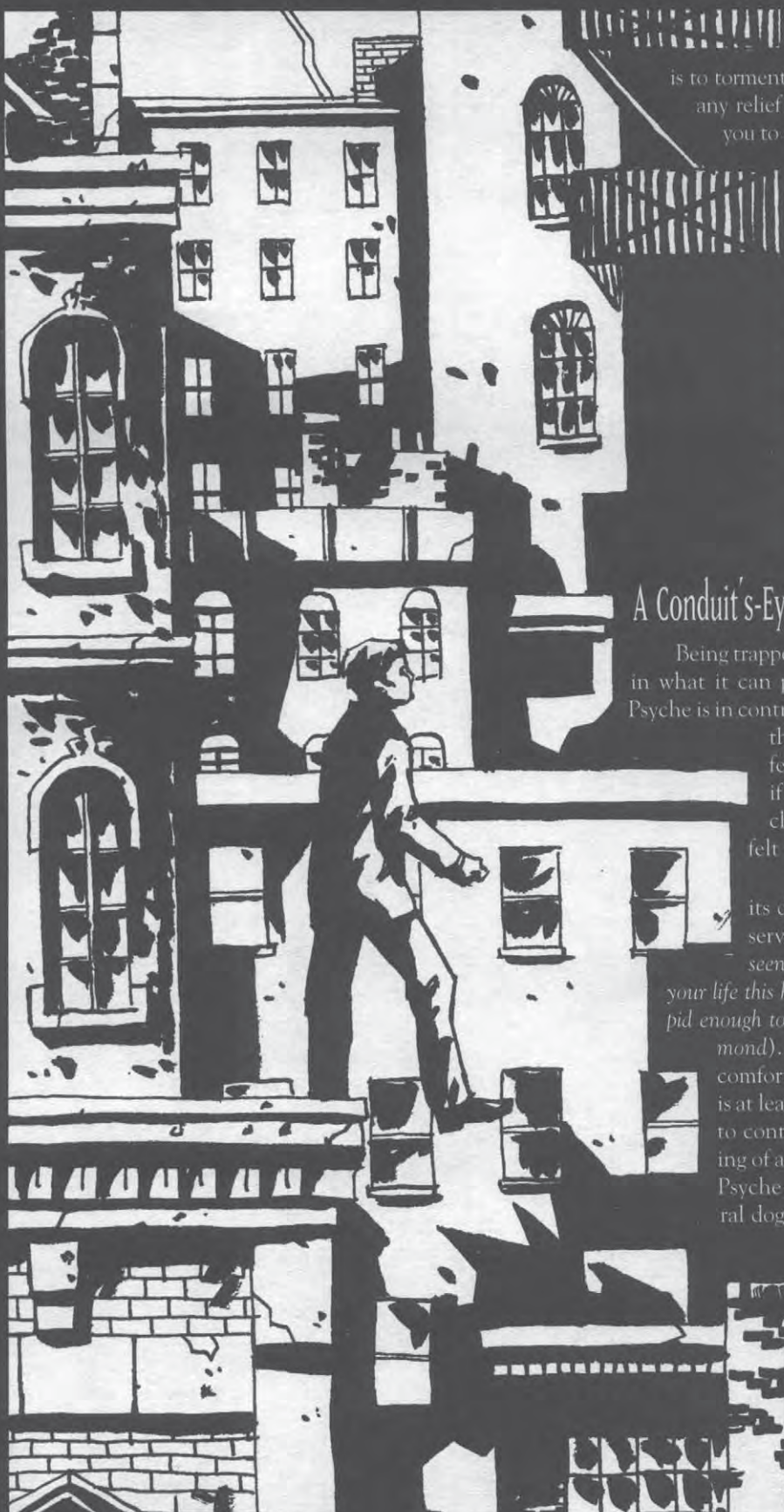
For a Risen, the Shadow is a constant companion, always whispering in the back of her mind. A Risen's physical reliance on the Conduit which houses the Shadow makes it clear that the Risen isn't going to do anything without input from her darker side.

A Risen's shadow always has an agenda of its own, otherwise it wouldn't have allowed the return to the Skinlands. This program is something more than simply pursuing Dark Passions and dragging the Psyche down into Oblivion. A Risen's Shadow has a point to prove to the Psyche and anyone else around. The type of wraith who becomes a Risen is an obsessive individual who has an equally obsessed Shadow. Of course, the Shadow's obsession is with bringing the Risen down, proving that every negative thought that the Psyche ever had to be true. The Skinlands provides a much better canvas for the picture the Shadow is trying to paint than the Shadowlands ever could be. The revulsion a loved one feels at the touch of a dead hand proves eloquently any doubt that a wraith had about his attractiveness. The instinctive revulsion a Risen inspires in passersby re-affirms a Shadowy argument that the wraith has always been a monster, even in the flesh. Rest assured that the Shadow will let none of these opportunities pass, and will garner every bit of Angst the situation provides.

When Shadowguiding a Risen it is important to keep the Shadow's agenda in mind. You are the embodiment of all the pain, hatred, and self-loathing of an individual who is consumed by a purpose, and it's your job not only to thwart that purpose, but to rub his face in their every failure along the way. In the end, you'll prove to the world that you were right all along.

As a Risen's Shadow you are trapped in the Conduit, which gives you a somewhat different perspective from that of a normal Shadow. Since nine times out of 10 the conduit is a object of some sort, this imprisonment isn't a very pleasant experience. How would you like to be incarnated as a piece of tacky jewelry,





carried around everywhere in some dead guy's slimy pocket? Your only diversion is to torment your other half, and your only chance for any relief is to take over the body which will allow you to do whatever you please.

### A Roleplaying Suggestion

It is appropriate for a Risen's Shadowguide to whisper frequently in the player's ear, so long as it is done quietly enough that it does not interfere with the main action of the game. This is much easier to accomplish if the Shadowguide sits next to the Psyche's player. Keep the Shadow's commentary to the point and in character, but never let one of the Risen's failures pass unremarked.

### A Conduit's-Eye View

Being trapped in the Conduit does not limit a Shadow in what it can perceive or do anymore than when the Psyche is in control in the Shadowlands. The Shadow (and the Psyche, when the two trade places) does feel confined by the Conduit, and cramped if the item is small. This discomfort is psychic as opposed to actual, but it is keenly felt nonetheless.

The Shadow should feel free to express its disgust and disdain for whatever Fetter is serving as the Conduit (*I'm embarrassed to be seen in here. You were going to give the love of your life this hunk of junk? Of course, she's probably stupid enough to believe that this glass splinter is a real diamond*). Animal Conduits are somewhat more comfortable, though things are still cramped. It is at least comforting to have a prison with a body to control, though it feels eerily alien. This feeling of alienation can be especially dangerous to a Psyche suddenly shunted into an alley cat or feral dog; the time adjusting to the new environment can cause the Psyche to miss valuable opportunities to reassert itself.

### Catharsis

Catharsis for a Risen is an experience that makes Catharsis in the Shadowlands seem like Time Out in nursery school. Imagine that all your senses are suddenly cut off, and the only



## Animal Conduits

Some Risen are lucky — or unlucky — enough to have living Conduits. This opens up whole new realms of mischief for the Shadow. Any pet owner can vouch as to the level of destruction an ordinary animal is capable of. Now take that same destructive capacity, and put behind it a scheming, malevolent intelligence. Even if a Shadow in a living Conduit can't summon the full power of its Risen body, it can still break valuables, run out into traffic in hopes of getting someone to chase it, urinate on the rug, attack loved ones, and generally make a vicious pest of itself. The Psyche in turn has to spend valuable energy and time cleaning up after the Shadow's messes (literal and figurative), which obviously distracts from her real mission.

Shadows in Risen have full control of their animal bodies. Psyches forced into animal Conduits must make a Wits + Enigmas roll (difficulty 7) to take control of the body with any degree of facility. If the Psyche fails this roll, the animal will appear to be ill, and may prompt all sorts of inappropriate responses from passersby (*Oh, the poor kitty is sick. Let's take it to the A.S.P.C.A.*)


A Psyche trapped in a living Conduit, if the Shadow decides to cut off her sensory input, will find herself restricted to the senses of the animal in which she resides. This may allow her to observe what her Shadow's up to, but only from a third-person perspective.

And before anyone asks, plant Conduits are quite possible, but extremely silly.

thing that you can perceive is the will of your worst enemy rushing up to overwhelm you. In darkness you battle for control, and what takes less than a second seems to be stretched out into hours. Finally, if you have lost the battle, you are overcome with the feeling of knowing that something horrible is about to happen, and that nothing you can do will avert it. Sensation returns as a splitting headache, dizziness and uncontrollable nausea. Then you are overcome with the claustrophobia of being locked curled up







in a prison so small that you can not move any part of your body more than an inch, which is how you will remain until your opposite number tires and allows you to regain control. Both Shadow and Psyche experience this horrifying rush of sensations whenever they trade places.

When the Shadow is in control of the body it will not destroy or tolerate separation from the Conduit; to do so would be to cause unbearable pain. Likewise, when the Shadow is in the Conduit it will do everything in its power to avoid damage or separation from the body. There are two reasons for this. Once the Conduit and body are out of proximity (within the same room or in line of sight), the Shadow no longer has access to Thorns. No Shadow, in or out of its right mind, is willing to tolerate the loss of its best weapons for long.

The inability to use Thorns is a small technicality compared to the other reason Shadows avoid separation. If the Conduit is separated from the body long enough for the body to be destroyed, the Shadow will never know the peace of Oblivion. Whenever the body of a Risen is destroyed by separation, the Shadow remains as a Spectral personality, while the Psyche is completely absorbed by Oblivion. This is the worst possible outcome as far as the Shadow is concerned, for apart from the complete degradation of the Psyche, the one thing that Shadow wants more than anything is the peace of the Void. Being a Spectre trapped in a trinket in the Skinlands is not on the agenda. It means an eternity of pain, torment, and the frustration of being chained to something that your worst enemy held dear — and that is something that even the most masochistic Shadow fears.

## Dirty Tricks

When a Risen's shadow flexes its muscles, it has a different set of limitations and advantages than an ordinary wraith's Shadow does. Certain Thorns cannot be used on Risen, but the presence of a physical body can more than make up for those minor losses. Below are some Risen-specific tricks for the Shadow to keep in mind; feel free to use or modify them as appropriate.

- **The Freudian Slip/Tainted Touch One-Two Punch** — This little trick can be nasty, particularly when **Tainted Touch** has not been used on the Risen recently, and he's forgotten about that little stunt his Shadow can pull. The Shadow uses **Freudian Slip** to get the Risen to touch some mortal they care about, perhaps disguising the action as a shove or a grope so that its intent seems obvious. However, compared to what Shadows are usually capable of this seems innocuous enough, so the Risen will probably not bother resisting. Then the Shadow activates **Tainted Touch**, hopefully inflicting significant damage on the mortal.

This technique is also very effective on fully Embodied wraiths.

- **The Devil's Dare Dance** — **Devil's Dare** is probably the single most useful Thorn a Risen's Shadow can have. The

Risen can be made to choose between saying or doing things to mortals, or having his Willpower sapped away. As it is a given that a Risen generally has less Willpower to spare than the Shadow has Angst, the math dictates that sooner or later the Risen will have to take the Shadow up on one of these little requests. Then the fun begins.

- **The Usual Suspects** — In the Shadowlands, a wraith's Shadow can contrive to have other wraiths or Spectres take action against the wraith. In the Skinlands the possibilities open up considerably. There are mortal policemen to be concerned with, not to mention those (heavily armed) mortals who hunt supernatural beings.

In addition, remember that Risen are very easily mistaken for vampires, which leaves them open to possible attack from vampire-hunters, vampires themselves, and werewolves who don't bother to figure out what sort of Wyrms taint they're dealing with. A cunning Shadow can certainly think up an inventive way to get a wraith in trouble with at least one of these groups. When in charge of the Risen's body, the Shadow can deliberately commit a crime in front of security cameras, or make allies or enemies of either vampires or hunters.

- **I Did What?** — Don't forget that when the Shadow takes control after a Catharsis roll, it can choose to cut off the Psyche from her senses. This can create certain embarrassing moments for the Psyche down the line, particularly if the Shadow has made commitments for the Psyche that obviously aren't going to be kept.

Furthermore, when you are surrounded by nonwraiths it may be very difficult to explain why you don't remember anything that happened in the last few hours. This can lead to any number of amusing situations where the Psyche regains control someplace unexpected, perhaps in the company of someone she does not recognize (say a locked bedroom, with someone who has just come to the realization that he's in bed with a walking corpse). The consternation of the Psyche in trying to extricate herself from the situation should provide ample opportunity for the Shadow to heckle.

Don't forget, unlike normal wraiths, Risen can't walk through walls without knocking them down first. This sort of thing leaves all sorts of questions that the Psyche will probably have a great deal of trouble answering.

- **Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde** — Catharsis can serve more than just the simple purpose of allowing the Shadow a free hand in pursuing Dark Passions. If the Risen is working with others, a good bout of Catharsis can serve to undermine any trust the others have in the Risen. Once the Shadow acquaints the others in the group with the fact that their friend has a split personality with a nasty side, paranoia can begin to set in. If the Shadow plays its cards right, the other characters can be constantly wondering if their friend is indeed in control of himself — and second-guessing everything he does.

Remember, the Shadow can lie: If he claims he can take over easily, the slightest off-kilter action on the part of the



Psyche will have the rest of the group reaching for the heavy artillery in anticipation of a round of Catharsis that's not actually happening. This can lead to loads of the fun, as the Psyche gets frustrated with his companions' distrust, which creates negative emotions, which feeds the Shadow, who takes over and starts the whole blissful process all over again.

## When the Shadow Comes out to Play

*Girls and boys come out to play  
The moon doth shine as bright as day  
Come with a whoop and come with a call  
Come with a good will or not at all*  
— nursery rhyme

When a Risen's Shadow wins a Catharsis roll it has access to something that makes being cramped into the Conduit worth it: a nearly indestructible body.

A Shadow's first priority upon gaining use of the body is to undermine everything the Psyche has been doing. A Shadow can try to make enemies of whatever mortal friends the Psyche has made, or otherwise undermine the Psyche's credibility by smashing things, committing acts of violence and the like. Mortals are unlikely to be able to distinguish between the Shadow and the Psyche in the Risen's body, which makes causing mortals to lose confidence in a Risen companion fairly easy to do. Nonwraiths are unlikely to understand the Risen's erratic behavior, and their natural reaction will be not to trust the Risen at all.

Often subverting the Psyche's plans will go hand in hand with pursuing Dark Passions, but if there's no overlap, Dark Passions are next on the list. Having a body should make these easier to fulfill, particularly those relating to destruction, pain and sadism.

If the Shadow for some reason cannot act to either sabotage the Psyche or pursue Dark Passions, another favorite pastime is dragging others down into Oblivion. Being a Risen presents an entirely new target audience for this little entertainment: the living. Inducing suicide is top on the list for style points. Fostering despair, drug addiction, and derangement is also to be encouraged. These are things a Shadow can do from the Shadowlands, but it's much easier if you're a mem-

ber one of the *walking dead* since you can't be rationalized away. Anything from "helpful" conversations with the depressed to senseless random violence can fulfill this type of mission.

*Remember, though, it's for their own good. The sooner they die sad and lonely deaths, the sooner they will be claimed by Oblivion and all their pain will cease.*

— The Shadow of Armand Malthus, Risen of Antwerp, Belgium

A Risen Shadow with no other means of amusement can always resort to mayhem. Risen are very good at this, and any self-respecting Risen can do more damage than a gang of bikers on PCP. Feel free to burn, loot, pillage, maim and defile. Keep in mind that sooner or later *someone* will send in the police, or if he's intelligent, a SWAT team, so it's good to remember to leave yourself an escape route. You should not let this pastime eliminate any future chances of proving the Psyche wrong or pursuing Dark Passions. After all, if you get brought down just for trashing a single tenement, it removes your opportunity to do a hell of a lot worse later on.

## Shadow Serendipity

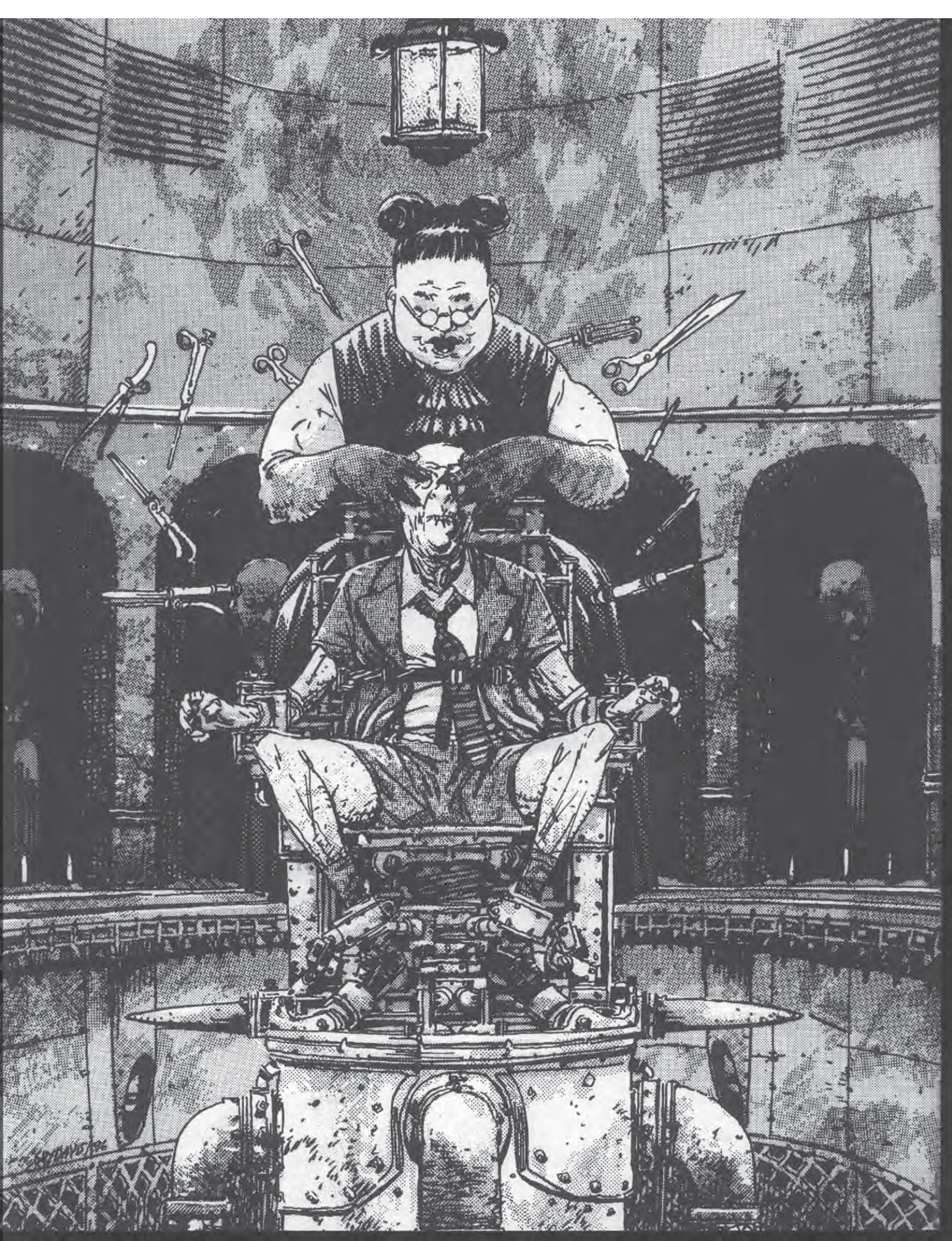
Keep in mind that Shadows have access to the same Arcanoi as the Psyche. This means that if the Psyche has Serendipity, the Shadow may also use that Arcanos when it is in control of the body. This means that the Shadow can arrange to run into people connected with the wraith's Fetters, which could be very useful in setting the Psyche up for a fall. After all, if a Risen has the Passion **Declare My Love to My Family (Love) 5** and the Shadow finds them first, the well could very well be poisoned for any future visits.

Or the Shadow could simply find people important to the wraith and kill or maim them. It saves those messy arguments later on.

**Rules Note:** The Shadow may not use this Arcanos to locate people or places associated with the Psyche's Passions unless they are also associated with the Shadow's Dark Passions, since this Arcanos is tuned to Dark Passions when the Shadow is in control.









# Chapter Five: The Lighter Side

## Eidolon



his thought experiment has three stages. First, imagine yourself in some stressful situation where you lose your temper, succumb to temptation or otherwise lose composure. Could it be an argument with your spouse or parents about pastimes or profession? A stupid order from your boss, or someone cutting you off in traffic? Picture it all the way through: your anger, your reaction (Screaming? Seething resentment? Violence?) and the unpleasant consequences of your behavior. That's stage one.

Next, think of some person you respect deeply because of their wisdom, maturity and compassion. It might be a treasured friend, mentor, or even figures like Jesus, the Buddha or Mother Theresa. Imagine that person in exactly the same situation you envisioned before, where you reacted with anger. Carefully picture that person's different response: calm, enlightened, constructive. That's the second stage.

*The third stage consists of answering a single question: Who, really, was acting in stage two?*

— Pardoner Lyle Van Arne, *The Tomes of Golden Light*, "Appendix" (1984)

## The Higher Self

*Rouse thyself! Do not be idle! Follow the law of virtue! The virtuous rest in bliss in this world and in the next.*

— *The Dhammapada*

Just as each living person has a dark side, so do we all have aspects of basic decency and wisdom, small inner voices that can guide us should we choose to listen. In the traumatic transition to the Shadowlands, most wraiths lose track of this voice, but a rare few remain sensitive to the higher self — the Eidolon.

Though all wraiths — like all humans — have this spiritual potential, few have the vision and fortitude necessary to tap into it. Willpower can only resist the Shadow for so long; at some point, one needs the extra vision, the unremittingly honest yet balanced self-perception and strength of character



that the Eidolon represents. Without it, a wraith is threatened continually by her Shadow's cunning.

Whereas all wraiths recognize the existence of the Shadow and often speculate about the nature of Transcendence, many — perhaps most — among the Restless have never heard of the Eidolon. Of those who have, many doubt its existence. Most Restless exist in a world battered by the whirlwind of their Shadows' whims. They are bound up in the concerns of the moment — how to protect a favorite relic from this Hierarch, preventing that Heretic from gossiping about an affair, keeping out of the path of Renegade slavers. In the midst of the joys and crises of everyday life, the Eidolon seems about as real and significant as a Ouija board.

To its few believers, the Eidolon represents a stabilizing force against the Shadow's dark tide. An even smaller group sees it as something active, a guide to Transcendence. Students of Transcendence use "the Eidolon" (as well as "the eternal flame," "the Matrix," "the inner light" and so on) to refer to a complex of positive traits listed in the multivolume *Tomes of Golden Light*. They list eight "Eidolon virtues" said to be useful to aspirants toward perfection: compassion, courage, creativity, honesty, hope, humor, love, self-acceptance and wisdom.

But those who heed the Eidolon think of it as something more engaging, more alive (as it were) than a mere moral doctrine. The inner voice speaks in the present. Its advice is based not on a rote menu of virtues or commandments, but on a clear, compassionate view of the wraith's current situation.

For instance, even a Heretic can understand, at least intellectually, that not all servants of the Hierarchy deserve hatred and contempt. But in a confrontation with Hierarch recruiters who seek to exploit Enfants new to the Shadowlands, the ordinary Heretic may feel hatred. If pointedly reminded of the "Eidolon virtues," this same wraith may grudgingly try to treat the Hierarchs with compassion — yet inwardly he seethes. In contrast, a wraith who heeds her Eidolon can feel this compassion for Enfants and Hierarchs alike, spontaneously and without inward gnawing.

An optimistic (though untested) theory among some Restless scholars has it that the Eidolon works just as much as the Shadow in the wraith's everyday existence. When the Shadow takes over completely, the wraith succumbs to Oblivion and becomes a Spectre; by the same token, when wraith and Eidolon merge completely, the wraith experiences Transcendence — or at least is that much better prepared for Transcendence.

## Speaking in Stillness

Yet the inner voice is quiet indeed. The Shadow thrusts itself upon its victim in every moment of weakness, but the Eidolon speaks only to those who listen carefully. It is not weak, only demure, awaiting the quiet moment away from the bustle of unlife.

In a crisis, when the Shadow threatens to take over, a panicking wraith senses the higher voice only as a nagging, needling stab of conscience. Even in stress-free situations, a listener seeking guidance may feel a sense of rightness about one particular course of action. In *Shadow and Light*, one of the high-flown dreamverse plays of Sandman Lorenzo, a character speaks of "the feathery touch at the small of the back, from the silent guide who points along the path."

Most of the Restless have little time to heed the quiet voice of the Eidolon during their busy days. When a wraith senses the need for the Eidolon, she must struggle to hear it. She must fight not only through her own apathy and dark impulses, but also through the numerous distractions that cloud her mind constantly.

### For Example...

A typical monologue dramatizing this quandary:  
Should I tell him he's a jerk?

*No, what do I care? — he is a jerk, after all, and I'm not going to change things. On the other hand, who cares if the truth hurts?*

*He's a big boy; if he can't handle it, there's no way he's going to change, and he certainly won't if I say nothing.*

*Remember that time when he pinched you in front of the Circle? You got so mad!*

[External event: Character bumps hard into someone on the sidewalk.]

*Hey! Watch where you're going, jerk!*

*Damn 'em all. They should be melted into keychains....*

*...And so forth. The mind is so busy talking to itself that it couldn't hear the Eidolon over a PA system.*

The Eidolon background (**Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition**, page 129) represents your character's conscience with dice that help him resist the Shadow's siren call. Higher Eidolon ratings not only help you resist the Shadow, but may occasionally show you how to prevent the Shadow's emergence in the first place. By understanding the nature of the Eidolon's resistance, both Shadowguide and Storyteller can help dramatize its aid.

At her discretion, a Storyteller may also wish to adopt the systems offered in this section. These emphasize the polarity between darkness and light — Shadow and Psyche — in the Chronicle.

## Eidolons in the Chronicle

The Eidolon is a part of *some* wraiths, just as the Shadow is a part of *every* wraith. But the higher self, unlike the Shadow, does not beckon. No Passion drives it; if anything, it repre-



sents a state free of all Passions. (After all, Passions are essentially emotional Fetters driving the Restless to remain wraiths, rather than to pass on to Transcendence.) No player controls the Eidolon, and it has no game statistics except the Background rating. Never controlling its subject, the Eidolon appears content to observe, whether the wraith is rising toward Transcendence or descending to Oblivion.

However, unlike the Shadow, the Eidolon can never be suppressed. For the wraith who honestly seeks its guidance, it is always there. A botched Eidolon roll does not mean that the Eidolon is absent or negligent, but that the wraith does not sincerely seek wise advice. (Even the most depraved wraith among the Restless may have an Eidolon. He just never listens to it.)

**System:** The Eidolon does not have a separate Archetype as does the Shadow. Instead, the Eidolon is an idealized actualization — or in some cases, a true indication — of the wraith's Nature, which a fortunate wraith may glimpse in a dream or vision. The player and Storyteller decide the Eidolon's Nature together, then inform the Shadowguide. After all, the Shadow should know its enemy.

This Nature can serve more than the needs of the current Chronicle; it offers a road map for your character's long-term development. Remember, each Eidolon represents its particular character's spiritual potential. The number of dots in the Eidolon Background can show the wraith's degree of spiritual maturity. By this standard, a character who reaches

Eidolon 5 has reached full maturity. (For further use of this idea, see "Recognitions.")

## Eidolon Archetypes

Here are suggestions for Eidolon versions of the archetypes given in *Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition*. Many other versions are possible, so adjust these to suit your needs and those of the Chronicle.

**Architect:** No longer driven by egotism or yearning, the Eidolon creates selflessly, taking satisfaction in existing accomplishments and in the achievements of humanity as a whole.

**Avant-Garde, Explorer, Gambler:** The Eidolon has achieved a secure satisfaction with its own current nature, free from craving novelty.

**Bon Vivant:** The Eidolon still enjoys the delights of existence — but with a clear insight into the fruitlessness of transitory sensory gratification. It rejoices in every kind of pleasant sensation, not only those enjoyed to excess; it endures unpleasant sensations with detachment.

**Bravo:** Having confronted the insecurities that prompted your bullying, the Eidolon feels compassion for those it once tormented. In the Eidolon, this Nature has given way to another of your choice.

**Bureaucrat:** The Eidolon has helped you overcome your dependence on the sheltering illusion of the System. It uses





the orderly strength of bureaucracy as an advantage against Oblivion, but it is not mindlessly devoted to proper procedure.

**Caregiver:** The Eidolon's basic Nature is unchanged, but it clearly sees when aid to the unfortunate is practical and realistic. Sometimes a victim wants no help, or genuine help is impossible to offer; the Eidolon recognizes these situations with sadness but without anguish.

**Child:** The Eidolon has matured emotionally and taken on another Nature of your choice.

**Conniver:** The Eidolon, understanding the need for personal responsibility, has taken on another Nature of your choice.

**Critic:** A healthy assessment of virtues and flaws is vital to the examined existence, but the Eidolon realizes that perfectionist zeal hinders wisdom. The higher self, though motivated by the quest for excellence, tolerates imperfection in itself and others.

**Follower:** No longer silenced by fear, the Eidolon grants you courage to speak up when disaster looms. It takes initiative during crises and accepts responsibility for its decisions.

**Jester:** The humorist's higher self is not driven by a neurotic aversion to suffering. It has freely experienced both joy and pain, and its wit has deepened and matured.

**Leader:** By allowing dialogue with its followers, the Eidolon acknowledges the need for others' growth and helps you achieve humility. Your sense of responsibility has deepened to accept fallibility.

**Martyr, Rebel:** The Eidolons for these Natures depend on your motivations. Each Nature has its noble, mature side, necessitating little change in the Eidolon. But each also has a neurotic, adolescent version driven by selfish egotism, and in these cases the Eidolon has overcome the neurosis, accepted the failings that prompted it and taken on another Nature.

**Mediator:** Sometimes, especially with the forces of Oblivion, mediation isn't possible. The Eidolon has helped you accept this truism, overcome the impulse of self-blame, embrace a less static view of self and find the courage to face conflict without compromise.

**Scientist:** The Eidolon recognizes that logic and deduction can lead to a bloodless view of existence. It has overcome the simple impulses to compartmentalize and reduce, and it now combines these with the instincts of compassion and heart.

**Survivor:** Combining vitality with inner peace, the Eidolon has moved beyond simple survival to larger issues. It has taken on another Nature of your choice.

**Traditionalist:** This Eidolon has accepted that all existence is a ceaseless play of change and has taken on another Nature of your choice.

**Visionary:** This Eidolon is little changed but firmly grounded in practical existence. It has achieved or foreseen the culmination of its quest, the point where it can be content.







## Gleanings

*The only tyrant I accept in this world is the still voice within.*  
— Mahatma Gandhi

A *Gleaning* is a single clue or insight that the Eidolon grants a character in a specific crisis.

How can a wraith gain guidance from the inner voice? It's a difficult task; as explained previously, it's a struggle to push away the myriad voices of the self and the external world, and to hear the one voice that resists your dark impulses. Still, if you try hard, you can get advice from the inner voice during dramatic circumstances. This advice is called a *Gleaning*.

**System:** In dangerous situations, when much hinges on the right decision — even (perhaps *especially*) when the Shadow is dominant — you may risk a *Gleaning*. After you indicate your interest, the Storyteller decides when and whether a *Gleaning* is appropriate. Then, based on your Eidolon rating, the Storyteller secretly determines the level of benefit you can gain. Advice can range from Eidolon 1's generalized "I've got a bad feeling about this," to Eidolon 5's specific reasoning and prediction: "Avoid this because X will happen if you don't." Other benefits are listed below.

Without the Eidolon Background, you can't experience a *Gleaning*. You simply don't have the faith and concentration it takes to hear the Eidolon's voice.

In order to receive the benefits of a *Gleaning*, you must gamble on your faith. Jaded and busy with life, you struggle psychologically against to take that leap of faith ("Should I believe this crap?"); you gamble with your sensitivity to further *Gleanings*.

**System:** Spend a Willpower point to make a *Gleaning* roll (Wits + Meditation). The *Gleaning*'s difficulty depends on the circumstances. Heeding the Eidolon while imprisoned in the deepest dungeon of Stygia with no distractions is difficulty 6; listening while facing down a Legionnaire is difficulty 7. In combat or during a Harrowing, the difficulty is 9.

If you botch the *Gleaning*, then roll your Eidolon Dice against difficulty 6. If this second roll succeeds, you gain nothing, but neither do you lose ("I must work on my meditation"). If you fail the second roll, you forfeit a level of Eidolon ("Pah! Remember what happened last time I believed this idiocy!") for the duration of the session.

But if the *Gleaning* succeeds, you may feel a sense of high purpose and see the nature of the situation clearly. This may indicate possible solutions to the crisis, ways to defuse hostilities, or a game effect such as *one* of the following (Storyteller's discretion as to which is appropriate):

- Reduce your temporary Angst rating by 1.
- Add the dice of your Eidolon rating to all Social Attribute rolls related to the immediate crisis. For example, with Eidolon 3, you could add three dice to your Manipula-

tion + Etiquette roll to convince a Ferryman to take you and your companions to the Far Shores.

- The difficulty of rolls involving Awareness, Empathy, Expression or other qualities relevant to the situation may be reduced by your Eidolon rating (minimum difficulty 4). The Eidolon's compassionate nature is such that it cannot improve Intimidation, Subterfuge or similar rolls.

- Subtract your Eidolon rating from the difficulty of rolls against Passions to regain Pathos. This applies only to Passions that are, in the Storyteller's judgment, characteristic of the higher self — positive virtues such as compassion, courage, wisdom and others like the "Eidolon virtues."

- Depending on circumstances, the Eidolon's influence may help you resist a Spectre's ability to numb your Passions or rend your Fetters. Add your Eidolon rating to Willpower for purposes of resisting the Spectre's influence.

However, all *Gleaning* game effects depend entirely on your intent. Only worthy and noble intents (as judged by the Storyteller) earn the *Gleaning* bonus. The bonus might be appropriate for a Pardoner trying to cast out Spectres from an orphanage, but not for a Harbinger using Oublette to cast a minor adversary into the Tempest.

The Storyteller can judge the applicability of the bonus by performing the same thought experiment that began this chapter. If a wise figure were acting in the wraith's place, would that person take similar action? If so, it merits the *Gleaning* bonus.

## Recognitions

A *Recognition* refers to a powerful vision the Eidolon may grant a character. Unlike a *Gleaning*, this rare experience bestows no specific clues and does not relate to the wraith's immediate situation, but instead indicates character development on a larger scale. In a chronicle, the vision may serve as an adventure hook. In game terms, a *Recognition* gives the Storyteller a narrative device to increase — or decrease — a character's Eidolon Background.

Whereas a *Gleaning* gives you a sense of correct action in the current crisis, a *Recognition* offers valuable insights about your personality and your whole afterlife. With this clear vision, you see your goal. Even in death, you can find the right way to live.

The Shadow wants power, and to this end it prepares nightmarish Harrowings for its victim. The Eidolon wants nothing and ordinarily prepares nothing. Still, it will always guide when asked; it's just your struggle to obtain that boon. When you diligently heed the inner voice, the Eidolon may grant a dramatic vision or experience — a *Recognition*.

Any wraith with an Eidolon rating can experience a *Recognition*. In fact, *Recognitions* represent a typical path for gaining additional levels in the Eidolon Background. They





take a long time to achieve and require a great deal of effort. The higher the Eidolon rating, the harder the roleplaying (the Storyteller should require this above all else) and the more experience points needed.

## Storytelling

When should you, as the Storyteller, allow a character to experience a Recognition? Only when, in your judgment, the player's roleplaying is clearly evolving to match the Eidolon's Nature (see "Eidolon Archetypes" above). As a practical matter, the vision works best at the beginning or climax of a chronicle.

At the beginning of a narrative, a Recognition can motivate the wraith toward some concrete goal that initiates the action. For instance, the Chanteur Stephen Raleigh, whose Eidolon is the cul-

## Experience and Eidolon

Obtaining new levels of Eidolon by means of a Recognition costs two times a wraith's current Eidolon level in experience points, in addition to some extensive roleplaying and the permission of the Storyteller. Wraiths who do not have Eidolon but wish to obtain it must pay four experience points to go through the Recognition process.

Recognitions are of course optional; it is eminently possible for a wraith to advance in Eidolon without the benefit of one. The initial cost for obtaining Eidolon is still four, but to advance further requires three times the current rating.



mination of his Architect Nature, sees a puzzling vision of his idealized self fortifying the walls of Necropolis New York against the onslaughts of Lower Bay Spectres without using soulforging technology. In this vision, he cultivates relations with a fennel-sword-carrying Benandante who entrusts him with her defensive arts in exchange for protection. When the vision ends, Raleigh gathers his Circle and begins to infiltrate the Hierarchy for purposes of positioning his allies and gaining information about the Benandante.

At the climax of a chronicle, the Recognition vision should bring a character insight worthy of the obstacles she has faced during the story. The event that triggers the Recognition should be the wraith's victory over (or defeat by) some existence-threatening danger, the successful solution to a Harrowing, or some other crucial point. If more than one member of the Circle has the Eidolon Background, there exists the possibility of simultaneous Recognitions (each tailored to the individual wraith), but unless handled carefully, this can dilute each vision's impact.

## Recognition Systems



The Recognition vision is typically brief and requires no choices from the player. It is qualitatively different from a Harrowing, and the Shadow cannot imitate the vision. The wraith always feels the authenticity of the Recognition as a sense of intangible rightness; no forgery is possible.

The Storyteller tailors the vision to the character's Nature and to her spiritual progress thus far. Recognitions take place in several distinct stages, keyed to the character's Eidolon rating. A character with Eidolon 1 receives a vision characteristic of the Eidolon 1 section described below, and so on. A sample progression of stages appears below; many others are possible.

Each vision indicates a spiritual path the wraith may follow, such as the cultivation of compassion for enemies, or a task to complete, such as the search for a mentor. If the wraith fulfills the task or modifies her behavior to match the indicated path, then at the end of the story, the Storyteller may increase the character's Eidolon Background by 1. If the character refuses the path or the task, or deviates significantly from the Eidolon's Nature, the Storyteller may decide instead to reduce the Background rating.

No character should experience a Recognition vision more than once per story, except under extraordinary circumstances.

## Stages of Recognition

Here are six typical stages of Recognition that mark and guide a wraith's evolution as her spiritual potential grows. Not every stage requires a vision, nor does each vision inevitably lead

to an increase in the Eidolon rating. The Storyteller may drop or add stages, adapting this scheme to the needs of the chronicle.

## No Eidolon

Without an Eidolon rating, you are subject to the vagaries of your Shadow's schemes. You have a conscience — you usually know what feels right — but you don't always have the strength to pursue it. You lack spiritual wisdom; your Shadow finds it relatively easy to trick you, whether through outright lies, sophistry or just apathy.

In this state, Willpower is your only defense. You have stumbled onto a sense of right and wrong, and by god, you're going to defend it. Still, you lack vision and self-analysis, which are key to your long-term defenses should you be low on Willpower.

How do you gain such vision? That's up to you and the Storyteller to decide, but try these guidelines: Devise a long-term plan to resist your Shadow, perhaps by taking an oath to avoid some difficult, chronic temptation or by studying meditation under a master — perhaps even by learning to accept the dark side of yourself without indulging it. The difficulty lies in training your mind, the way you housetrain a puppy. Gently correct the puppy, bring it back to the paper when it poops in the wrong place, and pretty soon it will learn. The mind's training period requires some roleplaying, probably best scattered throughout the duration of a larger story. After you follow this plan for a while, the Storyteller determines if your character can experience a Recognition that, with roleplaying and the expenditure of 4 experience points, will allow you to gain Eidolon 1.

## Eidolon 1: Awareness

With a single level in the Eidolon Background, your Recognition vision grants an awareness of a central spiritual reality of humanity that is undeniable, desirable and elusive. It takes the character out of himself, even briefly, and opens him to perception of other souls' pain and joy being as real as his own.

Always present is a calmness and peace that inspires you to examine and manifest your true Nature. If, for instance, your Nature makes you prone to seek Transcendence, you find the inspiration to go ahead and do so. Conversely, you may try to cultivate your virtues to fight more heartily against your Shadow. If the vision conveys a task, you may change your entire pattern of existence to fulfill this new mission. With the Storyteller's approval, you may adjust your Passions accordingly. However, Fetters should never change as a result of a Recognition.

## Eidolon 2: Seeking the Path

At the second rank of the Eidolon Background, the Recognition typically compels you to seek a teacher. This may be a Mentor (in game terms), a wise old Gaunt who befriends



you, or another source of wisdom — perhaps even a mortal or an embodied Eidolon, although this is rare. The vision may identify a particular teacher, or it may only convey a sense of the large spiritual territory waiting to be explored and the necessity for a guide.

The quest for an ideal teacher makes a good story. Potential teachers may test you with tasks or problems, and in return you must determine whether the teacher is suitable. There may be interesting complications; for instance, the teacher may still be among the Quick. But once you find a teacher and begin study, the training itself is best left to the “offstage” time between stories.

Usually a wraith who heeds the inner voice can find a teacher who offers genuine and valuable advice. Because of this, the student may come to idolize the teacher subconsciously, and to staunchly rely on the doctrine he teaches.

### Eidolon 3: Mission

At the third rank, the Eidolon begins to instill a sense of destiny. Your next Recognition usually inspires strong motivation to undertake a great task, the seeming culmination of your Nature. The vision shows a well-defined but rocky path. This typically calls for sacrifices of material wealth, treasured possessions and even friendships that retard your progress.

Having completed your early studies, you may now see your former teacher more realistically, as a human with ordinary failings — or, disillusioned, you may believe the teacher to be corrupt. Lessons learned still remain strong, though you are breaking away and learning to act for yourself.

### Eidolon 4: Plunge into Doubt

Those who travel the Eidolon’s path agree that it holds many perils. The greatest of these is self-doubt.

Whether your plans fail (this sometimes happens) or your theories collapse in the face of reality (this *always* happens), you experience a dramatic setback. You may question the value of your mission, and sometimes of your whole existence. You may become convinced that the Eidolon has deserted you, or worse, that it was a tool of the Shadow all along. At this time of besetting doubt, you become vulnerable to a clever Shadow’s insidious wiles.

During this passage through blackness, this “long dark night of the soul,” you may think the Eidolon is absent. Despairing, you may endure a particularly brutal Harrowing at the hands of the Shadow. Even the player may be convinced that her character is done for. But at that moment (if it comes) when you turn loose of fear and accept your dark side, that is when the Eidolon may appear at last, resurgent, with a releasing and revitalizing Recognition.

At that point, you begin to understand the nature of your path’s final lengths. Having sacrificed the outward trappings of your afterlife to follow your higher Nature, you see that

you must make the greatest sacrifice: your Nature itself. You begin to realize that your potential is unlimited, stretching beyond the bounds of the doctrines that have carried you this far. The most insidious of these static instincts is the sense of self-preservation, which encourages fear. You learn that you can overcome even this most basic fear, though (because of your innate creativity) you never sacrifice yourself needlessly nor senselessly.

### Eidolon 5: Serenity

At this final stage (Or is it?), you act in accord with the Eidolon almost all the time — not because you hear the inner voice more often, but because you’ve grown to match it, and you act instinctively as it would. You extend compassion to all beings equally, friend and foe.

At Eidolon 5 (depending on the goals of your character), you may be prepared to make the last steps toward Transcendence. With some effort, you see whether, when and how to resolve your Passions and Fetters. At this stage, you’re closer than ever before to Transcendence, assuming it really exists (see “Transcendence” in *Wraith: The Oblivion Second Edition*). On the other hand, you may not wish to stop playing the character. You may like the idea of helping others fight their Shadows. You might desire additional wisdom from Ferry-men or strange Gaunts throughout the Shadowlands.

Your biggest enemy at this stage is complacency. Without fear for yourself, you risk apathy and the folly of underestimating your Shadow’s cunning. At this point, where you might be banking on Transcendence or on your value to other wraiths, your Shadow can confront you with unfinished business. It is the Shadow’s one last grasp at dominance, and as a result, confrontations at this stage between you and your Shadow are the stuff of legends. Some speculate that Charon and Gorool were acting out this very drama before the eyes of the Underworld when they descended into the whirlpool.

## Castigation

*And Jacob was left alone; and there wrestled a man with him until the breaking of the day... And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me.*

— Genesis, Chapter 33: 24, 26



The process of Castigation results in the reduction of a Shadow’s Angst, thus weakening it and sometimes bringing the wraith back from the edge of Oblivion or Spectrehood. The experience is not a pleasant one for either Shadow or Psyche. Like medicine, the worse it tastes, the “better” Castigation is for you. Most Shadows fear Castiga-



tion the way Psyches fear Harrowings; the comparison is not an idle one. Whatever form Castigations take, they force Shadows to confront themselves, peeling away the lies with which Shadows cloak themselves and revealing the raw hatred that simmers within their hearts. Like the emperor suddenly denuded of his illusionary clothing, the Shadow stands exposed before the unrelenting mirror of its Castigator's contempt.

Many wraiths seek voluntary Castigation in order to reduce their Angst and weaken their Shadows. Naturally, Shadows work to convince their Psyches that such drastic measures are not needed. Sometimes the fear of Castigation will drive a Shadow into temporary retreat in an attempt to fool the Psyche into believing that the heinous act of confession and purgation is unnecessary. Occasionally, this ploy succeeds. When it doesn't, however, the Shadow undergoes a prolonged and often painful ordeal.

## An Inside Look at Castigation

"Come out of hiding and stand before me, you pitiful excuse for a Spectral wannabe!" The Pardoner's voice jerked Elyse's Shadow into awareness. Feebly it tried to pretend it couldn't hear the torturer's demands, but the inexorable mockery of the Guildsman forced it to respond. With a sound halfway between a sigh and a sob, the Shadow stood before its confessor. "Haven't we met


before?" the Pardoner asked, his voice silky soft, almost cajoling. Glimly, the Shadow nodded. "You think you're some kind of hotshot director, don't you?" The Shadow attempted a defiant stare and failed as the pardoner glared implacably at his victim. "Answer me!" The pardoner's voice cracked like a whip. The Shadow felt the lashing words cutting into it, ripping a response from it. "Yes!" The Shadow screamed. "Allow me to show you what a director is really like. Let's see how well you dance to my commands. And remember, this is only Act One, Scene One. Oh, did I tell you that this will **not** be a comedy?" Elyse's Shadow moaned, steeling itself for the agony to follow.

From the Shadow's point of view, Castigation ranks somewhere between a jaunt in a medieval torture room and undergoing the amputation of a limb without the benefit of anesthesia. Being forced to surrender any part of its treasured supply of Angst causes extreme suffering to the Shadow. This is because the Shadow gains its strength from Angst, literally building its own substance from it. Ripping Angst from the Shadow is like grasping handfuls of the Shadow's body and tearing bleeding pieces out of it. Aside from the pain involved, this loss causes weakness as the Shadow's lifeblood (Angst) leaks from its wounds, leaving it no reserves to fight against the agony.

In addition, the Shadow discovers, at least for the duration of the Castigation process, its own culpability in incurring the punishments involved in purification. Not only is







the Shadow tortured, but it is forced to admit that its actions brought the session on. As if this were not enough, at some point during the process, the Shadow comes face-to-face with the knowledge that its actions have damaged no one more than itself. For that brief moment, the Shadow stands naked in the glaring realization that it is consigning itself to Oblivion along with the Psyche, and that it will be erased from existence at the very moment its Psyche ceases to exist.

Still, somewhere inside itself every Shadow knows that it can never be utterly destroyed by Castigation. There are several limits on what a confessor can achieve when purging the Shadow. First, each point of Angst carved from the Shadow is accompanied by a point of the Psyche's temporary Corpus. Thus, the Psyche also suffers some of the torment. Further, the Castigator dare not go so far that she uses up all the wraith's temporary Corpus lest she send the Psyche into a Harrowing.

In addition, if the Shadow were ever to be completely overthrown, the wraith would Transcend on the spot, so Castigation can only affect temporary Angst, assuring that at least one point of permanent Angst will remain after even the most complete Castigation (at least so long as the wraith still has unresolved Fetters and Passions). The Shadow knows quite well that even if a session with a Pardoner leaves it as nothing more than a whispered thought, in time it will grow and become strong once again. Thus, while it bows to the purgation and becomes quiescent for a while, the Shadow will always plot its eventual return to power. That knowledge may be what allows the Shadow to survive the ordeal, whether it emerges more or less lucid than before.

## Roleplaying the Castigated

Imagine having your innermost secrets, meanest thoughts and most perverse fantasies exposed to the jeers of a professional tormentor while you, yourself, stand helpless to prevent it. Consider what it is like trying to hide those thoughts while screaming from an agony comparable to being slowly immersed in molten metal. Now realize that you invited such treatment through your own reckless actions. This is the dilemma Shadows in the throes of Castigation face.

The opportunities for roleplaying presented by a Castigation session provide a chance for intense interaction between Storyteller and Shadowguide. Some players (and some Storytellers) may prefer simply to make the rolls, avoiding engaging in actual dialogue or descriptions of the Shadow's torment at the hands of the Castigator. Others may choose to utilize the drama inherent in Castigation, roleplaying the interchanges between tormentor and tormented.

In most cases, the Shadowguide, rather than the wraith's player, should at least share center stage during Castigation. Because the Shadowguide is privy to the secrets of the Shadow, she is more likely to react convincingly and appropriately. After all, the wraith character wants the Castigation to suc-

ceed and might not oppose the procedure as vehemently as her Shadow would. Besides, the Psyche also suffers loss of temporary Corpus from Castigation and will need not only to roleplay her reactions to the purgation of her Shadow but also her cooperation with the Castigator.

Ideally, Castigation should involve a *menage à trois* in which the Storyteller (or another player) enacts the part of the Castigator, the Shadowguide takes the part of the beleaguered Shadow, and the wraith's player portrays the willing victim of her own purification. Castigation sessions and Harrowings provide unique opportunities for the Shadowguide to move out of the "shadows" and into the spotlight, bringing the full force of the Shadow's personality to the forefront. Each Shadow reacts according to its Archetype. The Rationalist may attempt to defend itself through reasoned arguments, while the Leech will barrage the Castigator with a litany of whines and whimpers in a futile stab at arousing pity. If the Castigator is successful, however, even the most brutal Archetype will "repent" given enough time. Some, in fact, grow to like the sensations.



### Castigation Junkies

Like mortals who thrive on their own suffering, some Shadows develop a perverse taste for Castigation. The discomfort caused by the purification process actually provides the Shadow with a certain degree of satisfaction. These Shadows put up only token resistance to the idea of being Castigated, although they strenuously fight the actual Castigation (in order to increase the duration of their anguish). Afterward, the Castigation junkie goads its wraith into actions that will boost its Angst to a level that will require further visits to the local Pardoner or expert in Castigation. Many such addicts of spiritual pain will encourage their wraiths to learn the Castigate Arcanos so that the means of feeding its abnormal desire is ready to hand. Such wraiths have the Flaw **Castigation Junkie**.

## The Shadow's Arsenal

During Castigation, the Shadow engages in a duel of wits, wiles and Willpower with its Castigator. Roleplaying the actions of those involved in a Castigation session allows the Shadow to make some attempts to lessen the severity of the purification. This can take various forms, depending on the Shadow's Archetype as well as its particular strengths, weaknesses and Thorns. Some methods of undermining the work of the Castigator demonstrate a greater degree of subtlety than others, but all may prove effective in softening the blows the Shadow must undergo.

For example, a Shadow may use **Freudian Slip** against the Castigator, trying to throw her off her stride and interrupt the purification process. Physically attacking the Castigator



through the use of **Tainted Touch** may give the Shadow the satisfaction of exacting its own revenge upon its tormentor through increasing the Castigator's own Angst. Most dangerous for all involved, however, is the Shadow who possesses the ability to summon Spectres through **Shadow Call** to come to its aid. A truly desperate Shadow may seek to escape confession entirely by forcing its Psyche, the Castigator and anyone else present to fight against monsters from the Tempest.

A popular tactic is for the Shadow to threaten to withhold future favors if Castigated. A threat of no Shadow Dice, no matter how dire the situation, can carry considerable weight with a wraith used to having that extra bit of help. On the other hand, the Shadow walks a fine line in making this threat. If the promise is made and then renege upon, it loses all power in the future. On the other hand, by absolutely refusing Shadow Dice, a Shadow may get itself destroyed with alacrity, and it is certainly cutting itself off, at least temporarily, from its best supply of Angst.

When all else fails, a Shadow may always try to lie her way out of further Castigation, pretending or claiming to be totally humiliated and repentant. Since the player of the Castigated wraith often has no idea of her own Shadow's strength, she just might believe her Shadow's pitiful pleas for mercy and urge the Castigator to cease his work. There is no guarantee that this ploy will succeed, since a wraith skilled in the Castigate Arcanos can judge the Shadow's strength for herself and force the Shadow to reveal at least partial truths.

**System:** The Storyteller may call for appropriate rolls depending on the actions of the Shadow during Castigation. Attempts to lie to the Castigator may involve the use of Ma-

nipulation + Subterfuge, opposed by the Castigator's Perception + Empathy. Dice rolls should reflect only the high points of the Shadow's defense, however, since too many interruptions for rolling dice may break the mood of the Castigation session. Creative ploys by the Shadow may result in the Storyteller's decision to increase the difficulty of the Castigation by 1. Conversely, brilliant purgation on the part of the Castigator (so long as that role is not played by the Storyteller) might lower the difficulty for success. In all cases, rolls should never take the place of roleplaying unless those involved feel unable or unwilling to portray their sides of the argument.

## Aftermath

The physical and psychic torment engendered by a successful Castigation has several effects on the Shadow which reach beyond the actual purging session. While the Shadow is almost certainly weakened from the ordeal, it emerges even more resentful of and angry with the Psyche for having subjected it to such abuse. Because it has lost Angst, the Shadow is not as strong as before or as able to utilize its Thorns as frequently. It may become entirely quiescent for a time. While this would seem to limit what the Shadowguide can do for a few sessions (until the Shadow regains its confidence and power), nothing could be further from the truth. Shadows are built of deceit. They are the most dangerous when being quiet, for then the Psyche has no idea what they are up to. After a Castigation session, the Shadowguide should be feverishly planning the Shadow's revenge.









# Chapter Six: Roleplaying

## Where Horror and Shadows Meet

by James A. Moore




The Shadow in *Wraith: The Oblivion* is a powerful tool. It can easily be misused, accidentally or deliberately. It can, when improperly handled, destroy an otherwise amazing story. The Shadow should come complete with the warning: **HANDLE WITH CARE** in big bold letters; messing things up with it is just that simple. Players in the game are likely to cause the Shadow's reputation irreparable harm simply by being human. It's almost too easy to take out a few

frustrations on another person in the game, especially when you are in control of their Shadow.

That's where horror comes into the scene. The Shadow is too easily turned into a parody of horror. Horror does not involve a Freddy Krueger waggling his tongue as he slides his knives into the chest of yet another promiscuous teen. Instead, using Freddy as our example again, horror involves the desperate need to sleep, to escape from an endless cycle of anguish and woe, all the while knowing that sleep will bring forth the claw-handed demon who destroyed your friends. Knives plunging into rib cages is terror at best, and easily degrades into simple schlock. After a while, one murder looks the same as another, and even the visceral thrill of escaping (but observing) the act of the kill grows stale. Horror, on the other hand, is a different beast entirely. Make no mistake about that.

It's easy to be brave when the only one you have to protect is yourself. The Shadow knows this, and it should be played in ways that emphasize the fact of that knowledge. When Shadowguiding, why just torment your counterpart with snide comments when you can bring about a *much* stron-





ger reaction by implying that his widow was in on his murder? The tiniest seed of doubt that forms in the back of the wraith's head....That is the start of horror.

Consider which would scare you more: fighting a monster from the Tempest with a group of your friends and allies, or watching helplessly from the Shadowlands as your beloved slips further and further into a madness caused by a part of you that you can't control? I know which one I'd pick. It's much harder to watch a loved one suffer than to suffer yourself. Ask anyone who has ever had a close family member crying out in pain as the doctors in the emergency ward tried to save a mangled limb or stop the last drop of life's blood leaking from a gaping wound. For that matter, anyone who has lost a loved one to cancer knows exactly what horror is. One day your grandmother is fine. The next time you see her she's lost 15 pounds and her skin looks wrong. Later that same week, she's starting to look skeletal, and the vital woman who used to bake your favorite cookies when she knew you were coming over is having trouble breathing. Wait a few more days, and the woman whose strength was something you've counted on for years can't even stand up, and she has to suffer the degradation of bedpans and sheets that are changed all too often because the nurse didn't get there in time. Her warm, welcoming smile has become a rictus of pain and confusion because the doctors are doing their best to keep her *alive*, not necessarily comfortable.

That's horror.

Horror is personal — not necessarily visceral. Blood and guts make a wonderful backdrop for horror, but they can never really take the place of emotion. (That's right, emotion. Contrary to popular belief, horror is more than a genre.) The Shadow is personal, too. The Shadow knows the weaknesses of its host, and it wants to make that host suffer as no one ever has before. It wants the Psyche to know horror. Every negative feeling, every guilty secret and hidden insecurity is there for the Shadow to exploit. Love, in the eyes of the Shadow, is simply another weakness to prod at until the strength of the whole is lessened.

Another pop quiz. Which is worse: finding out that while you were Slumbering your darker half threw you into the Tempest, or discovering that while you rested to face another day in the life of the Restless Dead, your Shadow spent its time planting lies about you in the mind of your best friend? Or, better still, slipping horrid nightmares about your death into the mind of your only child? I'd risk the Tempest, I'd even risk my friend's ire, but once the Shadow brings a loved one into matters it's personal.

Playing the Shadow is literally the same as torturing someone. But that torture doesn't have to be physical. That torture can be a slow, rotting anguish, born of the certain knowledge that no one you care for is safe because there is a part of you that wants them dead. There is a part of you that works against all of your hopes and dreams, seeking constantly to

shatter any illusions of hope you might have and always picking you as the favored victim. Being a Shadowguide is a responsibility. Your job is to make the existence of another character an endless nightmare so horrifying that they want to escape by any means necessary, even self-destruction. You must be as intimate as a lover and as cold as a serial killer. You must become all the demons of that character, and you must always keep that character off guard. The same trick seldom works twice. **Freudian Slip** will get a character into trouble, true, but **Trick of the Light** can smash a thousand hopes when the dead lover of a wraith is seen as a face in the crowd and then disappears — repeatedly. **Bad Luck** has a nasty habit of turning would-be conquests into frustrating failure after frustrating failure, but that just means a little anger and disappointment. **Shadow Life** can lead to disaster when used against a living Fetter of a wraith.

You're dead, right? Being dead is not fun. The last thing you should want is for anyone you care about to die as well, because they, too, will suffer. If you truly love someone, the last thing you want is for that person to hurt. Protecting that person is an important part of your life. By the same token, misery loves company. If a player decides that a living entity, especially a loved one, is a good Fetter, than the Shadow has a fabulous bargaining chip.

Let's think about that for a moment more. Your wife, Amy, and your newborn son, little Bobby, Jr., are all that you have left to care about. They are the reason you stuck around after your unfortunate and fatal attempt to stop a bank robbery. More than anything, you want to make certain that they are safe and well provided for. Killing them will do your Shadow no end of good, right? With them out of the way, you can no longer come back to the Shadowlands, especially since you killed Guido the would-be robber (and your other Fetter) a week after your Caul was removed. But your Shadow needs more than just their deaths. Your Shadow needs to gain the upper hand in this little battle you two are constantly joining. The more you suffer, the more Angst you generate for the Shadow to use against you. Besides, simply killing your wife and son might lead to a touching reunion in the Shadowlands. That would hardly be productive from the Shadow's point of view.

From the Shadow's perspective, wouldn't it be much better to make you *want* them dead? How much sweeter the victory if the Shadow can convince you that everything you thought was true was nothing but a lie you created to protect yourself? The Shadow may be lying, but time still passes, and your widow is now married to someone else. It's been years, after all, and she's gotten on with her life; it's what you always said you wanted.

Liar. That's what the Shadow calls you now.

Well, you've still got Junior, right? Heh heh heh... But Junior is calling that other man "Daddy" these days. You finally get to hear your infant son (not an infant anymore)





speak, and he's calling someone else "Daddy." Even your own flesh and blood has turned away from you.

So the question is, what are you going to do now? Rest assured that the Shadow has suggestions aplenty.

What happens if you take his suggestion? Well, after the funerals — where, to add insult to injury, the three are buried together in a cemetery down the road from where your remains are rotting — your Shadow might feel obliged to let you know about how he kept you away from your wife for so long. He'll explain in great detail how the loss of you brought you dear friend Dan and your beloved wife Amy together. How they only held on to their minds because they each offered the other strength. He might even explain that Junior was calling his stepfather "Dan" or "Danny," and that you'd just misunderstood when you were listening.

Whatever self-hatred you feel at this moment, whatever guilt and shame and anger, all of these make the Shadow happy indeed. It has shown you horror.

And if you decide to be rational and accept that the relationship between Amy and Dan was almost inevitable when you think of how close the three of you were? That's all right, too. The Shadow is a patient creature. It has to be, and in some ways that's the most horrifying thing of all.

Blood and gore have their place. Violence and carnage are as much a part of **Wrath** as being dead. But horror is something different. Horror is the sinking knowledge that you have betrayed

a loved one and collaborated in his demise. Horror is the anguish of knowing that the person you swore to protect — even after death — is in danger of being tortured and murdered because of a secret that only you knew. Well, you and your Shadow. Horror is a nightmare that never ends, unless you choose Oblivion as your final recourse. Horror is the darkness that hides within your very soul, waiting for you to weaken. Waiting for a chance to destroy you, no matter what the cost. Horror is the Shadow.

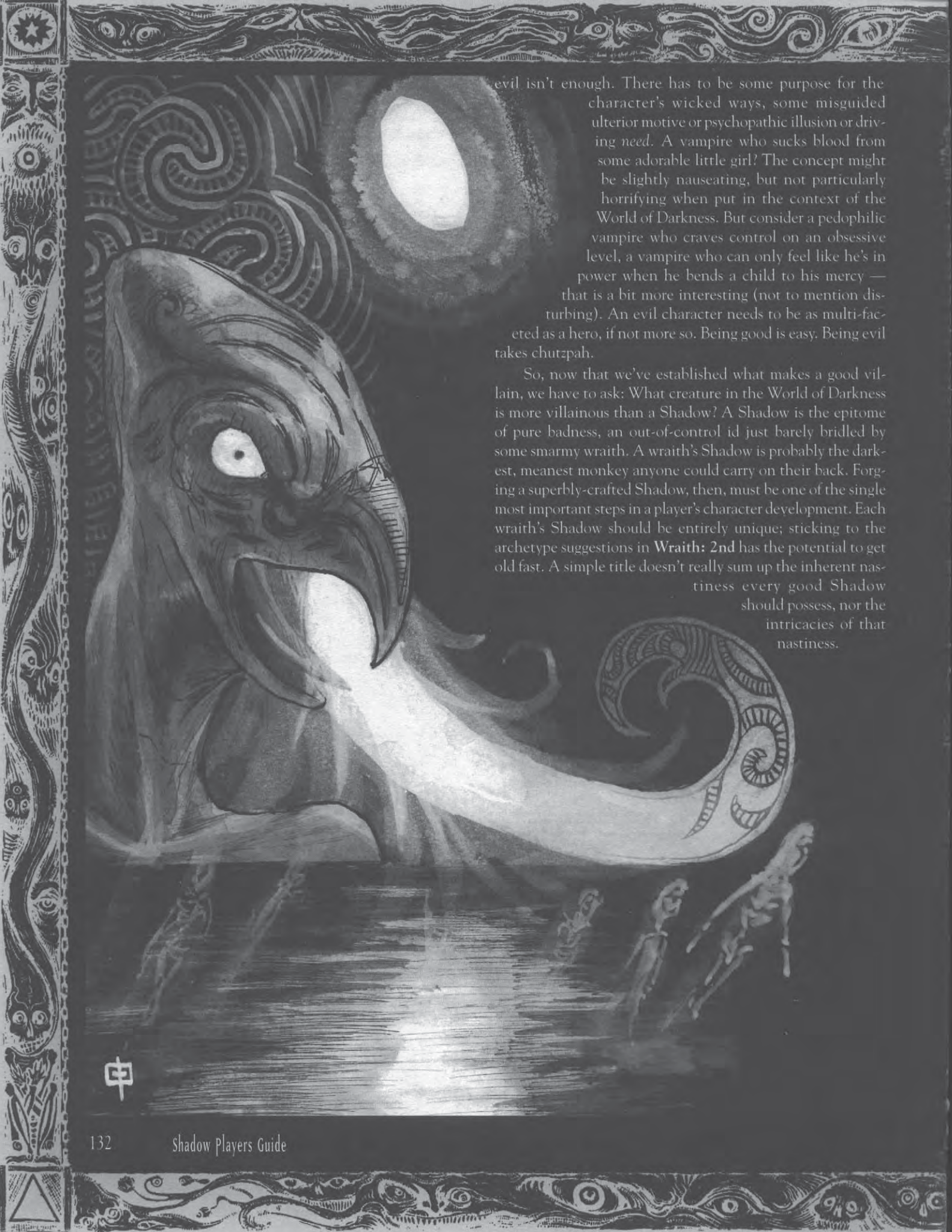
## Forging the Shadow: Unearthing Your Evil Inner Child

by Laurah Norton



We all know that evil characters — dastardly villains in black, sweet-faced children with steak knives in hand — are a hell of a lot more interesting than your generic hero type. But why are villains so fascinating, and what qualities make for a good bad guy? Obviously, just being inherently





evil isn't enough. There has to be some purpose for the character's wicked ways, some misguided ulterior motive or psychopathic illusion or driving need. A vampire who sucks blood from some adorable little girl? The concept might be slightly nauseating, but not particularly horrifying when put in the context of the World of Darkness. But consider a pedophilic vampire who craves control on an obsessive level, a vampire who can only feel like he's in power when he bends a child to his mercy — that is a bit more interesting (not to mention disturbing). An evil character needs to be as multi-faceted as a hero, if not more so. Being good is easy. Being evil takes chutzpah.

So, now that we've established what makes a good villain, we have to ask: What creature in the World of Darkness is more villainous than a Shadow? A Shadow is the epitome of pure badness, an out-of-control id just barely bridled by some smarmy wraith. A wraith's Shadow is probably the darkest, meanest monkey anyone could carry on their back. Forging a superbly-crafted Shadow, then, must be one of the single most important steps in a player's character development. Each wraith's Shadow should be entirely unique; sticking to the archetype suggestions in **Wraith: 2nd** has the potential to get old fast. A simple title doesn't really sum up the inherent nastiness every good Shadow should possess, nor the intricacies of that nastiness.

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The question is, how does one create a perfect Shadow?

I was faced with this question not too long ago, when I was just beginning to play **Wraith**. I'd created a character I was satisfied with, a sad hippie prostitute who had been strangled by a john and left in a dumpster. The problem was, I couldn't find a Shadow archetype that really suited my character. I struggled with this problem for the better part of an hour. I wanted a Shadow that amplified my wraith's weaknesses and preyed upon them, a Shadow that represented all of the failings in her short life. The only possibilities I could find in my copy of **Wraith: 2nd** were the Martyr and Leech archetypes, but they didn't quite seem to fit into the big picture that I'd painted of my wraith. Finally, I decided to take the hard road. I realized I wanted to create my own Shadow.

This may not sound like a big deal to the seasoned, jaded roleplaying mavens of the world. To a newbie, however, the idea of *putting down the book* and thinking for one's self is a rather horrifying concept. I had no idea where to begin. Luckily for me, though, a friend of mine who was more experienced than I at the Art of Gaming, was determined to help me in my endeavor. He suggested that I sit down with a pen and paper and brainstorm for a while. His idea was that I jot down all the bad thoughts I had about myself and other people, the nasty running commentary that ran through my head all day long. His thought was that I'd get some ideas for a good, complex Shadow from my own shortcomings and dislikes. "Great," I said, smiling weakly. *What a #\$\$(@ing idiot. That's the stupidest idea...* I thought as he trotted away, pleased with himself.

Immediately, I felt guilty. That thought was nasty, scathing and judgmental — and the type of thing that you simply don't say to a friend. It's also the sort of mental commentary you might get out of a Shadow. So, I realized, my friend had a point. Maybe his idea had some merit. I found a chewed-upon pencil and a yellow legal pad and flopped down at my desk. After all, it wouldn't hurt just to try out his suggestion....

An hour later, I'd filled nine pages with the mean thoughts, prejudices and judgmental commentary I had never said aloud. Judging from the list, I hated every person, establishment and subculture that had ever existed. I'd tried to think about people like the character I wanted to play, selfish victims who cast away responsibility and tossed themselves to fate, and how that sort of person annoyed the hell out of me. I'd written down such lines as "hate weak people, the kind who get wasting sicknesses in those stupid Victorian novels," and "obnoxious little fatalists who never take initiative — people who let everyone shit on them 'cause it's meant to be." An idea was forming in my mind as I studied the results of my bout with brainstorming. My character was a weak, sad slip of a girl who really hadn't tried to do anything with her life — when she'd actually had a life. Her Shadow should try to make damned well sure that she didn't accomplish anything after death, because her passive uselessness was her greatest flaw.

I decided to call my Shadow the Fatalist. The Shadow's main purpose would be to squelch any initiative, original thought or feelings of empowerment that my wraith might develop. It would want to drive her to Oblivion using her own fatalistic and passive instincts as a tool. The Shadow would croon things like "Tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow — if it's meant to be, it will happen. Rest. Don't worry about anything. Fate decides." These words aren't necessarily evil — unless, of course, they are whispered to a wraith at a critical moment when action is necessary.

Satisfied with my Shadow creation, I sat back and looked at what I'd created. I had shaped the Shadow into a complex and nasty version of my character — which, in my eyes, is what a Shadow is supposed to be.

It's true, a book archetype will work for most characters, as a building block or word for word. You don't have to brainstorm. The brainstorming session, however, helps you slip into the mindset of your specific Shadow. Your most malignant and carnal impulses are a Shadow's bread and butter. A Shadow will be infinitely more intriguing when it embodies the true dark side of a specific character.

Remember, it's easy to hate an antihero, to fear, revile, or even *respect* him. Attempting to understand the method to the madness and the reasons behind that method can be a more terrifying task. If you can relate to your Shadow on some visceral level, the actions it engages in are infinitely more, well, engaging. This is the World of Darkness. In the Gothic-Punk society, evil shapes reality; this isn't a soft, cuddly, cartoon critter kind of world. The dark is the thing...and your villains, your Shadows, love the dark. Try to understand why, and you'll begin to understand them, too.

## Notes from the Dark Side

by Andrew Bates



If you got this far, I commend you. It takes a hardy soul (no pun intended) to make it through 100-odd pages devoted to a rather dark (there go the puns again) subject.

By now, you may well be thinking there isn't much left to discuss regarding Shadows (clever you — what gave it away, the fact that we're almost to the back cover?). Well, there are a few remaining tidbits. There's plenty in here about trying to get a feel for what the Shadow's about, plumbing the depths of horror, creating dramatic tension in the role-playing session, blah blah blah.

So whatever happened to having fun?

Well, Shadowguiding can be a helluva lot of fun. It's roleplaying, certainly, but with an edge. The trick is to keep





your balance on that edge; otherwise you'll slip down one side or the other (or worse, cut yourself in two on it). As long as you keep a sense of perspective and don't get so wrapped up in what you're doing that you lose sight of what's around you, you'll be fine. That's my whole point in a nutshell, but I'll be happy to expound on it for a while. Walk with me, won't you?

Much like a relationship or a low-yield IRA, you get out of Shadowguiding what you put into it. If you play the Shadow as a cackling cardboard villain bent on wreaking havoc, your game itself will also take on a flat, two-dimensional tone. If you present the Shadow as a psychoanalyst's wet dream, the game will be similarly overrun with heavy emotional theatrics. Roleplaying doesn't take place in a vacuum; even though other wraiths cannot hear an individual Shadow's whispered machinations, the other players usually can. The tone, if not the content, of what goes on in those moments can't help but influence how everyone plays.

Let me tell you a story:

A fellow player in a **Wraith** chronicle was a guy I'll call Evilio de Sperazzi. He's a nice enough fellow, I suppose, but I routinely wanted to smack him — and not just because he'd eat the last piece of pizza. No matter whose Shadow Evilio guided (we did the "pass your Shadow to the person on your left" routine), he always played it the same way: a nasal, Beavis-voiced caricature whose dialogue consisted of little more than "Oh, I wouldn't do that, heh heh," "Don't trust him! Don't trust him!" and "Want some help? Heh heh. Looks like you need it, heh heh" (this last while offering five Shadow dice, then snatching them all away with a snort). Subtly disturbing and fraught with horror? I think not.

Like that anecdote? I've got another:

Another player in the same game was somebody I'll call Jabez Weeksworth. He'd actually look at the Shadow's Archetype to get an idea of what the character's dark half was like. His Shadow comments were generally reasonable, seemingly unassuming and only occasionally did he even say anything. Jabez's Shadowguiding was geared to seem a natural extension of the wraith's character, popping up every so often to keep the wraith off-balance and more susceptible to his Shadow's intrigues. A couple of times Jabez's Shadowguiding drew my character into a dialogue so well, it wasn't until after I'd had my character take a course of action which played right into the Shadow's hands that I even realized *myself* what Jabez had been doing. Moody and unnerving? Yup.



What's my point? Besides the fact that I tend to come up with pretty odd names for people, those are examples of a bad way and a good way to Shadowguide. This is not to say that one wraith's Shadow might not be a cartoonish, mustachioed scoundrel, but thinking of every Shadow that way makes the game pretty damn dull. The flip side to this is that some people try overcompensating and turn the Shadow into an overblown Marlon Brando of an id ("I coulda been a Nephwrack; I coulda had some Thorns").

This leads to what I like to call the "Three Bears Theory." Yes, there's another name for it, but I like the bears so that's what I'm calling it. Quit interrupting.

The Three Bears Theory goes something like this: A child from a broken home, Goldilocks lived on the street and engaged in various petty criminal activities. One day she did a little B & E on the Bears' house while they were off on their morning jog. Goldilocks went through the Bears' food, wrecked some furniture and finally passed out in one of the beds. The Bears came home, found their place trashed and the culprit drooling on the pillows, called the cops and got a new kitchen set from the insurance money.

Perhaps I paraphrased a bit, but this story comes down to two things.

Thing #1: When Goldilocks tried the Bears' porridge, one was too hot, one was too cold, but the last was just right. Same thing with the chairs and the beds; she found one to be an extreme in one way, another an extreme in the opposite direction, but the third was a perfect balance in between.

Thing #2: Just because the third choice was perfect for Goldilocks doesn't mean that's the right choice for everyone. Maybe Little Red Riding Hood would think the first bowl of porridge tasted better than the others. Maybe Hansel or Gretel would like the second bed better than the other two.

In other words, when you're Shadowguiding, be careful of being too heavy-handed. In roleplaying, it's important to create a believable character, but it's just as important to remember you're playing a game. By balancing between these two poles (the cardboard villain and Method acting, if you will), you should be able to create a convincing foil for someone's wraith while keeping it all in the fun of a game session.

Also, what works best for you might not work best for someone else (and vice versa). As long as it contributes to the game instead of detracting from it,





don't be concerned about someone else's style. Keep your eyes on your own paper.

We're talking about games here, not about a political cause. Care about what you're doing, but don't make it your life. If you balance emotion with common sense, maintain a perspective, then you'll have fun roleplaying and you might even learn something.

Hub. Kinda like life.

# Shadows on the Mirror: Sexuality in Gaming

by Cynthia Summers

**W**

hy am I writing this? It must be because I'm a girl and girls know about this kind of stuff, right? Speaking as a longtime female gamer, well, uh — yes. I've found that sexuality *does* tend to be one of those things that frequently falls to the province

of female gamers to rescue, whether from Oblivion or disrespect. As a game tool, it can be remarkably useful, and no self-respecting Shadow should be without it in his arsenal. However, playing with sexuality can have its little mishaps and problems, and I've seen just about all of them at one point or another.

On numerous occasions, I have been the only female player in a tabletop game, which made for interesting times. Sometimes, the guys were so used to me that they would forget I was female until I brought up the issue. Never was this more clearly demonstrated than the time my 1920s chanteuse, Josephine, turned up the heat on her boss to "convince" him to let her have a little time off to chase monsters. The room — filled with four gents who had been chatting quietly amongst themselves waiting for this boring scene to get itself over with — suddenly got very quiet. At some point, the player in me realized that all eyes were riveted on me, some of my fellow players were changing their sitting position, and that the normally verbose Storyteller was having trouble finding his words. I was more than a little surprised. I had just been *playing* this wonderfully sensual character (who was not afraid of her body or its effects on others), and everyone else was dropping their jaws.

A male friend later pointed out that I had probably given the other players quite a fright. Until that moment, I had been "just one of the guys" — just another player in the game.

The minute I turned on the gas, things changed. I was female, I was something *other*, and I was dangerous.

Embarrassment has been one of the greatest obstacles to a proper utilization of sexuality in roleplaying games. I'm not sure if it's a reluctance to show off one's ignorance, distaste for the subject or simple lack of thought, but watching guys giggle, blush or tell locker-room jokes often deterred me from dealing with a character's sexuality during game time. I found the juvenile nature of locker-room talk to be more embarrassing than the subject itself, but on the other hand, talking about sex with a straight face was easy when it was done in a mature fashion. It was frustrating to me to have to put a leash on something I wanted to do *in the game* because of a lack of maturity on the part of my fellow players. Yes, my character thinks your character is cute, so shut up and let me flirt with you, and quit acting like a fool!

Note the way I just phrased that: "My *character* thinks your *character* is cute." One thing about using sexuality in a game is that the boundaries between player and character often blur, which can lead to problems in distinguishing between fantasy and reality. It's a rare thing to have a character who shares nothing of his creator's tastes or ideas, and good roleplaying can too easily be mistaken for the "real thing." People who are very certain that they know the difference between the game and life suddenly have remarkable trouble finding the border when it comes to romance and sexuality.

Now, some people like having the freedom of a persona to take on things they normally wouldn't do. My chanteuse, who could be quite the bombshell, was at times the complete opposite of my real-life personality. I made hay in playing Josephine because the game situation gave me the chance to practice flirting in a "safe" environment. I didn't have to worry about someone trying to follow me home, or about my potentially looking clumsy, or worse. Using the character in this way was all fine and dandy, because the guys (however much they were turned on) understood that this was Josephine talking, not Cynthia.

However, I've also had guys who did not understand that my character's interest did not translate into player interest. Such people take in-character flirting and actions and mistake them for real-life feelings, which can rapidly spiral out of control. This sort of misunderstanding can lead to a player falling for the other *character*, not the person behind her. This sort of situation is unfair in a variety of ways. The first player can't understand why his feelings aren't returned by the *player* of the character he's in love with. The player being sought after may think that this is all in character (when in fact it's only halfway there), innocent character comments can be taken out of context, and things can get ugly after that.

Using sexuality as a game tool to establish characters and relationships in a game can be a wonderful thing. When this is done properly, the chronicle achieves a depth of realism





that is difficult to simulate otherwise. Likewise, a Shadow with knowledge of her Psyche's sexuality can achieve an edge that makes for a remarkable game. But playing with a such a delicate topic is like walking on a tightrope: one false step, and the results can be disastrous. If you want to inject sexuality into your game, understand that it can't just be "naughty bits" and innuendo. Doing it properly is going to demand a lot from players and Storyteller alike.

Boundaries become paramount when dealing with this topic, and if you're going to be using sexuality in your game, you'd do well to set the borders of what is and isn't acceptable early on. A Shadow may push the envelope of what's acceptable to a wraith, but only a true sadist would continue to harry the Psyche about something that makes the *player* uncomfortable. Think of the boundary as the safety net. If there's a

boundary, a safe zone where the player knows things will not go further on a certain subject, she can play in relative comfort knowing that the Shadow won't go beyond that mark. It's walking the wire knowing that if you fall, there's something there to catch you. Boundaries also prevent "accidents," which can spoil a player's enjoyment of the game.

I've been through a couple of "accidents," and the results weren't pretty. Meanwhile, the "offenders" had little idea I was suffering. That's walking without a safety net, and that's what happens when you fall. When the boundary was established, when I talked to the offenders and spelled out what was wrong, they were mortified to realize they had done me wrong, and they set out to rectify things. Life went on; so did the game, and a good time was had by all — afterward.



# Plain and Simple

by Ethan Skemp

**W**

raith is the sort of game that lends itself nicely to 50-cent words, particularly when you get into Shadow/Psyche dynamics. At that point you can start playing with words like Dualism, Id and Superego, Psychodrama, Dynamics, even. Some folks have even gotten the impression that

**Wraith** was written to be played by psychology majors with a morbid streak. This Shadowguiding thing in particular makes 'em shake their heads — jeez, how *existentialist* can you get?

Existentialist? Nah. It's actually pretty easy. You can get the hang of proper Shadowguiding by watching Saturday morning cartoons, particularly the mindless action shows. Don't believe me? C'mon, grab a bowl of cereal and sit down with me. I'll explain it all to you.

It's pretty much a staple of TV, comic books, cheesy movies and all that sort of entertainment that the fight between Good and Evil is a pretty sure thing. Hell, good doesn't even have to be all that admirable — the heroes can spend most of the hour bickering over the prepackaged moral *du jour* and still beat the villains in the end. Why? Because evil is incompetent. Evil is cowardly, stupid, short-sighted and most importantly, has no friends. All of the villains hate each other and can't wait for an opportunity to start being treacherous, which is ultimately their undoing.

But that ain't **Wraith**, baby. You should be so lucky.

You see, the tables are pretty much turned in the Shadowlands. All those little problems that made those villains such a joke on Saturday mornings are fixed easily enough. Evil isn't cowardly — it's fanatical. It knows it's bigger than you are, so it'll run you right over even if it loses a toe or three in the process. Evil isn't stupid, either. It's a clever beast that knows all the right buttons to press to make you jump as high as it likes. It has a long-range plan, one that will actually make things work out for the "best" (if you're a Spectre, that is).

Worst of all, it has friends. Lots of them.

Think about it. The organization is always a longer-term, more dangerous foe than any one individual. You can lock a few mafiosos away, but that doesn't cripple the Families. James Bond could kill a SPECTRE mastermind in every single movie and those dastardly baddies would still be assassinating his loved ones in the next installment in the series. And about the only thing worse than one deadly omnipresent criminal organization is a number of them that get along well together. That's where Oblivion comes into play.

In **Wraith**, the triumph of the protagonists over the antagonists isn't a given, and it shouldn't be. The world of those grade-school morality plays is reversed and distorted. Here, the antagonists (we'll call them Evil for short) are often unafraid, smart, patient and well-connected. There are exceptions, sure, but the flawed villains aren't the ones that pose the real threat. Those Spectres who have survived for decades, even centuries, in the Tempest are Oblivion's best, and they're the foes any wraith should be afraid of.

Not that this is the worst of what's facing the players' characters (for want of a better term, we'll call them Good, even though that's a tricky word for most people with human wants and desires). This time around, Good is the one that's flawed. The forces up against Oblivion are fractured and exceptionally uncooperative, as evidenced by the continual Hierarchy/Heretics/Renegades struggle. Each side would probably sell the others out to achieve their own ends (which would seem to be Evil's province). To exacerbate this already sticky situation, a wraith can't even count on herself to be her own best friend. The presence of the Shadow makes every wraith a house divided against itself, and we all know what happens to those.

So a wraith had damn well better be courageous, but smart enough to know what fights she'd better not pick. She can't afford to overlook the big picture, or she might find herself descending into Spectrehood just to resolve a 2-point Fetter. Now, I *could* offer advice to help a player array himself against the overpowering net of corruption that is Oblivion, of course.

But this is the **Shadow Players Guide**. Forget advice for the Psyche; if you're reading this, you want to know how to be a better, stronger Evil. By the time you hit this section of the book, you've probably got plenty of ideas. I won't try to sneak in any more tips, tricks or neat little turns of phrase to use in corrupting your target Psyche; there have been more than enough of those. Besides, the object of the game isn't to drive your target to Spectredom by the end of the first story (while your own character is being driven there himself). Instead, what you do want is menace. You want to show your target just how innocuous and overwhelming, mindless and devious, treacherous and unified Oblivion is. You don't just want to play the villain: You want to play the exquisitely villainous villain, the one that slides onstage with a wicked leer and has most of the audience covering their faces so they don't see what horrible thing he does next — and peeking through their fingers because they don't dare miss it.

Again, maybe the surest way to play with this is to defy stereotype. Watch an old "heroic adventure" cartoon like *Super Friends* or *G.I. Joe*. Take note of everything the villains do at the end of the episode, when their own character flaws or just plain incompetence do them in and neatly tie up the episode with an easily understood moral lesson for the kids at home.

Then, when you're Shadowguiding, do just the opposite. Preferably when the Psyche doesn't see it coming.



If the Big Four Flaws of Evil are cowardice, stupidity, short-sightedness and lack of cooperation (and maybe they aren't, but these four cover a fair amount of ground), then the perfect Shadow would be fearless, brilliant, eagle-eyed and of one mind and purpose with all his fellows. Nobody's perfect, of course, and a Shadow should be just about as fallible as its Psyche (they *are* the same wraith, after all). But don't sell the Shadow short — he deserves some respect, too.

It's easy to see where cowardice got associated with Evil. It starts off with the school bully, who gladly picks on kids half his size but buckles when faced with someone bigger than him. You can't respect a Shadow who backs down whenever threatened with Castigate. But if that selfsame Shadow suddenly says, "No. I'm not afraid of your Pardoner any more. You're going to listen to me now, because I refuse to have you pushing me around for the rest of my existence," look out. Confidence implies strength.

But don't let confidence turn into idiocy. The clever Shadow knows how to bide its time, and isn't stupidly overconfident. Most people don't presume they're experts at everything there is to be done; they tend to pick a few areas of specialty. Similarly, a Shadow shouldn't use methods of corruption that it doesn't excel at. If your Psyche doesn't respond well to bullying, you shouldn't keep shouting in its ear until the Psyche knuckles under. Stick to what you know. And if the Psyche calls your bluff, and you have to back down, don't be afraid to offer a compromise. It always helps to let them know you'll meet them halfway. With the cartoon villains, it's always all or nothing — either I rule the world, or I don't. That's a rather short-sighted way of looking at things, don't you think? You don't need the world; why, just this little tract of land is enough for you and you *promise* you won't cause any more trouble....

Of course, if you want the world eventually, you'd better know what you're going to do with it. If you want to drain it of its natural wealth, then there's no point in razing those gold-rich mountains just because leveling them would be part of The Plan. And why would you really want to destroy the world, anyway? What would you do for an encore? By the same token, if you want to eventually become a Nephwrack, driving your Psyche into fits of blind rage that endanger his existence is a bit counterproductive. Be patient. Don't whip him into running amok in hopes that he'll arrive at the goal someday; he's more likely to end up an Anacreon's ashtray. Instead, carefully nudge him into taking tiny little baby steps that just happen to lead to that ever-elusive Goal. Play your cards right, and once he gets there, he may figure that he wanted to go there all along.

The final thing to remember is that "Trust No One" is a motto for *them*, not for *you*. You are on the Spectres' side. You are on the Heretics' side. You are on the rest of the Circle's side. You are on your Psyche's side. And they are on yours.

A business without contacts isn't long for this world; you should feel no different about the business of Shadowguiding. In fact, you should encourage Spectres, other Shadows and other wraiths to trust you, and you should trust them. Some mutual back-scratching is good for everybody. Allegiances among cartoon villains always break down when somebody feels the uncontrollable urge to betray the group. Prove the cartoons wrong. Continue to get along. Reinforce good business relationships. After all, nothing beats the look on the Psyche's face when he traces a deviously sinister plot from a Guild higher-up to a Hierarch to a Heretic priest to a Doppelganger to a Nephwrack to...you. His own Shadow — friends with everyone along the line. Hey, if you don't set an example of cooperation ("...just like you should be cooperating with me if you want real results, Jim..."), who will?

See? That wasn't so hard. A little TV for the sixth-grader set, a touch of pedantic action-movie technique, and now you know what not to do.

Just don't ask me to put *The Brady Bunch* in **Wraith** terms. Some fleshcrawling horrors you're going to have to deal with on your own.

## Devil's Advocate

by Trevor Chase



He Shadow, eh, Dansky?

How convenient.

One aspect of our roleplaying games — pardon me, "storytelling experiences" — which I find especially irritating is the cop-out mentality inherent to them. It's never your fault, you know — it's always that pesky Beast Within or Rage or Wyrmtaint or Nephandi corruption or some other Darkness — some utterly alien, overly capitalized Other. Even redcaps and the like aren't really to blame — they're just nightmares-made-flesh and all that. When confronted with that most dreaded of supernatural bugaboos — Personal Responsibility — throw one manicured hand over your anguished face, stare up at the uncaring sky, and intone any of several convenient aphorisms we've provided for you: *A Beast I am lest a Beast I become. When will you Rage? We are the Damned, we are the Hollow Men, lost in the Shadowlands.*

There's always an excuse. Dominate. The Hunger. Frenzy. Wyrmt corruption. Quiet. Angst. Dark Passions. Banality. Blood Bond. Chemical imbalance. Recovering addict. Bad home environment. Pornography. PMS. Television violence. Postcombat stress syndrome. Codependency. Backward messages in Judas Priest records. One "-ism" or another. "I was





drunk, baby, I didn't mean it." "I just got downsized and I'm suffering from burnout." No one understands the Real Me, no one gave me the proper support and guidance, and so nothing I do is my fault.

Oh, the horror, the horror! We are victims, all. We should take up lawsuits against Caine for parental neglect. (Maybe we can get him to spill some scalding coffee on us for good measure.) Why, you'd almost think White Wolf products were designed by a bunch of precocious, pretentious, nauseatingly PC, emotionally infantile middle-class whitebread liberal self-centered egotistical creampuffs without a fucking clue about living a real life and utterly unwilling to admit blame for their own fuckups. (I won't tell if you won't.)

And now we've got this Shadow thingie. What does it say here — "...combination of the classic Freudian id and the bully from the school playground..." Well, duh! Everyone has a Dark Side, a conveniently breadbox-sized Darth Vader sitting incorporeal on our left shoulder, breathing "ouuu-pphhh" in our Collective Unconscious. A lovely dichotomy, this is. Everything is so conveniently divided. You have the real "you" — the Psyche — which pristinely plucks its Pathos from all the culturally correct, neatly laid out emotional flowerbeds. And then you have the you that isn't, of course, *really* you — the Shadow — callously strip-mining its Angst from all the underlying compost your superego so desperately tries to sanitize. (By the way, can you believe that even White Wolf Game

Studio actually gets away with a stat called Angst? Angst, for crying' out loud!)

Funny thing, though — if you actually sit down and look at what's considered a "Passion" and what's considered a "Dark Passion," sometimes there really doesn't seem to be much of a difference. Take **Haunts**, page 31. There's a character named John Soulis, and he's got a Passion — not a Dark Passion; mind you — that says, "Insatiable need to do violence (Perversion) 5." Huh. I don't know about you, but "insatiable need to do violence" and "perversion" sound pretty Dark to me, much more so than "Fears he will one day pay for his actions (Despair) 3," which is one of Soulis' Dark Passions! Or what about this one, also from **Haunts**: Carina Matuszek (page 67) has a Passion of "Find the men who killed her and make them pay (Vengeance) 4," while her evil, nefarious Shadow has the Dark Passion of "Get the Hanging Gardens to play some better in-house music (Selfishness) 1."

So, it's perfectly cool and justifiable and worthwhile to Insatiably Do Violence and Make People Pay — but, by god, try to get Barry Manilow out of the Muzak machine and you're going straight to Hell!

Seriously, though: What's the difference between a Passion and a Dark Passion? Is there a difference? Or, when it comes down to it, is the Shadow — the Beast, the Rage, whatever — just an artificial construct, a euphemism for the stuff you want to do and don't admit to?



Nah, it can't be. A reading of the rules makes it very clear that this Shadow is a separate thingie. It has a different form and different powers. It can talk to you as a separate entity. Hell, you don't even have to play it — that responsibility is delegated to someone else entirely. How, then, can you — nice, well-meaning you — be held responsible for the fiendish machinations of this Unholy Trinity of Shadow, Shadowguide and Storyteller?

Gacy tried the same thing, you know. No sir, *John Wayne Gacy* didn't bring 33 young boys to his home, get them drunk and stoned, trick them into handcuffs, strap them to a torture rack, cut off their pants and underwear with a knife, commit fellatio on them, rape them, beat them, violate them with such force that their sphincters ruptured, beat them again when they bled on the carpet, hold their heads underwater until they'd suffered several near-drownings, and finally strangle them to death with their own underpants. It was Jack Hanley — the Other. It was the dark personality that emerged at night, possessed Gacy's body and forced it to cruise the gay district and commit all sorts of hideous acts. It was the Shadow, I guess.

A court of law didn't believe in the Shadow. They sent Gacy — Hanley, whatever his name was — to Death Row. Not to get too serious here, but if I were one of the innumerable victims of crimes and atrocities past and present, I might be a little insulted by a "storytelling" model in which my suffering and death are presumed to be mere side effects of my murderer's botched dice rolls.

And if we are going to set up a morality in our games, shouldn't it be internally consistent? Some of the lines our games draw are pretty ludicrous. Not to get into moral relativism here, but: How come Varney the Ventrue has a "Humanity" of 1 and is thereby deemed "stable" because he's only mutilated, eviscerated and exsanguinated 6,602 victims over the past 300 years, but old von Wagner the Brujah there hits =6,603, fails a Conscience roll, and is suddenly deemed "out of control," possessed by "the Beast?" Why is it that Susan Smith's drowning of her children will almost certainly condemn her postmortem self to Spectrehood in the eyes of right-thinking Storytellers, but a priest of the Aztec god Tlaloc can drown hundreds in a year and is subsequently a major player in the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian? Why can a werewolf routinely rip and slash her way through busloads and buttloads of Pentex "goons" (mindless, faceless ciphers all, to be fumigated from the universe, no strings attached) in the name of Saving the Spotted Owl, but as soon as she chows down on a derelict she's considered to be Of the Wyrm? These examples aren't just cultural phenomena, mind you — these are enforced by the game mechanics and the Storyteller.

Now, granted, all our games are about horror and being victims and all that, and it's good clean fun to bemoan misery every now and then. (And I'm under contract to write an angst-filled [or is that Angst-filled?] diatribe on something,

so bear with me.) But it seems that, just maybe, one of the reasons for White Wolf games' relative success in this industry (aside from Shakespearean prose such as this, of course) is because we're pandering to a cultural craving for catharsis — helping you feel as though the next time you act unpleasantly to your significant other, or badmouth your friends behind their backs, or cut somebody off in traffic, or steal someone else's food out of the company fridge, it isn't because you're an asshole. You just botched a Virtue roll, that's all.

So, hey, next time your Beast or Rage or Hubris or Shadow or Banality or whatever ignites the Dark Frenzied Primal Passions within you, and you run out of those all-important Will-power points, go with the flow. After all, if the cheesy slogans don't work, you can always rebut with this old classic: *I Was Only Following Orders.*

## Shadowy Thoughts

by Richard E. Dansky



he one advantage of this job is that you always get the last word. So here are the last words, the last chance anyone has to make sense of the 100+ pages that have gone before.


You've reached the end of a book all about Shadows, and what do you have to show for it? You've learned a bit about how the dark side of the soul supposedly operates in China and Australia and a few other places, all circumscribed by the rules of the **Wraith** system (of course). You've seen a bit about how the Shadows of Risen work, what an Eidolon can do for a wraith, and a random smattering of other tidbits. You've come across stuff that's reverential and writing that's frankly incendiary.

But what have you learned? Have you learned what a Shadow is?

If you have, write to me and let me know what you've discovered. I've been working on **Wraith** since near its beginning, and I still haven't quite figured that little conundrum out. All that I have learned in the intervening years is that I know what a Shadow isn't.

It isn't evil, at least not in the take-over-the-world, boogedy-boogedy-boo sense. Dismissing the Shadow as just a reflexive villain is inaccurate and cheap. After all, the Shadow has things that it wants and fears as well, and maybe even a justification or two for what it's doing. It's been dragged into this new existence, turned loose inside a soul-sized prison and told that the only way to get out of its afterlife sentence is to end it all.





If you knew you were going to be imprisoned for centuries with no hope of escape, you might consider self-destruction to be a viable alternative, too. If you had to sit and watch an imperfect version of yourself act freely while you stared out from behind prison bars, you might learn to hate your other half, too. Are you beginning to see why the Shadow might have a bad attitude?

And there's the crux of the matter. After all, the Shadow is the Psyche's other half. It didn't spring into existence, fully formed like Athena, once the wraith crossed the Shroud for the first time. It came from somewhere, and that place was the mind of the person the wraith was. Everything the Shadow wants, that person wanted, too. All the pain the Shadow inflicts, that person could have inflicted as well. The capacity for such actions was always there. It's just that now these urges have a voice and a hand of their own.

What do Shadows want, though? Well, they want what they want. It's not that their Dark Passions are EVIL while the Passions of the wraith they balance are GOOD. Ask the ghost of John Soullis about that.

Rather, it's that a wraith's Passions are what a ghost can admit that she wants. A wraith like Carina Matuszek can be up front about stating that she wants revenge on the men who violated and killed her, and that's all right. It's a desire that she's willing to accept as her own. But getting good music on the jukebox? That's selfish. That's childish. That's pointless.

That's the province of the Shadow.

Calling Dark Passions evil is too easy, primarily because they're not. They're selfish, yes, and they're desires that a wraith is ashamed of. It is because they're ashamed, wraiths suppress those desires. *It can't be me wanting something that petty, a wraith says, I'm better than that.* But the truth of the matter is that the wraith isn't better than that, and banishing that desire to the province of the Shadow and its Dark Passions doesn't excise the want entirely.

It's still there. The person made up of Psyche and Shadow still has a desire, a want, a need to do whatever it is that the Dark Passion demands. However, by fobbing responsibility for that want off onto another part of himself — a part he can wall off and designate as the Other — the wraith avoids taking responsibility for it.

*That's not my Dark Passion, he says. It's my Shadow's.*

The unspoken truth is that his Shadow is part of him, and so is anything the Shadow wants.

Now that isn't to say that a Shadow can't inflict evil or be evil. Many do, and many are. Sadism is rarely a positive

social trait. Self-hatred is not something most psychologists condone. Seeking to reinforce these and other negative emotions by creating situations that pander to them — that can be subjectively categorized as "evil." Inflicting pain and reveling in it — that, too, can be described as evil. Never make the mistake of thinking that a Shadow is a poor misunderstood victim; it understands what it is doing and chooses to continue down its path.

Instead, just remember where all of the Shadow's malice and hatred, its capacity to cause pain came from.

A caveat: **Wraith** is only a game, after all, intended to help people while away an evening or six and have a good time. It occasionally sounds some deep waters, though, and sometimes the fun of the message can get lost in the medium. Yes, the very notion of the Shadow raises some serious questions about responsibility and desire. How far can you go as a Shadowguide, all in the name of a good time? Is there a point beyond which you shouldn't go in this role? When do you pull back, when do you stop, and once that point is reached, where do you go?

I don't know. I just try to remember that every Shadow supposedly comes from someone's life, experience and death, and that in the world of **Wraith**, even the most mundane of lives can spawn something that capable of malign hate. Often I look around and wonder what part of my day's activities — which argument with a coworker, which shouting match with a loved one, which bit of disgust with a bit of my work that's not up to snuff — might go into making my Shadow if I were living in the World of Darkness. Every last one, I suspect.

Then I turn back to the game I'm making, and wonder how I can turn a concept like this into a way for people to have a good time.

Perspective, I think, is the only way. Look at **Wraith** and the Shadow for what they can be, and enjoy the learning curve.

Just remember this, though. One of my favorite characters (Grover the Muppet, if you must know) once said with great solemnity: *There is a monster at the end of this book.*

There is a monster at the end of this book — and at the beginning and in the middle, too. You've found it. If you've identified at all with this book, if you've enjoyed it or thought that you might like to try a few of the dirty tricks hidden between its covers, you've found that monster. It's you.

While the dice are rolling, there's nothing wrong with that at all. Just remember where that monster lives when the dice stop, though, and don't ever forget it.



# SHADOW

PLAYERS  
GUIDE

## Surrender to the Dark Side

Every wraith has his own personal whisperer in darkness, telling him that it's a very good thing to be bad. (*And it is, it is — trust me.*) They call the voice the Shadow, and every wraith must strive to resist its efforts to drag him down to Oblivion (*Why? It's always more fun heading downhill.*) This Shadow will urge the wraith to untold acts of depravity and evil until he is lost forever to the Void. (*So, like, does anyone out there have a problem with this?*)

## You and Your Shadow...

The *Shadow Players Guide* discusses the less pleasant half of a wraith's personality, the part of a wraith's soul that wants to fast-forward the plunge into Oblivion. In other words, it's all about the nasty fun part of playing Wraith, so buckle up and get prepared for a hell of a ride. Want to find out how Shadows work around the world? Need to see the top-10 Shadow dirty tricks? Have a yen to chat with a Shadow who actually enjoys getting Castigated? All that and more hides between these covers, waiting for you.

*And ignore all that sissy stuff about Castigation, the Eidolon and whatnot. This book is about serious fun — for my kind, at least.*

### The Shadow Players Guide contains:

- The ins and outs of the Shadows of the Risen; *Wrecking the Skinlands for fun and profit! Wheeee!*
- New Merits, Flaws, Thorns and more; *More toys for the arsenal — we're loaded for bear!*
- And of course, dirty tricks galore. *You were expecting maybe recipes for chocolate-chip cookies? Wimp.*

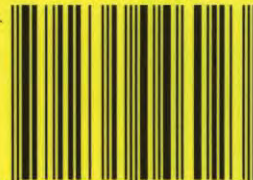
Note: Do not expose this book to bright light, cheerful music, fuzzy stuffed animals or greeting cards featuring cute bunnies. White Wolf is not responsible for the consequences if you do, and we won't cover your hospital bills, either.

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