

GUILDBOOK:



The Artificers Sourcebook for Wraith: The Oblivion  
Guildbook One

GUILD BOOK:



By Richard Dansky



"Wherefore do ye toil; is it not that ye may live and be happy? And if ye toil only that ye may toil more, when shall happiness find you? Ye toil to live, but is not life made of beauty and song? And if ye suffer no singers among you, where shall be the fruits of your toil? Toil without song is like a weary journey without an end. Were not death more pleasing?"

— H.P. Lovecraft, "The Quest of Iranon"





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# Ghost Story: A Road of Steel and Souls

## Part I: A Meeting of Minds



Deep in the bowels of the Isle of Sorrows, a gavel moaned. Obediently, 12 heads, all more or less human, turned to face its wielder: a charcoal-colored caricature who'd introduced himself only as Ember. He sat, as they all did, in a chair forged from black Stygian steel, functional instead of ornate. Souls Moliated into cushions (through the good offices of Dame Katrin of the Masquers' Guild, their host had indicated, even as he pointed to one of the early arrivals) provided the sole bit of ornamentation, and even they were plainly functional.

The room matched the furniture in its utilitarian simplicity. A single entrance, barred with a steel door, loomed behind Ember and framed his countenance with a deeper black. No windows looked out on the Imperial City, and the

floors and walls were a single surface of polished soul-steel. A wagon-wheel chandelier hung from the ceiling on a black chain; Moliated candles standing at the end of its spokes provided smokeless red light. Below the chandelier squatted the monstrous table, its legs hammered into the semblance of dragons' limbs and its surface polished to a dark mirror's gleam. Apart from the dozen masked figures seated around the table and Lord Ember himself, the room held no other wraiths.

Ember himself was garbed in loose robes of gray, and his skin was a cracked and ridged carbon black. Completely bald, he looked as if he had been forged as statuary and then discarded as a botched job. Only the startling whites of his eyes and the deep red of his mouth lent his form any color. He appeared as a ghost among ghosts, and the odor of char drifted unpleasantly from him. In his left hand he held the black-and-gold gavel whose moan had set the others to silence; in his right was a sheaf of papers. A dozen carved faces looked up at him expectantly, and in the back of the room someone coughed. An expression of impatience, perhaps, or a habit from breathing days.





Ember's voice, when it came, was a bass rumble, roughened by the soot of centuries in the forge. "Forgive me," were his first words, "for calling you on such short notice. I know that we were not due to meet again for another seven years, but I felt that what I had to impart to you to be...well worth the risk." Waving the sheaf of papers for emphasis, he waited. Every pair of eyes in the room, he noted, was on the papers. Where, of course, he wanted them.

"This is insanity." The voice came from the back, from behind a mask like a leopard. "To meet again this soon is idiotic. To do it the bowels of the City itself is suicide." Arms clad in the court garb of the De Medicis were crossed in disapproval. Ghostly feet in relic leather boots were propped up on the table.

Frowning, Ember turned. "My dear Lord..."

"No names."

"Of course. Master of Chanteurs," and Ember paused for the general laughter. The fop behind the leopard's face was the latest in a long line of "Masters of Chanteurs" who had attended these meetings, each of whom was obviously an expendable decoy. At first Ember had found the way in which the faux Guildmasters had attempted to press their bluff to be admirable. Of late, it had grown tiresome. Consistency in the lie would have been a courtesy.

The laughter, of course, was because it was highly likely that all of the "Guildmasters" gathered on this night were "imposters." Including Ember.

"Master of Chanteurs. Invoking my right as Master of the Eldest Guild, I have called us together tonight because I deem it important, and not because after twenty-two centuries, I've suddenly acquired a death wish. As for meeting in Stygia, as one of my Guild's new apprentices once put it, where better to hide than in plain sight?"

A portly woman, covered in shifting robes that moaned and twisted in time to the twisting tentacles of her octopus mask, rose shrieking. "You took her? She was ours by right!" The sigils on her arms danced in time with her gestures, and the same markings danced across her mask.

Ember made a self-deprecating gesture. "She chose us. We did not take her. And who were we to refuse such an illustrious apprentice?"

"We should have been consulted. We'd have made better use of her."

"And taught her through your calm example, no doubt," called the Chanteur at the back. The woman, an Oracle, made an obvious show of ignoring him as she sank back into her seat.

"Were you going to plump her up as well, Missy Cassandra?" Again the Chanteur, lazily drawing forth a mandolin even as the Oracle rose again. The din her chair made crashing to the floor was ignored.

“Never mention that name again,” she hissed, “or you’ll find yourself rolling double ones with your own knucklebones.” Along the mask and the plump white arms, the black sigils twitched and fretted.

“Is it such a good idea,” said the Chanteur, his long fingers strumming the strings along the length of the mandolin’s neck, “to threaten me in this echo chamber? Play your games with the Alchemists, you fat little fraud. Maybe you’ll frighten them.”

“Fraud? You’ve just bought yourself a century of bad luck, you vicious little...”

“ENOUGH!” The hammer howled in time as Ember brought it down on the table hard enough to crack the mirrored surface. With a crash, the wreckage fell to the floor. Ember stood before his chair, rage-red marks mottling his flesh, his eyes green with anger. “Little songbird, you have said quite enough.” He was on the Chanteur before the man could rise, his hand around the singer’s throat. The gavel lay, shattered and weeping, on the floor. “I will not have this. If you, or any of your successors, disrupt a gathering of this sort again, I will take my revenge. I will personally hunt you down and take you back to my forge. I will melt you down for coin, and I will scatter those coins to the far ends of the Empire, those that I don’t send to the Void or the Jade Emperor’s Hell. And I will make sure that you are awake for the entire process.

“Do you like the sound of that, songbird? A little bit of your mind in China, a little bit of it here. A little bit amidst the dust on my workshop floor. A little bit lost down a sewer grating. Do you like the sweet sound of that?” A choking sound was his only answer. “I can’t hear you, nightingale. Do you like the sound of that?”

“...no...” The response came in gasps, in terror.

Ember released the Chanteur, who fell to the floor in a jangle of strings. None of the others in the room stirred. Impassive masks stared back at him. There was silence.

“Right,” said Ember. “Back to business. We’re here to talk about Charon.”

“Charon’s dead and gone,” murmured a woman with the inky fingers of the Pardoners. She gave Ember a look like a raptor gives a sparrow and frowned from beneath her half-mask.

“Just gone. Not dead. I want to get him back.”

“Impossible!” It was the plump Oracle again. “He and Gorool went down in that horrid whirlpool, and we’ll never see him again.”

A man at Ember’s right elbow, marked with the broad shoulders and the pinched expression of the Spooks, barked laughter. “Miklos there was right. You are insane.”

Ember spun on him, still clutching the papers. “Idiot. Stygia’s going to hell under the Deathlords. Without Charon and a unified leadership, it’s just a question of who gets us first: the Spectres or the other Dark Kingdoms.”





"Granted," came the Pardoner's voice. "However, you're still begging several questions here."

"Such as?"

"Such as where is he, how do we get him back, what's the benefit to us in all of this, and why did you choose now to hatch this?"

"I'll answer the last first," Ember answered as he settled back into his chair. The gavel whimpered once, and the Spook gave it a petulant kick. "Now, because I have just received some new information on Charon's disappearance. The benefit to us, besides mere survival, is that if we, the Guilds, retrieve Charon from the Labyrinth, he'll owe us. Reinstatement in Stygia will be the least of it. Down with the Deathlords, up with us."

"Perhaps," came a voice from unblinking eyes behind a moon mask. "You said retrieve him from the Labyrinth. I take it you know he's there?"

Ember shrugged. "Where else would he be?"

"The Void. In Gorool's belly. Playing pinochle with Nhudri's grandfather. The mind boggles."

"All the evidence I have points to his being in the Labyrinth." Again, a shake of the papers. "After a fashion."

"Do tell," came the Pardoner's purr.


"These papers were obtained for me by a journeyman of my Guild. One who specializes in computers. He's a bit undisciplined, which is why he's still a journeyman, but his hobby is retrieving odd bits of data. This time, he stumbled onto more than he knew.

"What he came across was a file on a computer belonging to a psychiatrist near his haunt. This doctor had come across a group of patients who'd been suffering from similar nightmares. All were over 55 years of age and were absolutely unable to sleep because this nightmare, which they'd all originally had at the time of the Fifth Maelstrom, had returned. In the dream, a monster comes up out of the ocean and fights a man in a boat. I trust you'll all be quite surprised when I tell you it ends with a whirlpool swallowing both man and monster."

"Sounds familiar, yes. But I fail to see much significance." The Pardoner sounded spectacularly unimpressed.

"Besides the fact that it came to these people in a dream?" Ember paused to look quizzically at the lone Sandman in the room and met an unblinking stare. "Besides the fact that 50 years later it's still bothering all of them? Besides the fact that the descriptions of the Isle and the Weeping Bay and Charon himself are letter-perfect in all of the accounts? How about the fact that my journeyman found similar dreams recorded in four other psychiatrists' offices within an evening's travel of his haunt?"

The Pardoner leaned toward Ember, hand outstretched. "Let me see those."



"Gladly," as he handed papers around the room. Even the Chanteur took his without comment, and for a few minutes only the flipping of pages could be heard.

It was the Oracle who broke the silence. "All of these have something else in common," she said fretfully. "I don't like it."

"Don't like what?" retorted the Spook. "Piss-poor prose, most of it. What's eating you?"

"Well, all of them talk about Gorool...we agree this is Gorool, right...all of them talk about him rising up out of the waves and bellowing something like 'I have come! Where rests my sacrifice?' or some such."

Ember nodded. "More or less."

"But I don't remember hearing that! I was on the battlements when Gorool manifested, and it didn't say anything. It just howled. I don't remember the words all these people do."

"I don't remember those words either," interjected the Pardoner. "This is disturbing."

"We could call in the Mnemoi and find out what we *do* remember." All heads turned to the back of the room, where the Chanteur smirked behind his leopard mask.

"Not even as a joke, songbird. Not even as a joke." The Pardoner's face was grim as slate. "I'd open the gates to Yu Huang before I let a Mnemos into my head."

"Just a suggestion. The few I've met have been decent people, really."

"Then you're a bigger fool than Ember here thinks you are, and that's considerable. No, what really bothers me is what they all claim Gorool said."

Ember's smile was a cold thing. "The reference to the sacrifice? Yes, that caught my attention. It's why I called you here."

"Because Gorool wanted a sacrifice? Seems reasonable for a beast like that," muttered the Spook. The Oracle impaled him with a glance. Dutifully, he writhed beneath it.

"Imbecile. If he came for a sacrifice, someone must have promised that sacrifice to him." There was a long silence. "Someone promised a sacrifice to him. Someone called Gorool here, and Charon was the bait. A traitor. A traitor killed Charon."


"Tried to, at least." Ember's forced optimism echoed from the polished walls. "A traitor set Charon up, yes. We find the traitor, we find the path to Charon. We find the path, we find Charon himself. We find Charon, we free him, and it's back to the Weeping Towers in steel and glory. These memoirs are the first step on the road back to power for us. For our Guilds."

The Chanteur laughed, a bitter sound. "If you can trust your minds and your memories. I trust neither. I don't trust Lord Briquette here, I don't trust the fact that this magical evidence just came to light, and I don't trust the fact that despite the fact that we all watched Charon's Fall, not one of us recalls Gorool speaking so much as a coherent syllable. There's another game here, Ember. Why should we play it?"

"Because," and it was not Ember who answered, but instead the Oracle, "Because we have no choice." And a hush fell on the chamber, as in a dozen minds, a beast a half-century gone roared once more from the depths.



F. HARPER  
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# Chapter One: The Guild

*Call for a craftsman  
Bring me a draftsman  
Build me a path from cradle to grave  
— Billy Bragg, "Between the Wars"*

To: Hérnan of the Paupers' Legion  
From: Chandler DeShields, P.I.  
Re: Artificers

Encl: An overview of what I found out. The full report is on its way as soon as I can possess my secretary and get her to type it. Shouldn't be more than another day. In the meantime, these are the edited highlights. They'll get the point across.

Note: By the way, payment is overdue on this assignment. I fully expect the 10% late surcharge to be included when I hand you the full report.

## Overview



In case you were wondering, the Guild is still around. Give me all the bullshit you want about banishment and disbanding and whatever else, the Guild is real. More to the point, it's real and it has an awful lot of members. Plus, they're all nuts. This

group combines the worst elements of the Teamsters, the Masons and the Hare Krishnas. I can't tell if it's a professional organization or a religion, and at a certain point it doesn't matter. If an Artificer breaks your legs out of a deep and abiding religious devotion to their "Lord" or because he doesn't like independent soulforge contractors, it doesn't make much difference. *Capiche?*



I didn't get in deep enough to find out what they're really up to, but then again, you're not paying me enough for me to do what would have been required. Let's put it this way: you join the Artificers, you're making a real investment of yourself.

Got it? No? Tough.

Anyway, on to the facts of the matter. They are:

## Who Are These Bozos?

The Artificers Guild, *also known as* the Right and Honorable Brotherhood of Artificers, Soulforgers, and Gremlins; *also known as* the Society of the Hammer; *also known as* the United Smiths of Stygia; *also known as* the Hammerboys, is



real, active and vital. Sorry, it's not a myth. I know you're disappointed to hear that, but try to restrain your despair until after you pay me.

The older members tend to call themselves the Brothers of the Forge. Sexist as all hell, but what do you want from wraiths 2000 years old? The younger ones, at least those in the Guild, call themselves Artificers or Hammerboys. Not surprisingly, women tend to go by the former and men by the latter. Above is a partial list of aliases for the organization, but these are just the obvious ones. There are a lot more, most of which seem to be innocuous enough but are actually attached to the Guild.

Older members tend to have been blacksmiths, philosophers, inventors, and scientists. The leadership of the Guild is heavily slanted toward the male side, but this is changing a lot faster than the fogies would like. Younger members, especially those Reaped in the past 20 years, tend to specialize more in the computer end of things, though you get a few mechanical engineering mavens as well. Fewer architects than you'd expect, but a sizable minority of AFL-CIO types, blue collar workers who go into soulforging.

Physical profile is easy for the old-timers. Think big, burly and blackened. Working in the forges, most get seared like Cajun-style catfish, and even those who don't get carbonized look like they've been tanning in a microwave. Younger ones are harder to identify, but the weathering is there if you look for it. Red and black streaks often disguised as tattoos or covered with gloves and long sleeves are what to look for here. Steel-tipped chuckaboos are also a giveaway.

## What is It Up To

The Guild is actively recruiting new members, especially from the Legions, and seem to have stepped up its inductions over the past four years. Mind you, the Artificers are being quiet about it. It's real subtle; they find someone they're interested in and start dropping hints about the bigger quarters you get, the higher pay for smiths as opposed to grunt soldiers, the thrill of hitting computer systems and making the bank put a million bucks in your mom's account, all of that malarkey. No mention of the Guild at all. Then, once the sucker signs on, he gets some training, some testing, and wham, he's inducted into the Guild.

That is, if the Guild muckety-mucks think they can trust him. If not, he ends up as flatware. Very ecologically conscious, those Artificers; very into recycling, if you know what I mean. They don't leave any of their mistakes lying around for people like me to trip over.

The other main avenue of recruitment is the raw materials line. If an Artificer spots a likely candidate in the "Future Lawn Furniture" pile, he pulls her out, dusts her off and inducts her. This is where a lot of the computer types come

from, as most get hauled in as half-assed Renegades. Hammerboys pulled off the scrap heap tend to be very loyal to the Guild. None of 'em would even talk to me.

Mind you, that's what the Guild is up to in the small scale, not the large. There's something big going on here, something really nasty. Soul-steel production is down 2.1% over the same time that the Guild's bumped up recruitment, and that's just not kosher. What makes it even more interesting is that more and more souls are getting sent to the forges these days. More smiths, more raw materials; yet we're ending up with less product. Something stinks.

My guess is that the Guild is siphoning off the extra. Yeah, I know 2% doesn't look like much, but think about the volume of soul-steel we're dealing with here. 2.1% of 10 souls is an arm and a leg; but 2.1% of 4 million tons of soul-steel is an awful lot. It sounds like the Guild is stockpiling raw materials, a lot like survivalists squirreling away canned food and shotguns.

## Who Are Artificers Talking To?

Well, pretty much everybody. They've got contacts, if not actual chapters in both Heretic and Renegade camps. I got hauled out to a couple (location will be attached with the full report), mainly Renegade camps on "scouting" missions for the Legion. Bullshit. They were out there to make nice with the Artificers on the other side.

The vibe I got was that Guild loyalty transcends everything else. Everything. Let's put it this way, given a choice between saving a Renegade Artificer or a Legion Commander from getting chomped by a Shade, any real Artificer chooses in a second. Guess what: the Commander loses.

Seriously, the Guild has a network strung out over the entire Shadowlands. Favorite Haunts are factories, warehouses, and foundries. It's not going to surprise anyone that the Artificers pretty much own Pittsburgh, Cleveland, Detroit, and the rest of the Rust Belt. Oh yes, Buffalo too. Not overtly, mind you; however, the Hammerboys are damn strong there, and even the Anacreons know not to push it. Not much of a presence up and down the eastern seaboard or the West Coast; big in northern Europe and Germany, not much influence in Spain, Portugal, or Italy. Poland's chock full, at least the cities like Gdansk and Cracow.

In any case, one of my contacts, since vanished, informed me that the Guild has hidey holes, ammo and weapons dumps, forges and stockpiles of steel'n'souls all over the place. The Artificers love '50s vintage bomb shelters, too, and old missile silos when they can find them. The fact that Lyman disappeared right after talking to me lent a little additional weight to his words.

Two days after Lyman vanished, I got an anonymous delivery: a dozen relic paper flowers in a soul-steel vase. Expensive.

sive gift, and there was no name or card on it. Mind you, I'm not one for flowers, and the vase itself was no great shakes. Looked like it had been done hastily. Looked like the artist hadn't spent more than a day or two on it. Lyman makes a god-awful vase, in case you were wondering. Let me know if you want the flowers.

The long and short of it is, these honchos are serious. Same old Code of Silence from my days in Southie; you talk, you're dead. Or worse.

As for those bomb shelters and bunkers the Guild's dug into, I wouldn't want to be the one to pry them out. We're talking a serious plasm party here. Wait until Janet Reno kicks it, then get her to take charge.

## Growth Industries

As much as some of the old-timers don't seem to like it, they're getting into computers. Heavily. The Dictum Mortuum might as well be tissue paper as far as they're concerned; they're into databases and dedicated systems like there's no tomorrow. Mind you, I haven't seen what they're pulling down, but I can make some guesses: passwords, financials, launch codes. All that sort of fun stuff.

This is where a lot of ex-Guild types come in, especially the young ones. There's a decent number who quit the Guild before they get too far in. Some are allowed to go; some take it on the lam. I think it depends on how much you've been taught and how much of a security liability you are. Besides, even the ones who want out in the worst way aren't going to talk. Nobody wants to be a vase.

If they catch the ones who cut and run without permission, it gets ugly. No appeal, no chance for parole; you've had it. I've heard a few people talk about the "Ancient Arts" in connection to somebody who got smelted down. Not much came out of that conversation, but there's a clear social demarcation in the Guild, and I think that those who know these "Ancient Arts" are the ones above the line. There's also a bit of a rivalry between those who do the forging and those who work with computers. A rare few do both; everybody hates these guys.

## That Old Time Religion

The Guild has developed some religious overtones over the centuries, which isn't surprising in something as ritualistic as a guild-type setting. I remember back from my living days, a lot of the fraternal organizations like the Knights of Damon had sort of blurred the lines between their secular function and the religious trappings they'd draped it in. Well, the Artificers have that in spades.

Religious leanings are most prevalent in the old-timers, of course. There's a sort of holy book, which I saw at an initiation (more on that later), that purports to be the history of







the Guild in the same way that the Bible claims to be the history of the human race. I got to read a copy of the text at one point. Lots of “spakes” and “begats” and things like that, but at its core it’s essentially the story of how the demand for soul-steel outstripped Nhudri’s capacity to hammer it out, so Charon told him to get some help. The help hired more help, the whole thing snowballed, and it ended up with the Guild as we know it. Of course, the old-timers couldn’t deal with the fact that their entire little subculture is based on an economic proposition, so they’ve elevated Nhudri, excuse me, “Lord Nhudri,” to demigod status. The really whacked out ones call him “Our Lord” and talk about soulforging as a sort of communion with the souls they’re working on. More mumbo jumbo like that. The religious devotion seems to be weaker among the newer members, but during initiation something goes *pop* and suddenly they’re devout, at least for the duration of the ceremony.


Again, the line between computer Artificers and Hammerboys seems to be obvious here. The ones who actually work in the forges seem to take the religious end more seriously than the netsurfers. Then again, I heard one or two of those call Nhudri “The Great Ghost in the Machine,” so we could simply be watching the equivalent of a religious schism here.

## The Few, the Proud, the Artificers

I didn’t initiate. I was asked, and it was actually hinted at that I really, really should join. This came shortly after the delivery of the vase, and it was right around the time I decided to terminate my investigation. However, moron that I am, I said “Yes” and got to witness an Artificer induction ceremony before taking the old Argos sidestep outta there. Just in time too; I was next in line.

Let me add that I’ve been snooping around the Underworld for the past 46 years, and I’d thought I’d seen everything. Everything. I was wrong. What the Artificers put their initiates through is like nothing I’ve seen, living or dead. Just remember, fanatics are made, not born.

In any case, when you get initiated it isn’t like some suburban Moose Lodge. You get hauled into a forge, with smoke billowing around and everything. I suspect the place is actually on the Isle, from the way my Fetters got stretched when I was taken there. The whole place, wherever it is, was bathed in this dark red light, and there was soulfire behind these grates that were 30 feet tall. Bare stone floor, usual forge setup, and in the middle was the biggest goddamned anvil I’ve ever



seen. Next to it was a hammer the size of a small artillery piece, and there was a wooden bucket full of something that sloshes on the floor. Plasm, I think.

Besides the initiates, there were three others. Big suckers, all wearing featureless masks, dressed in long black robes. One held a sickle, the second had a chain, and the third had a book the size of a Bible. He (definitely a he from the voice) started reading from the book, and it was like a religious service. Reading, response, stand up, sit down, all of that. I snuck a peek at my fellow initiates, and they were all in some sort of trance, absolutely devoted.

After a few minutes (hours? days? hard to tell...) the reading finally ended and the big guy on the right closed the book and put it on the floor. Then the first initiate in line walked up to the grate, the one with the soulfire behind it, and without a word she opened this little door at about shoulder height. It couldn't have been more than four inches on a side. Just big enough to stick your hand through.

She held her hand over the fire, and there was silence. She didn't scream, didn't whimper, didn't make a sound, not even when her skin was blackened and cracking and when plasm was dripping down like hot wax. No one else made a sound either. Just the crackle of the flames and the sizzling of her hand over the fire. She just held it there so long that I thought I was going to scream. But she didn't make a sound.

Finally, thankfully, she took her hand out. It was barely recognizable, just a dripping ruin of dead meat, and she laid it down on the anvil with a hiss. I knew what was coming then, and I wanted to close my eyes but couldn't. All of the others were watching her, even the three elders, and the expression on their faces could only be described as reverent.

They kept that awed expression on their faces, even when she took her one good hand and put it on the handle of that impossibly large hammer. They kept it when somehow she swung that hammer up, and they kept it when she brought that hammer down like doom on her own hand. The whole place rang like a bell. She took the hammer and lifted it again,

and again she brought it down. And again. And again. And...it was horrible. All the while, everyone else was singing some sort of hymn, some sort of horrible chanting hymn, and all I could think was, "I don't care what they say, I'm in hell."

She stopped after a while, and most of her hand was actually intact when she finished. It was just a little...smaller. She was holding something in that ruined mess, somehow, and she quenched her whole hand in that bucket. It sputtered and steamed for a minute, and when she withdrew her hand it actually looked like it had been healed. Terrifying. She was holding a little coin with a hole in its center, and holding it out she walked over to the three elders. The one with the chain held it up, the one with the sickle cut the chain, and the one with the book took the coin from her hand and put it on the chain. Then the three intoned some kind of blessing, we all said, "Amen," she put the necklace on, and it was my turn.

That's when I left.

## Summary

They're dangerous, they're crazy, and if we didn't need them so badly I'd recommend wiping every last soulforger (except Lord Nhudri, of course) from the face of the Shadowlands. They're fanatics, powerful fanatics, and I'm not sure that's a good combination to have running around. Mind you, I've met a lot of them and liked them. Genuinely liked them. They're good people, mostly, and do something that I wouldn't want to, not on my best day. But anything that can inspire someone to put their hand in soulfire and not even twitch scares the hell out of me. If you have any sense, it scares the hell out of you, too.

The full report will be delivered, as stated earlier, by hand when I show up for payment. Meet me at Phocian's Column in the Forum Charonis Minor Tuesday at the seventh hour. Until that time, I'll keep the flowers for you.

Chandler

## Memorandum

*My Dear Friend Mario:*

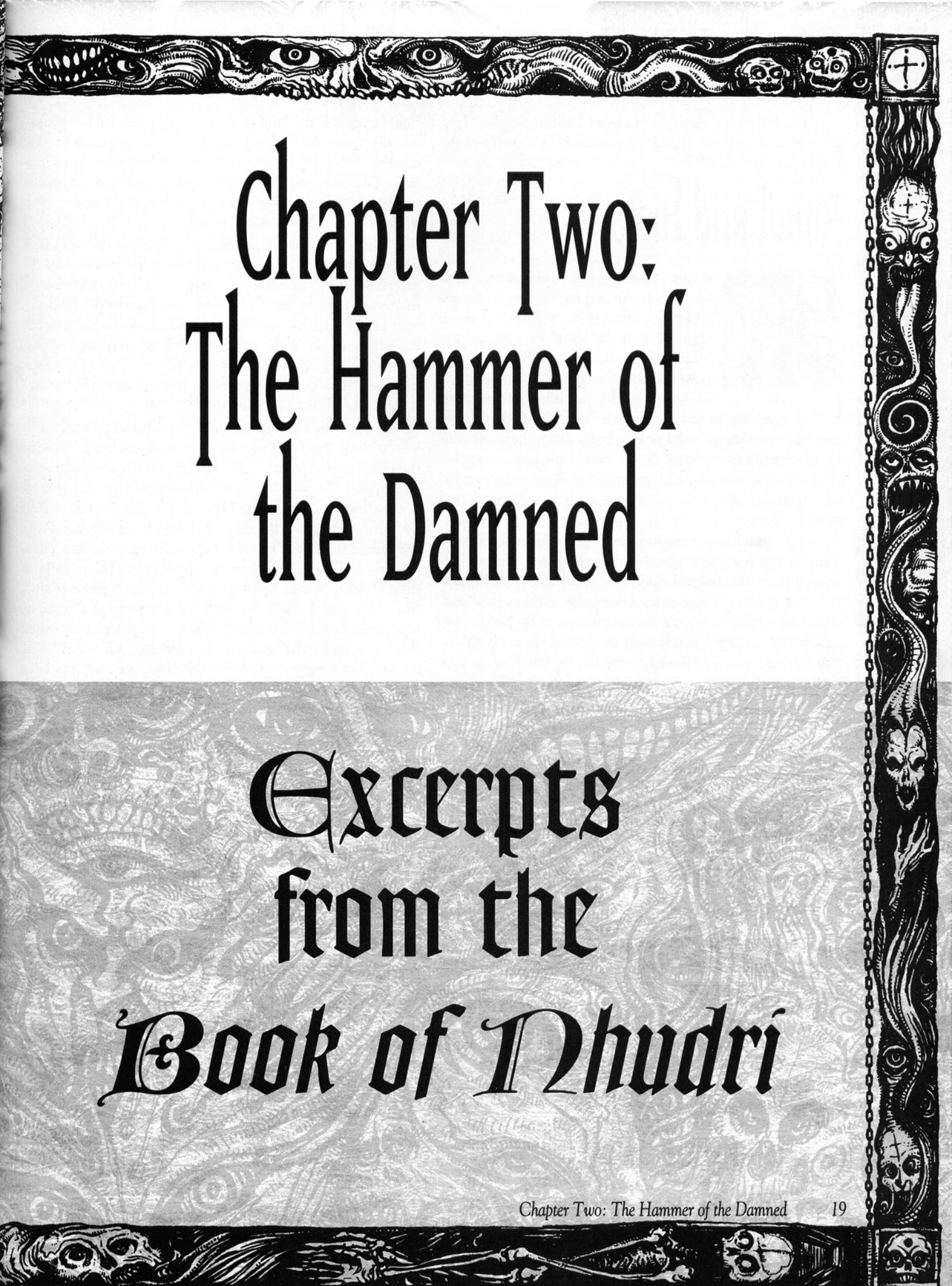
*It is truly appalling how much DeShields was able to uncover in only three years. Read his attached report and indicate to me what steps need to be taken to tighten our security. I want these leaks clogged within the week.*

*On a more pleasant note, the detective will be meeting me Tuesday at 7 in the Forum Charonis Minor to hand over the complete report and receive his payment. On his way home, deal with him. I expect all of the money to be retrieved.*

*Yours by the Hammer*

*Hernan*



A decorative border surrounds the page, featuring a repeating pattern of skulls, eyes, and other macabre motifs. The top border includes a cross symbol in a square. The right border is a vertical strip with a chain-link pattern and various grotesque faces. The bottom border shows a skeletal figure.

# Chapter Two: The Hammer of the Damned

Excerpts  
from the  
*Book of Nhudri*

The following excerpts are from *Talking Steel: A History of the Artificers' Guild*, written by N. D. Duffy of the Great Library, d. 1966

## Ritual and History



The art of soulforging (and it is an art, as surely as any other) has its own traditions and rules, handed down from master to apprentice since Nhudri's time. It was Nhudri himself, fully cognizant of the power he was granting to his apprentices, who created the traditions of his craft.

Before instilling in any student the secrets of soulfire, he first laid upon them the charge to hand down the same rituals to subsequent students. At the same time intensely practical and deeply mystical, the Soulforge Rites are intended to curb the potential abuses of power that soulforging permits.

A few privileged outsiders have been allowed to witness some of the Soulforge Rites, and they have uniformly expressed both astonishment and fear at what the soulforgers voluntarily undergo to gain the knowledge of the dark flames. Were the Artificers not so vital a resource, they could easily have been branded a particularly dangerous Heretic cult.

Very few if any of the higher ups in the Guild have ever believed in the so-called Cult of Nhudri. It has been carefully nurtured to exact obedience from the lower ranks of the Guild, but it seems highly unlikely that many Master-class Artificers actually believe that Nhudri is any sort of divine spirit.

The hoax becomes obvious when closely examined: The *Book of Nhudri* was supposedly written by the Grand High Artificer himself and handed down from generation to generation of apprentices. However, if one looks at the date of the founding of the Guild (simultaneous with or even pre-dating the Pax Romana), one notices that this date also pre-dates the invention of the book by well over a millennium. Either Nhudri was clever enough to invent books a thousand years ahead of the rest of humanity, or the *Book of Nhudri*, theoretically scribed by Nhudri himself, is an elaborate hoax played by elders of the Guild on the younger generation of Artificers. The reality of the matter, to me, seems obvious...

### In the Beginning

It was during the Roman expansion that Nhudri first took apprentices to himself. Even the greatest craftsman the Underworld had ever seen could not keep up with Charon's insatiable demand for soulforged steel. There were always more walls, more towers, more roads and gates that needed to be


hewn from the raw stuff of souls, and though he labored heroically, Nhudri soon realized that his commission was impossible. His solution was to take to himself a trio of apprentices. The three, then known as Aristogeiton, Caius Josephus, and Ravit bat-Yosif, were plucked from the construction gangs by the Lord High Artificer himself.

Nhudri selected his first three apprentices carefully. Each had unmistakable artistic talent, indomitable will, and the utter callousness necessary to condemn souls to an eternity as inanimate objects. But this same callousness worried Nhudri, who feared that his apprentices would become hardened to the plight of all of the souls with which they worked and, unfettered by conscience, feed the gaping maw of the forge too often. Restraint was needed, as was a sense of the tremendous responsibility of soulforging.

It was with all that in mind that Nhudri created out of whole cloth the Soulforge Rites, a combination of mystical theatricality and practical instruction as to the true nature of soulforging. To warn his apprentices (the title did not become a formal one until the 11th century) against taking their work too lightly, he had each of them place their hand over the primal soulfire of his own forge until their Corpus was as soft and malleable as that of any thrall fed to the flames. He then had them, one by one, hammer a small piece of their own flesh into a small coin, which he strung on a chain he had forged himself. Charging them to always remember what it felt like under the hammer, he gave the Three their coins as tokens of their responsibility. By always wearing a piece of their own soulforged Corpus, they would have a constant reminder of the pain they shared with those beneath their hammers.

Nhudri honestly believed that the shared pain of soulforging would serve as sufficient restraint on his apprentices to keep them from wantonly forging others. However, he also saw the day when even four smiths at the forge wouldn't be sufficient and realized that his apprentices would soon be taking apprentices of their own. While he could control his own apprentices, once they took students and those students took students, the situation would rapidly get out of hand. Nor could he afford to spend his time merely babysitting those who had inherited his knowledge; Charon still had great tasks for him that were beyond the capabilities of even the Three.

In the end, Nhudri decided to let his spiritual heirs police themselves. Drawing up a series of responsibilities, required knowledges, and ceremonies, he gave the list to his apprentices as the rules that they and all who followed them must follow. Intended to be a set of professional qualifications and moral restraints, they were quickly given an aura of pseudo-religiosity by the Three, who saw them as a way to ensure the eternal obedience of all of those who followed them.



# Chapter I

1) In the beginning was the hammer in the heart of the darkness, and Nhadri was alone at his forge. 2) Then came Charon, who brought flame with him, and who took Our Lord from darkness into light. Nhadri ascended the Veinous Stair, and dwelt with Charon, forging souls as Charon requested. 3) This pleased Charon greatly, and he taught Nhadri the tongues of men and brought him the souls of men to forge. 4) So Nhadri hammered at his forge, which he named Kygklops, and great was the din that went forth. 5) Black was the smoke that rose, yet from the blackness emerged that which shone. 6) There were the Seven Masks, the great beacon Lamem, the blade Siklos, and from the Seven Masks themselves was Charon's Mask forged. 7) Twice forged it was, and it was a star in the blackness when Charon wore it.

8) But Charon was not satisfied, and as his realm grew he demanded more soul-steel, which we know by its secret name. Day and night Nhadri was at the forge, yet Charon demanded more. 9) The half-forged souls cried out in torment, and Nhadri's hand grew weak on the hammer. 10) And when even Nhadri could forge no more, the hammer fell to the floor. 11) All Stygia trembled at that sound, for it was like unto the ringing of a titan bell that foretold death. 12) Even Charon, away chasing his steeds with the tools that Nhadri had made for him, heard the sound and returned to Stygia.

13) Charon came unto Nhadri, who slept at the forge, and spake unto him, saying, "Wherefore do you sleep and labor not. Have I not set a task before thee? Yet the fire is dim, and the coals are cold, and your hammer lies on the floor." 14) Nhadri awakened and replied, "I can forge no longer. My

hand is weak, yet you call it to the forge again. 15) Have I not crafted Siklos for you, the bridles to hold the horses of death and even your mask? Have I not crafted thy cities and thy roads, and the gates of black steel that open at your command? 16) And you would not marvel at what you have; nay, you would demand only more. 17) More I cannot craft, Charon. Else thou descend into the Labyrinth again and draw forth another smith stronger than I, I can labor no more." 18) Charon was sore troubled at this, and left Nhadri, and called the Senate into council, so that he might partake of their wisdom. 19) They spoke to Charon of the living world, where children were held in fosterage and taught the crafts of their elders. 20) Charon heard their words, and knew that they were good. So he returned to the forge, where Nhadri awaited him.

21) Nhadri had already taken to himself three Apprentices, and they were the Elder Three. 22) He taught the Three the secrets of soalfire and of soul-steel. 23) Lord Nhadri had chosen them, and they were the chosen ones. 24) For he looked within their souls and saw that they had the gift of the hammer and the eye to see forms within form. 25) So Nhadri blessed them, and taught them, and gave unto them the secrets of the Soalforge Rites. 26) He showed them that they must taste the hammer and the flame, ere they give others to the hammer and the flame. 27) And he took what they forged of themselves, placed it on a chain, and said, "Lo, you shall wear this all your days. 28) For even as you forge, you were forged, and this shall remind you that you too have tasted the flame and the hammer." 29) So the Three did as Lord Nhadri said and wore the coins that they forged from their own flesh all their days. 30) And they wear them still.

# Chapter II

1) Nhadri taught the Three, and it was well, and in time he returned to his forge, for there were great tasks that awaited him there. 2) But outside of his forge, the Three took unto themselves Apprentices. 3) And they passed down Lord Nhadri's teachings unto their apprentices, even as they themselves were taught. 4) They taught of the hammer and the flame and of the Soalforge Rites. 5) In time, each of the apprentices of the Three took of themselves to make a coin. 6) Their Master bound that coin on a chain and commanded them to wear it all their days. 7) And so they did, and it was good.

8) The Three took unto themselves new names. 9) Those names were Ferram, Smoke and Macabah, and they were not known by their old names any longer. 10) The Three set to forging as well and created the Treasures of the Guild. 11) They created the Sickle and the Book and the Masks, and Macabah, who was Nhadri's favorite, retrieved from him the Chain. 12) Nhadri gave her the Chain, yet never again did

they speak. 13) For there was corruption in the land. 14) Not from Nhadri's apprentices, not from their apprentices, but from the apprentices beyond, who knew not the craft.

15) They styled themselves as being of the hammer, yet they knew the hammer not. 16) They called themselves children of the flame, yet they knew the flame not. 17) So they forged like children, and their work was like unto the work of infants. 18) Many were the souls that they ruined, and great was the work that came to naught because of their blasphemy. 19) For blasphemy it was, the defiling of the forge and the flame within. 20) And the people cried out to Nhadri for saccor. 21) For seven years they cried out unto him, yet he heeded them not, as he was at the forge.

22) On the first day of the eighth year, he lifted up his ear to the cry of the people, and heard their lamentations. 23) Great was their lamenting, and many were the causes of their sorrow. 24) For their castles had fallen, and their swords had

Nhudri by this time had trained his apprentices and lost interest in them, believing them sufficiently qualified to handle their own affairs. He returned to his own work, leaving the Three to take on new names and set themselves up as the heads of what became the Artificers' Guild.

## The Golden Age

The Three, adopting the somewhat pretentious pseudonyms Ferrum, Smoke, and Macabah, did not wait long to start inducting apprentices of their own. As the Legions marched onward they needed more and more weapons, and more and more smiths were needed to arm the soldiers of the conquering Empire. The Three were happy to oblige, provided that the new smiths were properly trained to respect their elders. The instructions that Nhudri handed down were codified into what came to be known as the *Book of Nhudri* and were slathered with sufficient pomp and ceremony to impress even the most cynical new apprentice. Ferrum forged the Sickle, Macabah retrieved the Chain from Nhudri, and Smoke created the scroll that contained the words of the Book. Smoke also forged the Masks of the Three, polished and featureless soul-steel visages that were invested with a variety of Arcanoi.

It was at this time that the Three came to the more or less simultaneous conclusion that apprentices meant power. They began an almost comical race to induct as many follow-

ers as possible under their respective banners, and a great many underqualified souls were inducted into the Society of the Hammer, as it was then known. What followed was catastrophe. Half-trained, half-talented soulforgers indiscriminately took anyone they could find to their anvils, often botching their smithing and ruining souls to no gain. Weapons were half-forged and screamed in the hands of the men that held them. Buildings tumbled to spectral earth as their supports twisted and writhed under the strain.

Eventually, news of the failures made its way to Nhudri's forge, in which he had barricaded himself for over a hundred years. In a rage, he took his hammer and strode onto the streets of Stygia, looking for those who sullied his craft. They were easy to find.

The Day of Nhudri's Rage, as it has been called, really had little effect on the Guild in terms of numbers. While Nhudri is estimated to have taken somewhere between 40 and 50 of the false Artificers back to his forge, there to be subjected to the torments they had inflicted upon others, by this time the Guild's roster could be numbered over a thousand. The war was more important as it revealed the direction the Guild would take. Many of the incompetent smiths slunk out of the Guild. Others, terrified or shamed into compliance, actually applied themselves to their craft. The quality of smithcraft improved, Nhudri returned to his forge, and the Three had apparently learned their lesson.





been beaten down by their enemies. 25) Their labors were laid waste, and there was desolation in the land. 26) So Nhadri went into the streets and saw there a man, and he said unto the man, "Wherefore dost thou cry out to me for aid? Who has brought this desolation?" 27) The man said, "Thy children's children's children, great Nhadri. They have done this. 28) They have laid waste to my labor and defiled thy work."

29) Nhadri heard this and fell into a rage. So great was his rage that the Gates of Stygia did crack at the sound,

and Charon hid himself within his Citadel for fear. 30) And Nhadri took himself to the false forges and gathered up those who defiled his work. 31) From Stygia to the farthest end of the lands of men did he walk, and not one blasphemer escaped him. 32) The blasphemers were taken to his forge and for their punishment were given to the hammer and flame. 33) This was the Day of Nhadri's Rage, and it was good. 34) For the blaspheming ceased, and those who had defiled the forge were punished.

## Chapter III

1) The Guild was purified, and once again the fires burned brightly in the forges. 2) The labor performed therein was pleasing unto Nhadri, and his blessing was upon the whole Guild. 3) Others came, marveled at the Guild, and asked for the teachings of Nhadri that they might join in the brotherhood of those who stood at the forge. 4) But the Three would not let them join in the worship of smoke and steel, for they were not worthy. 5) So the others went off in search of new teachings, for they were not strong enough or wise enough to bear the teachings of Nhadri. 6) Many found other teachings, and these became the Younger Guilds. 7) The Younger Guilds numbered 12, and they were the seekers of learning who found it in light. 8) And some

found learning in darkness, and these became the Lesser Guilds. 9) But over them all was the Eldest Guild, that which had been given the secrets of smoke and steel.

8) The other Guilds never forgot that they were refused Nhadri's teaching because they were not worthy. 9) Their hearts grew bitter with hatred for the Eldest Guild, and secretly they made war upon us. 10) But because their cause was unworthy, they turned upon each other like dogs, each snapping at its neighbor. 11) For many years did the dogs quarrel, and quarrel with us also, yet Nhadri smiled upon us. 12) For our enemies sued us for peace, and Lo! we were stronger than we had ever been, yet they were weakened by their long years of struggle against the righteous. 13) They sued us for peace,





## The New Guilds

The next few centuries passed relatively slowly. Stygia reinvented itself in feudal form, and the Society followed suit, becoming a Guild. During this period various other Guilds emerged, evolving from the debris of ancient secret societies just as the Artificers rose from the Society of the Hammer. These other organizations ranged from the mystically aloof (The Oracles) to the appallingly common (The Haunters). Several found themselves in the same sort of symbiotic relationship with Stygia that the Artificers had. Guilds like the Mnemoi, the Proctors, the Pardoners, and the Solicitors (known by different names) all provided services to the Empire in exchange for status, power, and wealth. However, as the wealth of the realm still flowed from the forges of the Artificers, there quickly developed an antipathy between the soulforgers and their fellow servants of Stygia. The unofficial conflict, known prosaically as the War of the Guilds, lasted from 1096 to 1354, and while there certainly were never any open hostilities on the streets of the Isle during that time, a great many wraiths found their way to the Void because of the conflict.

Oddly enough, while the entire conflict was sparked by a desire to remove the Artificers from power, it wound up making them stronger. The conflict between Guilds produced a fair number of “accidents” that needed to be disposed of, and the forges were the obvious solution. All of the Guilds wound up indebted to the Artificers (save the bizarre Mnemoi) and no better off than they were before. A cessation of hostilities only made sense, and in 1354 the Compact of Guilds was ratified by the 13 major Guilds. The Mnemoi were excluded from the signing, and neither the Solicitors nor the Alchemists were regarded highly enough to be invited to sign. The other 13 Guilds, however, were party to the agreement, which helped shape the direction Stygia took until the breaking of the Guilds.

Simply put, the Compact called for an end to the conflict among Guilds. A Council of Guilds was to be formed, and this body would adjudicate any disagreements between the Guilds. And the Artificers, as the Eldest Guild, would be granted leadership of the Compact and the Council. It is worth noting that the representative of the Masquers, violently opposed to granting pride of place to the Artificers, disappeared during the negotiations and was replaced by a pro-Artificer candidate who sported a stunning new soul-steel blade.

## The Coup and the Breaking

However the result was achieved, the Council did serve to unify the Guilds as a political force. While they bickered among themselves, the Guilds presented a united face to the rest of Stygia. While they never quite equaled the Deathlords in power or prestige, the leaders of the Guilds towered over

and we granted it to them. 14) And they in their wisdom, which they learned late, granted unto us that which was ours by right as the Eldest. 15) Dominion over the Gailds they offered as for peace, and though we had that Dominion, yet we still granted them peace. 16) For Elders should always be gracious to those younger than themselves; this is the path of wisdom.


18) Lo, all the Gailds gathered under the banner of the hammer and forge, for we as Eldest did lead them. 19) And the Deathlords did bow to their wishes, and Charon did accede, for the children of Nhadri were righteous. But the rabble clamored in the streets. 20) Those who listened to false prophets and those who denied the teachings of Nhadri; their voices were heard in the Iron City, and none rose up to smite the blasphemers. 21) Those who bowed to no man, they entered the city as well and called themselves Renegade, and they stirred up rebellion. 22) In the midst of the clamor, the voices of the Three were heard, and they asked, "Who is the king who will lead us from this discord? For surely the end is nigh, when the rabble and the cursed of the earth do march and shout, and none will silence them." 23) So the Three, who were righteous in the ways of Nhadri, went unto Charon and demanded that he give over his dominion, that one who could silence the rabble might take his place.

## Chapter IV

1) Charon heard the truth in their words, yet he liked it not. 2) So he made to seize them, but there came a great wind that bore them away to the place where they slumber still, until the day the oceans shall drain into the Labyrinth, and Stygia shall be a City on a Hill for all the nations of the world. 3) Then shall they return, and be priests unto Nhadri that the righteous may rule. 4) But Charon was not satisfied that he had caused the Three to vanish, and he desired to banish all of their children as well. 5) So he made a decree, and the decree cast the righteous from Stygia. 6) No more could they come unto the great Gaildhall, no more could they hold the hammer. 7) And Charon made to set blasphemers in their places, to labor at the forges without having performed the sacred Rites. 8) Many did fear Nhadri's wrath that day, and when the unbelievers went to work at the forge, the flames would not heed them. 9) Nor could they work the hammer, for it grew hot in their hands and would not suffer them to touch it. 10) So Charon was shown the error of his ways and called back those who had performed the Rites. 11) Yet in his pride he would not permit the return to the Gaildhall, and he called those who held the Treasures Renegades.

12) And a new Three came forward, and they bore in their arms the Treasures. 13) They took the mantles of those who had come before them and wore them in righteousness and glory. 14) Under them the Rites were observed once more, and the flames danced in gladness. Under them a return to glory was prophesied and a casting out of those who had banished the Guild from Stygia.





the rest of the Stygian population. But change was coming, as Heretic and Renegade unrest grew. Certain Guildmasters, the Three among them, saw the situation as an opportunity to seize power from Charon's obviously loosening grasp. On April 6, 1598, the Guilds, led by the Artificers, attempted a *coup d'etat*. It failed miserably, and while their names do not appear in the list of executions following the uprising, it can be stated with little doubt that the Three were destroyed during the fighting.

Charon, perhaps understandably, decided that entirely too much power was concentrated outside of his hands, and the Guilds provided a focal point for that power. He determined, therefore, to remove that focal point and instituted the decree that banished the Guilds from Stygia.

The Decree of the Breaking is a simple document. It states that the Guilds are outlawed in Stygian lands, that belonging to a Guild is a crime, that the Guilds were by Charon's decree dissolved, and that Legionnaires would be instructed to take the place of the Guild members within Stygian society. Charon's decree was, in its own way, as misguided and preordained to fail as the coup. The Guilds, banished but still very real, hamstrung his efforts to replace them. After a mere 20 years, Charon abandoned the experiment and reinstated "former" Guild members under the condition that they swore on Siklos that they had renounced the Guilds. The fiction that the Guilds were destroyed was maintained, however, and eventually the general populace of Stygia grew to believe it.

During the revolt and banishment, the Guild underwent tremendous upheaval. The Three vanished, to be replaced by a new triumvirate; they did their best to instill the doctrine of the Cult of Nhudri in their constituents. Smiths attached to the Legions were instructed to train their replacements poorly or to sabotage their work. Rumors were spread about unsafe soul-steel, forged by Charon's replacement smiths that took its owner straight into the Labyrinth. Artifice and deception won out. Guild members were reinstated, though officially they were now freewraiths, not Guild members.

This period of upheaval coincided with the beginning of the scientific leaps forward that culminated in the Information Age we dwell in. Nhudri and certain of his spiritual descendants were keeping track of the advancements of mortal mechanics and learned how to duplicate them using Stygian steel. These knowledges he passed out freely to the Artificers, and the creation of Artifacts became a major function of the Guild in society. Furthermore, by creating these Artifacts, wraiths learned their workings well enough to Inhabit them in the realms of the living, and the modern arts of Inhabit began to evolve.

## Years of Secrecy

The official Stygian policy that there were no more Guilds actually worked to the Artificers' benefit. When once the Guild had been seen as a menace, the individual soulforgers and tinkerers were now seen as necessary to maintain society. Hardened Legionnaires who had fought against the Guild during the failed coup sang the praises of their unit's smith, who was one of the guys after all. The Hammerboys, as they became derisively known (despite an increasing female membership), were seen as harmless, as long as one stayed within increasingly harsh Stygian law. The threat of the forge, while never used by actual Hammerboys, was used as a weapon to keep the populace in line. The Artificers themselves were not feared; what they could do was.

Charon's disappearance had less effect on the Guild than one might think. Apparently the Guild leadership felt that testing the leadership of the Deathlords immediately after such a tragic loss would be counterproductive. Indeed, their restraint is almost enough to make one wonder if Charon's propaganda was correct: that the Guild had gone the way of the dodo.

## Computers

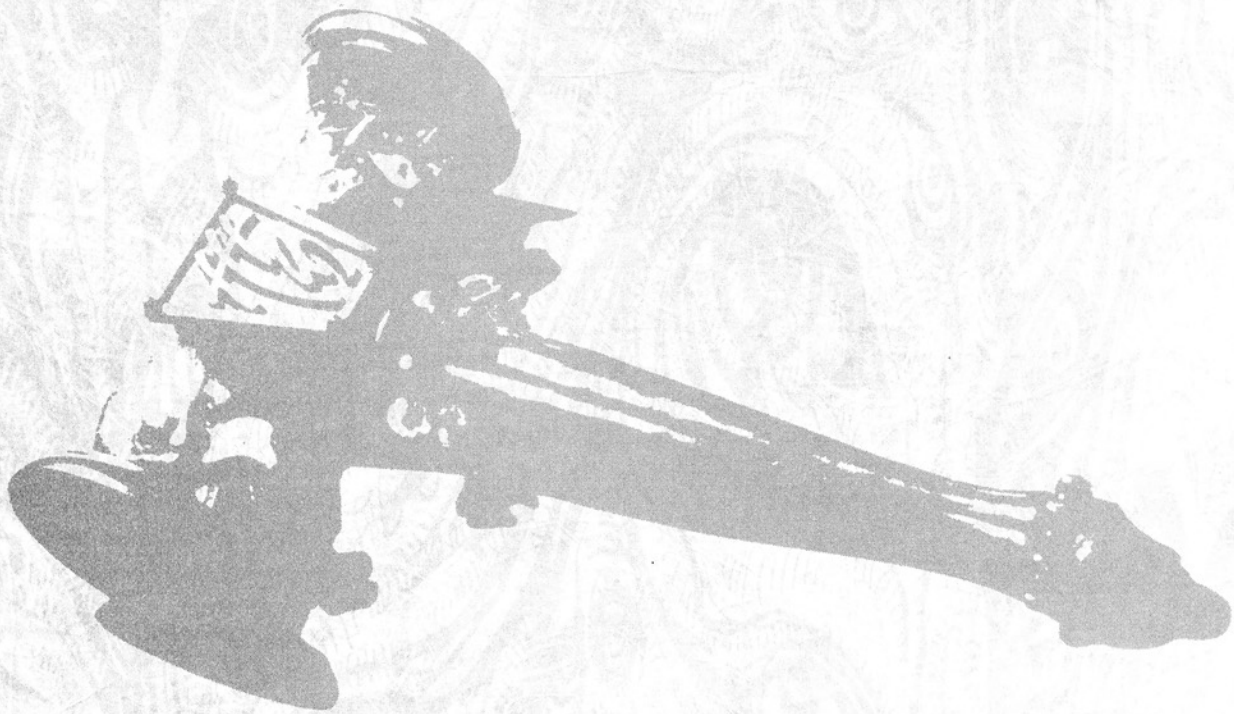
The only recent development in the arts of Artifice concerns electronics and computers. Certain of the arts related to Inhabit (which your author is privileged to know) involve the operation of simple devices. Refinement of these techniques, as well as the entirely new paradigm espoused by the computer generation, allowed the traditional arts to be transplanted to this brave new world of circuits, chips, and electronics. Naturally this caused certain schisms within the Guild, as those who prefer to "surf the net" and those who prefer to hammer souls rarely have much in common.

Of course, much of this is hearsay, as the Guild is more secretive these days. Much of the most recent information with which I have worked comes from the accounts of former Guild members, generally of the computer orientation. According to these escapees from the Guild, the friction between old guard and young turks within the Guild is real, but certainly resolvable. Many of the fugitives claim that the Guild is moving again to reassert itself in Stygia and that they are in mortal danger for having left the Guild. Obviously, one cannot get a statement from the spokesperson for a supposedly mythical organization, but the hints are so tantalizing that we are standing on the verge of a new renaissance on the part of one of Stygia's most venerable and most potent organizations.

# Chapter V

1) Nhadri labored still at his forge, and new wonders were brought unto him. 2) Machines and engines they were called, the labors of mortal men. 3) And Nhadri by his divine grace knew the souls of the machines. All were as toys to his touch, and those who served him saw his power as he crafted the new Artifacts that none of the Restless had seen before. 4) Great was Nhadri's knowledge and his wisdom. 5) So he shared his knowledge, in his wisdom, with those who labored in the forges. 6) For Nhadri had not forgotten his children, though they were banished, and he gave his knowledge unto them. 7) The secrets of forging machines and the paths to their secret hearts; all this he taught us.

8) So we labored in silence and in secrecy, until the Maelstrom came. 9) From the seas came the instrument of vengeance, called Gorool by those who knew not its purpose. 10) It came as a spirit of vengeance and as the staff of the righteous, for it came to smite Charon for his sins against the righteous. 11) Long was their battle, and righteousness triumphed. 12) For Charon slew the beast, yet was slain in turn. 13) And the Deathlords ruled in his stead, and the sons of the forge waited. 14) There shall come a day when we shall return in steel and glory. 15) And Nhadri shall embrace his children, though he forget that we are his. 16) The Three shall awaken, and those who observe the Rites shall be crowned with soul-steel and shall dwell in the light of the flames forever.






Look  
OUT!  
Below!

HEY!

HANG  
LOOSE

OUCH!



# Chapter Three: The Guild Inside and Out

*As the oldest of the Guilds, the Artificers hold a unique place in Stygian society. On one hand, they are the upholders of tradition within the community of freeguilds, and indeed are the most traditional and regimented in their practices and rituals. On the other hand, the Guild's very existence is a calculated act of rebellion against the Hierarchy and the word of Charon, who supposedly "broke" the Artificers centuries ago. It is a fascinating paradox, and one that when examined illuminates several seemingly mysterious aspects of greater Stygian society....*

*From Talking Steel: A History of the Artificers' Guild*

## The Guild's Place

### The Hierarchy



*He Artificers' Guild? Disbanded and broken 400 years ago. Any other stupid questions?*

— Jeanine Clodius, Anacreon of Fate, Milwaukee Necropolis

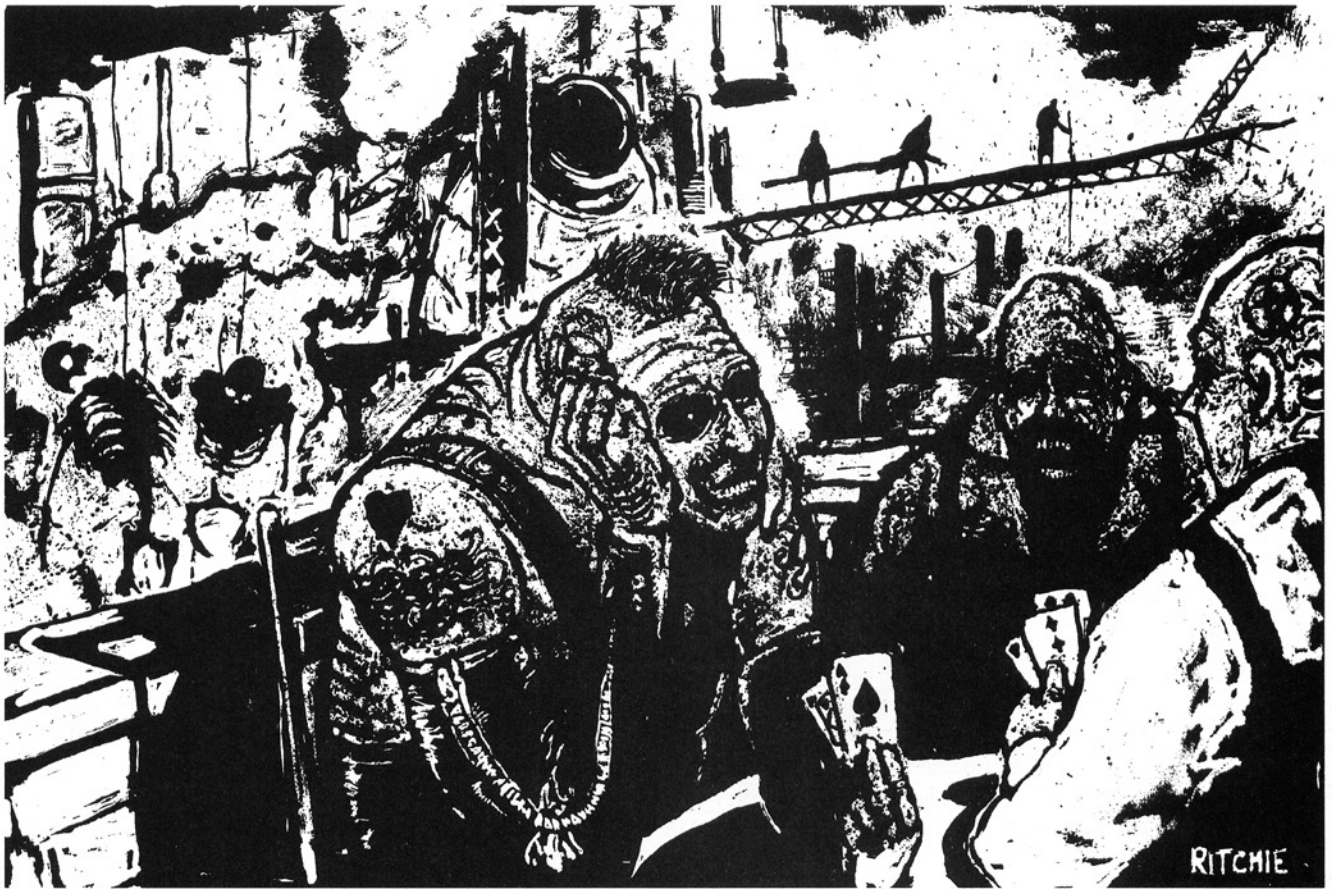
*They may have their heads up their butts, but they're disciplined about it. Gotta admire that discipline.*

— Howard Desmond, Journeyman, 13th Division, Emerald Legion

Not everyone in Hierarchy territory is a member of a Guild, and most wraiths in Stygian lands are firmly convinced that the Guilds don't exist. This makes life easier for members of the Artificers' Guild, as they maintain their exclusive

status while preventing their activities from being examined too closely by neighbors on the lookout for the banned Guilds. It is tolerated and even expected in Charon's empire that Stygian citizens should know an Arcanos or three, and mere knowledge of a Guild's specialty is no longer considered sufficient evidence to convict a wraith of Guild membership. After all, the Guilds were banished, and belonging to one technically makes one a Renegade. As only thralls, criminals and Spectres are eligible to be forged, there remains the ironic possibility that an Artificer may be arrested for his Guild membership and promptly be melted down by a fellow Artificer.

Inhabit is one of the more perilous Arcanoi to know in Stygia. It lends itself to interfering with the living in obvious ways, particularly in the computer age. Most Artificers keep their Inhabit abilities under wraps and display only their talent for soulforging. The various Deathlords, as well as the monolithic bureaucracy of the Hierarchy, consider it wise to keep a few Inhabit experts on staff for purposes of pirating data from systems, but for the most part, Artificers in Hierarchy territory keep their heads down. Many are attached to



Legions as weaponsmiths and as such enjoy a limited immunity in case they are caught practicing the dreaded Arcanos Inhabit. However, a Stygian Artificer who talks too openly of the Guild will either be arrested by the authorities or silenced by Guild elders.

The opinion held by most of the Deathlords' subjects is that the Guilds are history, not current events. It is less likely that the Deathlords themselves are fooled, but for now they seem content to let the fiction that Charon's ruling was enforced stand unquestioned. As for the soulforgers in the Legions, they are seen as an integral part of the Stygian military-industrial complex, and they are actively encouraged to recruit others so that the supply of soulsmiths remains high. Undue familiarity or secretiveness between soulforgers is generally taken as a professional matter by most in the Stygian military and is rarely questioned.

## The Renegades

*The Artificers' Guild? I dunno. Claudia here does most of our soulforging, and she's never said anything about a Guild. She's cool, though. You want to ask her? No? That's cool.*

— Joel Glass, voting member, Northampton Autonomous Souls Collective


*They're certainly more energetic than the Hierarchy. However, they're also more chaotic, and only a properly ordered society can hope to stand against Oblivion.*

— Chauncey Tinker, Forgemaster, Leicester Necropolis

The Renegades present a thorny problem for the Artificers' Guild. Technically, the entire Guild from the top down is a Renegade organization, for by merely existing the Guild defies the will of Charon. On the other hand, the Guild is an organization structured firmly around tradition and hierarchical structure. It seeks to place itself in power in Stygia, not to tear Stygian power down.

Artificers affiliated with Renegade bands tend to be a bit looser about flaunting their abilities. Indeed, most Renegade groups actively encourage the use of Inhabit, as computer savvy is one of their few areas of clear-cut advantage over the Hierarchy. The problem most Renegade Artificers face is that they are under constant pressure to teach their skills to other, non-Guild rebels. As the Guild elders are noticeably intolerant of Guild arts being taught to outsiders, this often leaves Renegade Artificers between a rock and a hard place.

Of more concern are non-Guild wraiths who teach Inhabit or soulforging. Many ex-Guild members and wraiths with Guild skills but no Guild affiliation seek cover with Renegade groups. The Guild seems inclined to let some of



these go, but those who have been taught Ancient Arts or who teach Inhabit and soulforging are certain targets for Guild retribution if they are discovered. A sizable percentage of the Artificers in Renegade encampments are not there out of any sympathy for the Renegade cause, but to keep an eye out for any runaway Artificers that the Guild wants put down.

## The Heretics

*They were blasphemers, praising Nhudri before God, and Charon was the instrument of God's vengeance upon them. He cast them out, he did, and they shall never be heard from again, save in the days just before the end of the world, when all manner of foul thing shall crawl up from the deeps.*

— Deacon Kenneth Droom, First Church of Jesus Christ, Wraith

*A charming bunch, really. A bunch of religious fanatics at each others' throats so often that the Spectres make popcorn and watch. On the bright side, they'd probably make good patio furniture.*

— Thora Eimundsdottir, Apprentice, Reykjavik Necropolis

Heretics tend either to be unaware of the Guild's existence or to see it as a vanished secular organization. A few Heretic leaders have learned enough about the Soulforge Rites and other Artificer practices to regard the Guild as a particularly nefarious form of competition, and they look upon the breaking of the Guilds as divine retribution for the Artificers' obvious blasphemy.

Most Heretic leaders give precisely zero thought to the question of the Guilds. Those who do ponder the problem, however, are among the most dogged and persistent pursuers the Guild has. Several Heretic cults have more knowledge about the Guild and its actual agenda than any of the Guild elders would have dreamed possible. Fortunately for the Guild, that information is in the hands of Heretics, whom nobody believes anyway.

## The Other Guilds

*It's really difficult to form a trusting relationship with someone who's always staring at you with this look of — no other way to put it — appraisal in their eyes. On the other hand, they tend to have absolutely marvelous senses of rhythm. Must have something to do with the hammers.*

— Roger Reynard, Initiate, Chanteurs' Guild

The Artificers' relationship with the other Guilds is colored by the fact that the Artificers are the oldest Guild; therefore they claim certain privileges for themselves. Nor are they shy about reminding others that that their Guild predates any of the others, and the constant reminders wear on the nerves of Guilds like the Spooks, Haunters, and Usurers.

Admittedly it is primarily the older wraiths of the Guild who harp on this supposed superiority, but fairly or unfairly the entire Guild has been tarred with the brush of arrogance.

*Their ambition is naked and raw, and by overreaching themselves they will bring destruction upon us all. It has already been written.*

— Hermia Matsoukis, Oracle of Athens

Another difficulty in matters between the Artificers and other Guilds is the fact that there is a very real fear of the Hammerboys in most other wraiths, many of whom were threatened with the forge if they so much as breathed a bad word about a Deathlord. While such threats aren't quite as effective among avowed rebels like the other Guilds, the knowledge that the Artificer you're plotting with today could be hammering you into a washtub tomorrow without blinking an eye certainly puts a damper on any potential for friendly socializing.

Of all of the younger Guilds, it is probably the Pardoners that the Artificers respect most. The two Guilds are in a similar position, being purveyors of something that Stygia cannot do without. As such, they share a unique perspective on the Hierarchy, one that less "essential" Guilds such as the Sandmen and Puppeteers lack. The Harbingers also garner respect from the Artificers, as do the Oracles. However, the Oracular predilection for intoning doom-laden prophecies in response to any plan an Artificer hatches does not bring the two Guilds closer together.

*The younger Guilds take their direction from us. We have a duty and an obligation to lead them back out of banishment into our rightful places in Stygia. Fortunately, so far they seem to be listening to us.*

— Masterforger Brigid Noonan, Artificers' Guild


## The Artificers and the Alchemists

*It's like dealing with your parents. They start you out, they give you everything you need, and they do their best to protect you. Eventually, though, they end up bugging the hell out of you and it's time to move on. That's what it was like with the Artificers. They were bugging the hell out of us. So we moved on.*

— Vladimir Kruglyak, Journeyman Alchemist

The Alchemists, offshoots of the Artificers, occupy an ambiguous place in the councils of the Guild. On the one hand, many of the elder smiths can never forgive the so-called betrayal of the Alchemists, and many of the Cult of Nhudri fanatics want nothing to do with anyone who abandoned the sacred way. On the other hand, when the Guilds were putatively equal under Charon there was much cooperation between the two in the research of new arts. Furthermore, when the Guilds were driven from Stygia, many of the Alchemists were sheltered by Artificers with political connections. Clearly, some affection and some affinity remains, though the Alchemists are





not considered socially equal to the Thirteen original Guilds. Still, one gets the definite impression that most Artificers would rather talk to an Alchemist than a Spook or a Haunter.

## Guild Structure and Ritual

*Now that I'm dead, I can finally make a living.*

— French, Frith, Kaiser, and Thompson, "Now That I Am Dead"

### The Hierarchy of the Guild

**W**hile the Artificers' Guild predates the medieval craft organizations that eventually lent the organization its name, the structure of the Guild has evolved to reflect that of an artisans' society. It has not evolved past that point, however, because there is an undeniably feudal strain to its construction, with more powerful wraiths protecting younger ones in exchange for loyalty. Elders of the Guild are very protective of their Apprentices and Journeymen, at least until they become skilled enough to challenge the elders for power. Still, there is an undeniable community to the Artificers'

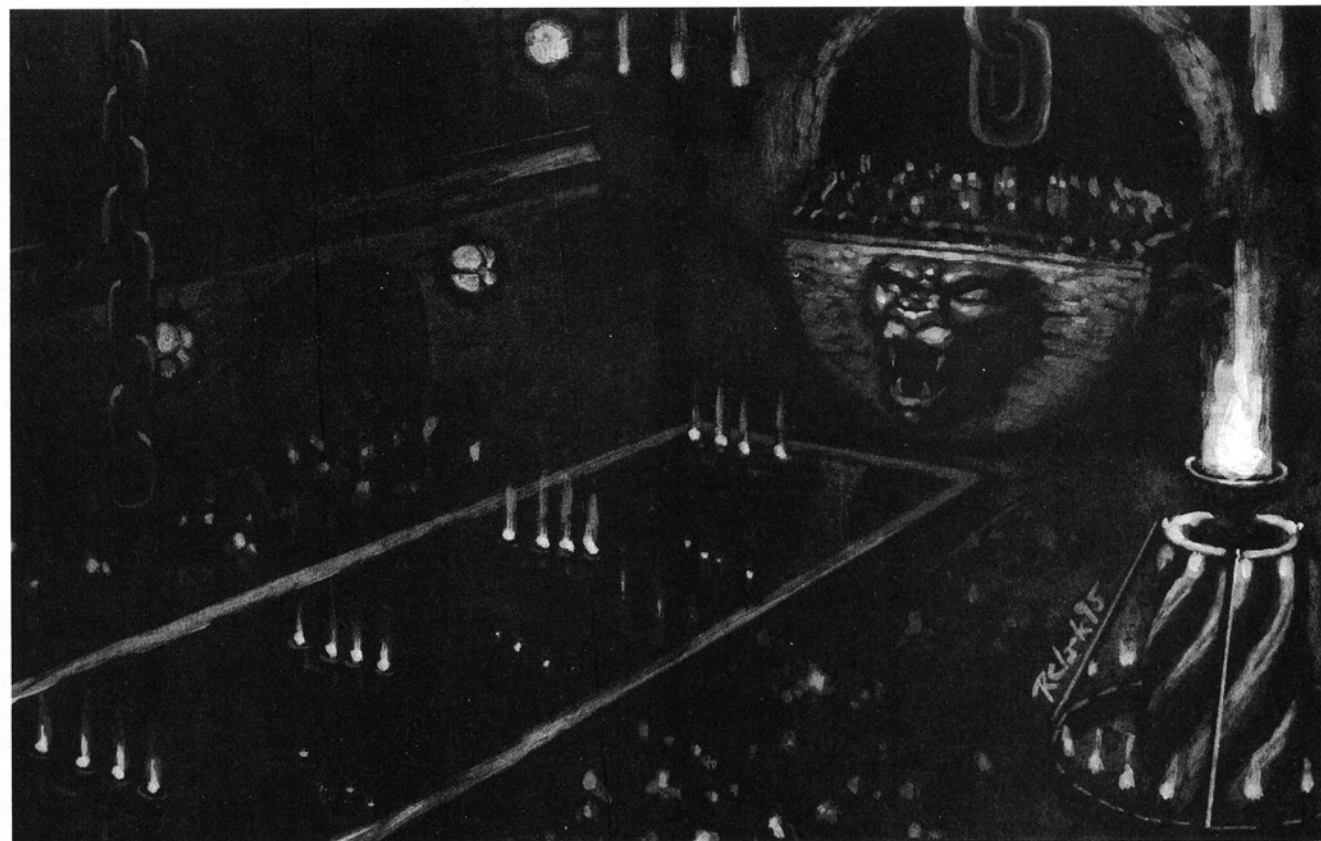
Guild, and Guild loyalty easily transcends any other. The shared bond of the Soulforge Rites supersedes any oath of loyalty to God, country, or Stygia.

### The Three Ancients

The *Book of Nhudri* claims that the first Artificer took to himself three apprentices, who formed what eventually became the Guild. While the names of the Three are recorded in the *Book of Nhudri*, there is no record of their having been destroyed or succumbed to Oblivion, and they have not made an appearance since the breaking of the Guild. It has been openly speculated that Charon took the opportunity of the breaking to destroy these three potent beings who had sworn fealty not to him, but to Nhudri. There is no proof to back up this wild speculation, but neither is there any evidence to contradict it.

### The Second Three

With the Three Ancients vanished, the Guild structure quickly replaced them. The positions of Master of Apprentices, Keeper of the Chain, and Guardian of the Forge, all of which had been important enough positions beforehand, assumed new importance. It is these three who make the final decisions as to the Guild's directions, though the fiction of a "Guildmaster" is maintained to keep others guessing.





The Master of Apprentices is in charge of directing the training each new Artificer receives, and while it is impossible for Lord Ember to see to each new arrival personally, he dictates the course of study for every Apprentice. The Keeper of the Chain, Lady Alais Capet, holds all of the ritual items of the Guild and steers the course of the Cult of Nhudri. Hugh Gannon, the Guardian of the Forge, is the master of soulfire and supposedly can look into any forge anywhere by staring into the flames in his own workshop. These three, or their duly appointed representatives, also perform the initiation for each of the new Apprentices. While the Council of Masters has certain advisory powers and commands absolute obedience from the Journeymen, the true power rests with these three.

## The Council of Masters

Forgemasters or Masterforgers (the titles are interchangeable) are the most highly skilled and potent Artificers, save only Nhudri and the Threes. Many are scattered with Legions or in Necropoli the world over, serving to oversee all of the lesser Artificers in their jurisdictions. The others, primarily those who dwell on the Isle of Sorrows, form the Council of Masters.

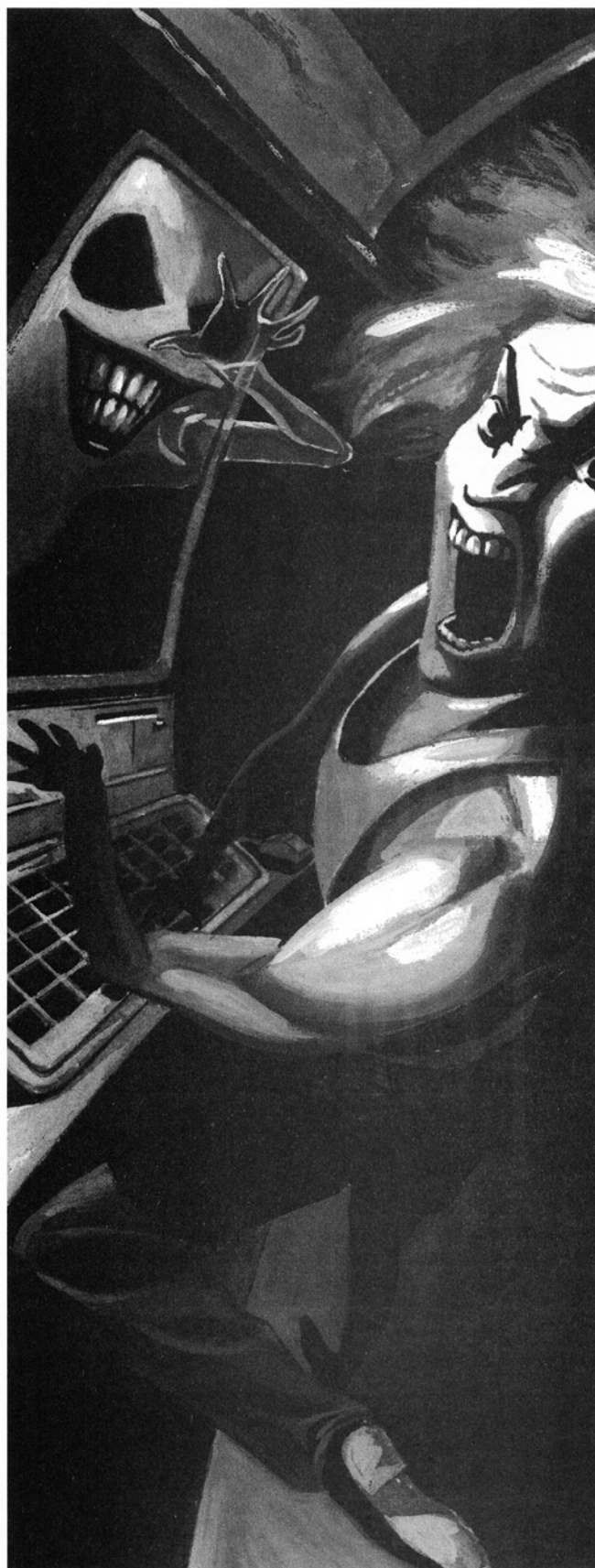
The Council is actually open to all Master-class Artificers, but only those who dwell in the City attend on a regular basis. While it holds no real power over the direction of the Guild itself, it controls the fates and assignments of the Jour-

neymen of the Guild. Furthermore, the Council makes those executive decisions that keep the Guild functioning on a daily basis. All promotions from Apprentice and Journeyman ranks are decided here, and the death sentences of those who flee the Guild are also ratified by the Council.

At present there are 37 Masterforgers who regularly sit on the Council, though several hundred others are eligible (and often show up when matters that affect the Guild as a whole are discussed). Full Council meetings tend to attract the attention of the Three and are exercises in controlled chaos. Many of the Masterforgers of the Guild are older than at least one of the Three and aren't shy about expressing their displeasure at certain policy decisions.

## Journeymen

Journeymen (the term covers both genders, as well as those wraiths who have Moliated themselves into something asexual) are those Artificers who have passed through the Soulforge Rites, served their Apprenticeships, and been deemed worthy of their own forges. Artificers who specialize in computer or electronic work often find it more difficult to reach Journeyman status and almost impossible to ascend to Masterforger. This prejudice on the part of the older wraiths is starting to fade, but it is still a very real phenomenon. Journeymen are often attached to smaller Necropoli, military



units, and intelligence-gathering services. A Journeyman will also often have one to three Apprentices at various stages in their training in his care. A great deal of a wraith's status within the Guild is determined by how many of his Apprentices complete the Soulforge Rites. A new Apprentice who performs her Rites stoically and efficiently is a credit to her teacher (called a Master or Mistress by the Apprentice only), while one who cries out or botches the ritual can bring disgrace on a wraith for centuries.

## Apprentices

Apprentices are those Artificers who have not yet been awarded their own forges. As the granting of the forge is largely ceremonial and takes place immediately after the Soulforge Rites, Apprentices are essentially those Artificers who have not yet gone through the Rites. The education of an Apprentice is slanted somewhat by the experience of her teacher, which means that more and more young Artificers are being trained in the computer arts as more and more users of those arts become Journeymen and take on Apprentices.

Apprentices are at the beck and call of their teachers, and pity any Apprentice who falls into the hands of a teacher who intends to take full advantage of his privileges. Apprenticeship can take anywhere from 1 to 50 years, though the latter is extremely rare. The average is three to five, but this is diminishing as less and less emphasis is put on the back-breaking labor of preparing a forge and more and more emphasis is put on electronic communication and computers.

Just as teachers are territorial about their students, Apprentices are possessive of their teachers. Wraiths who shared the same teacher will usually be willing to extend each other favors. This holds true even if one is a Master and the other is a rank Apprentice. Loyalty to a teacher and the Guild runs deep.

## Those Outside the Guild

There are a great many wraiths outside of the Artificers' Guild who have knowledge of, practice, or teach the Inhabit Arcanos. Most do so on a very small scale and keep their activities to themselves. Indeed, many wraiths come to the Shadowlands with an innate knowledge of Inhabit, and were the Guild to attempt to claim or destroy all of these souls, many Necropoli would become figurative, rather than literal ghost towns.

It is the blatant few, the Renegades who hack systems without going through proper channels, the wraiths who set up unauthorized soulforges and take apprentices without Guild approval; these are the cancers that the Guild actively seeks to excise. Many are actually offered the chance to join the

Guild; those who accept “disappear” into its ranks. This serves the twofold purpose of ending unauthorized activities and spreading the legend of the Guild’s wrath among those who are in the know. A Renegade who accepts the Guild’s offer of amnesty may find herself moved from Detroit to Dallas, but as far as the other local freelance soulforgers are concerned, she just disappeared. Of course, the Guild often seeks to destroy those wraiths who are contacted but refuse the offer of membership. Usually, the Guild is successful.

There is no mercy, however, for the wraiths who were members of the Guild but who turned their back on it. Apprentices are often let go, as they have not yet learned anything that would warrant the effort of tracking them down. Journeymen and above, however, especially those who have learned Ancient Arts, invoke a response that is frightening in its intensity. The Guild has eyes everywhere, from the Legions to the Renegade camps, and can offer great wealth to those who help it. After all, what’s another few oboli to the men who own the mint? Bribes of Artifacts and oboli are usually sufficient inducement to get the staunchest ally to turn in an ex-Artificer on the run.

## The Cult of Nhudri

The Cult of Nhudri does not officially exist. It is not recognized, either inside or out of the Guild, and if Nhudri himself were aware of its existence, he would be appalled. However, there persist within the Guild those who see truth in the Soulforge Rites and the associated writings and who insist that Lord Nhudri is a sort of divine being.

The actual number of Guild members who are Cult of Nhudri fanatics is relatively small. Most Artificers are affected to some degree by the sheer power of their initiation ceremony, and certainly there is something potent in the notion of a ritual that has been handed down over two millennia. However, very few actually accept the words of the initiation ceremony as gospel. These few tend to be extremely vocal within the Guild, and very closemouthed outside of it. Most non-Nhudrite Artificers have found that it’s not worth their while to argue with a Cultist, so while internal Guild discussions do take on a decidedly Cultist tone, that isn’t quite an accurate representation of the actual mood of the room.

There are few known rituals that are unique to the Cultists, as opposed to being performed by all Guild members. Perhaps the most noticeable is the Riteday ceremony, which all Cultists regard as sacred. Once a year, on the anniversary of her initiation, a Cultist will take off the coin she forged during her Soulforge Rites and once again place it over the flames. Most Artificers never remove their token, let alone return it





to the fire for even a brief time. Cultist Artificers can be identified by their blackened and burned tokens, so unlike the silver-gray of those of all other Artificers. Then again, non-Guild members almost never see the tokens in the first place.

It is hardly surprising that Cultists are among the most militant of the Artificers, particularly as regarding punishments for ex-Guild members. Any act counter to the well-being of the Guild is counter to the word of Nhudri, they believe, and any action counter to the word of Nhudri is blasphemy. Cultists also tend to make very productive soulsmiths.

## Nhudri

While Nhudri bears the title Grand High Artificer, he steadfastly maintains that it was not his idea. For over a thousand years, his day-to-day interaction with the Guild has been minimal. Apart from sharing new techniques for manufacturing Artifacts with Artificers he deems worthy of his attention, Nhudri's active impact on the Guild has been infinitesimal since the day he forged the false smiths. Nevertheless, Nhudri stands as a symbol of all that is good about Artifice and soulforging to the Stygian public. The Guild hides, with his tacit assent, in the shadows cast by the goodwill the citizenry has for him.

During the past two centuries, Nhudri has once again begun to take apprentices. Nhudri deliberately keeps these new students from enrolling in the Guild, which frustrates Ember to no end. However, no matter how many secrets any of Nhudri's apprentices share with the general public, the Guild absolutely will not move against them. Even those who don't hold Nhudri in religious awe have a healthy respect for his power and rage.

## The World of Darkness



raiths in general tend not to have much to do with the rest of the World of Darkness, though they interact far more than many of their fellow supernatural denizens might think. Artificers, because of their proclivity for computers and machinery, come into a great deal of contact with Kindred, Garou, and others who ride the Webs and Nets of the world. However, that doesn't mean Guild members don't like to have fun with the rest of the Awakened population as well.

## Vampires

The only ones to watch out for are the ones with the bad Italian accents. The rest of them wouldn't know a ghost from goulash. Some of them have tried to climb onto the nets recently; they're either crazy, incompetent or both.

— April Riordan, Apprentice

## Garou

Be afraid. Be very, very afraid. The ones who use tech we can fiddle with, but they have the best defenses against the arts of anyone out there. Pretty much, they're the only ones who realize that there are ghosts in the machines, and they want us out.

— Derek Pierce, Journeyman attached to the Skeletal Legion, 3rd Division

## Mages

There's an entire group of these idiots who rely on computers but don't have that many defenses against us. Mind you, the Shroud tends to be tough in places like that, but once you're in, you're in like flint. It is sheer joy seeing the look on one of these idiots' faces when you take his hard drive and turn it into gumbo.

There are a few clueful ones, but give them respect and everything will be fine. The only ones to worry about are the mad scientists — get trapped in one of their systems and you may not make it out. Around these guys, the laws of physics are really more polite suggestions. Stay out of their machines; you never know what you're getting into.

— Jennifer Tobin, Nomad of the nets and Renegade hacker

## Changelings

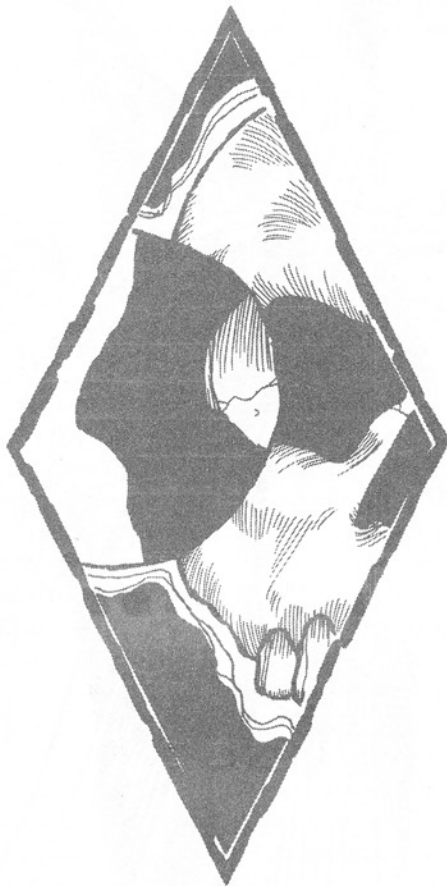
They have nothing to offer us; we really can't do too much to them. You'll be amazed at how easy it is to ignore them; they spend more time talking to Monitors and Chanteurs, anyway.

— Lisette Beltre, Journeyman

## Spectres

Show no mercy. They are fodder for the forge, and their evil taints even the steel of their bodies. Purify them in the flames; it is a duty to do so.

— Sir Edmund Wilkes-Smythe, Masterforger of the Grim Legion







# Chapter Four: Putting the Hammer Down

*They talk of me going around and buying souls, like a fishwife come market day, never stopping to ask themselves why. I need no souls. And how can anyone own a soul?*  
— Neil Gaiman, *Season of Mists*

## Soulforging



Soulforging lies at the heart of the Artificers' Guild. Before the Inhabit Arcanos and the Guild itself, there was the sacred ritual of taking the soul of a human being and turning it into a senseless, inanimate thing. It is a moment of supreme power for the smith, of prime importance for

those who rely on the smith's output, and of supreme agony for the victim of the Artificer's ministrations.

## That Delicate Moral Question

There is something inescapably repugnant about the forging of souls into objects. It is the worst sort of slavery to which one can reduce a fellow human being; a dehumanizing brutality with profound effects on both forger and forged. Many

Artificers find they cannot stomach their work in the forge and either leave the Guild or transfer to other, less viscerally disturbing lines of work. What possible moral justification could there be for such a dehumanizing profession? On too many, the lesson of the Soulforge Rites is lost.

The sad truth is that for many Hammerboys, there is no justification, or even any attempt at one. Hardened to the uncertain nature of existence in the Underworld, they approach their task as just that; a task that needs to be done, requiring some very odd materials to be done properly. They close their ears to the screams and tell themselves that if they didn't do this, someone else would. Such smiths are usually merciful, if such a word can be applied, and labor as quickly as possible to minimize the pain of their victims.

Other, truly despicable souls actually enjoy the torment they put others through. The moment at which a consciousness is obliterated once and for all is a powerful narcotic for certain personalities, who will come to the forge as often as they can in search of their fix. Many of the most and least efficient soulforgers are of this sort. The former seek the mo-







ment as often as possible and thus work souls through as quickly as they can so they can get to their next victim; the latter simply take their time.

However, there are some good and noble souls, from Nhudri on down, who labor in the forges and yet are neither callous nor sadistic. It is their belief, or in some cases their hope, that they are actually doing the souls in their care a favor by hammering them into obliviousness. While the belief has never formally been codified, it can be summed up as follows: soulforging purifies a soul by literally burning out its Shadow. The selfish Shadow cannot endure time over the flames and flees to Oblivion rather than suffer. While the remaining soul is doomed to a term as an inanimate object, there is hope even for these. It has been noted by many wraiths that even soulforged Artifacts tend to break down after a few centuries, leading to speculation on a sort of soul "half-life." Many Artificers have embraced the notion wholeheartedly and claim that the souls that they hammer, once they have broken down completely in a century or three, can go unencumbered by their Shadows straight to Transcendence.

Many other wraiths, particularly those who have been threatened with the forge, view this belief as pollyanna-ish hogwash, but in one form or another it has endured through the centuries. Furthermore, even the most robust cynic cannot help occasionally hoping that it's true.

## Process and System

Soulforging is a delicate and dangerous process, and the wraith who attempts it without proper preparation and skill can lose a great deal more than just valuable raw materials. After all, soulsmiths are hammering the souls of human beings, and the slightest bit of pleasure taken in this activity can open the door for a wraith's Shadow to seize control of them.

To forge a soul into something useful, a smith starts with soulfire (see **Wraith: The Oblivion** for more details on soulfire) and a pair of tongs. The Corpus of the wraith intended for forging is held over, not in, the flames of pure Pathos until his outlines begin to sag and melt. Corpus that is held in the flames, while still workable, suffers Corpus damage and thus can be lost to a Harrowing. Corpus held over the flames softens and becomes malleable, but at no risk of dissolution.

When the Corpus has softened enough to be easily malleable, it is placed on the soulforger's anvil and hammered with a specially made instrument of Stygian steel. Ordinary soul-steel cannot withstand the heat necessary to melt a Corpus, so the more potent metal must be used. The unfortunate wraith is then pounded into shape, reheated as many times as necessary until the Corpus has assumed its final form. It is during this procedure that any additives, such as "death ore"

or raw Oblivion, are hammered into the mix. Often these materials also need to be heated over the Pathos flames, though this can be dangerous in the case of raw Oblivion. Material scraped from the wall of the Labyrinth acts unpredictably in the heat of Pathos. It can explode, melt, evaporate, or achieve a sort of disturbing animation and attempt to crawl away from the searing flames. "Death ore" is sedate in comparison.

At this point, the newly forged object is plunged into a bucket of liquid plasm, which cools and hardens it instantly. Soulforged items that are not cooled in plasm are brittle and often break, which is why most independent smiths produce work inferior to that of Guild smiths; they're simply unaware of the secret.

**System:** To work with souls in the forge requires a series of rolls. The initial roll, Perception + Empathy (difficulty 7) determines whether the smith can see a potential end product within the Corpus she is working. If the roll is failed, the Corpus must be set aside and another one used, as the smith simply won't be able to do anything with that one.

Once a soulforger has determined that there is something salvageable within the Corpus, she makes an extended series of Dexterity + Soulforging rolls (See Chapter Five). The difficulty of the roll is the Stamina of the wraith being forged, while the number of successes necessary depends on the type of object being soulforged. A simple bar or wheel requires 2 successes, while a wheel mounting for an Artifact locomotive would require as many as 10. A single botch during the forging process necessitates starting the contest again. Once three botches have been accumulated while working on a single soul, the smith must discard that soul temporarily. Additionally, being forced to discard a soul that has already been worked on gives the smith a temporary Angst point. Wraiths without the Soulforging skill can substitute Crafts, but the difficulty of the actual forging roll will be increased by one.

## Stygian Steel (and the cheap stuff)

There are a variety of materials that can be worked with soulfire. The two most common are pure plasm, sometimes called soul-steel, and Stygian steel. The former is the pure soul essence of human beings, heated and hammered. Oboli are made from soul-steel, as are most of the weapons of the Legions and many of the buildings and bridges of the City of Chains. Most Artificers can only forge soul-steel, but this material serves their purposes.

Stygian Steel is something else again. An alloy of souls, the "death ore" that makes up the islands in the Tempest, and the raw stuff of Oblivion scraped from the walls of the Labyrinth, Stygian steel cuts through soul-steel with hardly a hitch, and as such Stygian steel weapons are coveted by





Deathlords and the other mighty of Stygia. It is rare that an Artificer below Forgemaster rank is capable of working with Stygian steel, and anyone without the requisite skill (at least four points in Soulforging) who attempts to work with the raw Oblivion necessary will inevitably destroy all of the materials with which he's working.

Between these two extremes lies an alloy of "death ore" and souls that is marginally tougher and stronger than soul-steel. Sometimes called Necropolis steel, it takes longer to work than plain soul-steel. Many soulforgers don't consider the extra effort worth it.

## End Product

There is a relatively simple ratio between souls forged and product produced. Every object produced up to the size of a human being requires a single soul, though complex Artifacts with multiple parts are often considered a single item. Every weapon, whether it be sword, dagger, mace, or spear, is made from a single soul. Soul matter compresses and attenuates in odd ways, but in almost all cases the ratio is one soul per object.

Girders and other large objects sometimes require that multiple souls be forged into them. Cases like these require great delicacy on the part of the smith, who must convince, using soulfire and hammer, two or more souls that they are in fact one. If this blending of souls is successful, a seamless mass that can then be forged is produced. Failure ruins all of the souls involved.

## Oboli

*We'll buy you and we'll sell you  
But perhaps we'll save your skin*  
— Marillion, "The Hollow Man"

At the heart of the Stygian economy rests the lowly obolus, a coin forged from souls. Oboli are frequently known to mutter or moan, causing more sensitive wraiths to refrain from carrying them. However, as oboli are the most common form of portable wealth in Stygian lands, it is rare to find a soul who will not deal with them. Often oboli will be split into slivers to serve as "change"; this is done because of the impossibility of creating coins of smaller or larger denominations out of souls.

Oboli are valuable both as coinage and because they are the easiest way to transport forge-ready souls. Oboli are very easy to work with as raw materials and can be smelted down readily into other forms without the difficulties usually attendant upon reworking souls.

Each obolus contains precisely one soul, setting up an eternal, unwavering exchange rate for goods and services. It is for this reason that there is only one denomination of coin: any coin forged would take the same amount of soul-matter no matter how much it was supposedly worth.



An obolus is approximately four inches across and has a dull gray sheen much like pewter or gunmetal. On one side is a portrait of Charon's Mask, on the other a representation of the Great Seal of Stygia. The edge of both sides is decorated with geometric patterns, and small skulls rest at the cardinal points. On one side is a legend in Greek; translated it reads "High Court of Stygia." Any obolus is instantly recognizable as such, and there is remarkable similarity from coin to coin, considering how many forges they flow from.

Recognizing the impossibility of trying to control the obolus-based economy, the Hierarchy allows any authorized smith to make oboli so long as 20% of their output goes directly to the Isle as tithe. The Hierarchy's real control is in the souls handed over to the smiths to be made into oboli; a soul forger out of favor in Stygia can find himself with a license to create oboli but no raw materials. In Legion camps there is a very careful reckoning of how many souls go to the forge earmarked for oboli, as opposed to how many come out as coins, but in other places it is easier for a smith to set aside a few coins for himself. Renegade smiths do a booming trade in "counterfeit" coins, but as the obolus' real value is in its raw materials, the notion of counterfeiting one is somewhat dubious.

## Chains

Contrary to popular belief, the Deathlords of Stygia do not produce the city's fabled chains by seating themselves upon their bathroom thrones. This is propaganda, as ludicrous and inaccurate as the notion espoused by Japanese tacticians during World War II that American soldiers would crumble upon hearing the phrase "To hell with Babe Ruth!" Rather, chains are painstakingly and slowly forged link by link from souls. Relatively few soulforgers know the secret of making chains from souls, and those who discover the secret often find themselves turning chain out day and night.

Chain is one of the few exceptions to the "one soul, one item" rule. Each soul hammered into chain will provide one foot of chain for every 10 pounds she weighed in life, and a pair of manacles.

Stygian chain can also be imbued with a unique property. When Empowered with the Arcanos Argos, Stygian chains or manacles actually prevent the wraith upon which they are fixed from using that Arcanos to escape. Such chains are fastened on valuable Artifacts or dangerous prisoners to prevent their theft or escape, respectively.

## Forge to Net



It has been asked how on earth the Artificers went from forging souls to hacking security systems. The answer lies within the soulforging process itself. At the beginning of each attempted soulforging, the Artificer reaches out with her perceptions, attempting to "feel" the patterns and grains within their materials. It was the same "reaching out" technique that first allowed Artificers to Inhabit machines. Wraiths projected their consciousness outward into the machines they worked with, and by searching for those same patterns and stresses within the Inhabited machines, they were able to send their entire consciousness inside.

Of course, thought (and therefore consciousness, according to some schools) is composed entirely of electrical energy, and when circuits and transistors appeared on the scene, they provided remarkable pathways for Artificers to project their consciousness onto. With the advent of telecommunications networks and circuit boards, the paths became even more streamlined, and many wraiths found it easier to work with the newer contraptions than with the old ones. From traipsing along the electronic pathways it was a short step to meddling with them, and from there, making them do things they were never meant to do.





F. HARPER '95'



# Chapter Five: Ways and Means

*Looking down on the smoke and the factories  
Until the truth leaks up unseen  
They see themselves in the faces of their children  
And realize they too are part of the machine*  
— Jethro Tull, “Part of the Machine”

## Inhabit




The Inhabit Arcanos as it is currently configured in **Wraith: The Oblivion** is only the most recent manifestation of the ancient skills of the Artificers. Admittedly, it is the one that most younger wraiths wish to learn; a generation raised on ATMs and the Internet has little use for a talent that tells them where a blade will break or allows them to manipulate a row of cuckoo clocks. So it is the uses of Inhabit that scramble data and possess vacuum cleaners that the teachers, particularly those outside of the Guild, hand down to eager students.

However, there are other and older uses of Inhabit, many of which still apply today. Knowledge of some of these talents are hoarded by Guild Elders, who fear the loss of their monopoly on such esoterica. Other skills are carefully taught to

selected students under fearsome vows of secrecy. Those wraiths with potential for advancement within the Guild are those who are singled out to receive this additional knowledge, and once it has been imparted, they are no longer permitted to leave the Guild. The Guildmasters will simply not permit any wraith with knowledge of the so-called Ancient Arts to resign from the Artificers. Most who learn these arts are convinced that it is in their best interests to remain with the Guild. As for the others, well, the forges are always hungry.

If any wraith not of the Guild is found practicing or, even worse, teaching any of these abilities, the wrath of the Guild is swift and terrible. Lord Ember himself deals with these situations and regards it as a pleasure more than a duty.

What follows is a list of the Ancient Arts, all variations on what today is called Inhabit. A wraith may choose to learn one of the Ancient Arts instead of the modern Inhabit art of an equivalent level. In addition, a wraith who has already learned Empower but who wishes to learn a two-dot Ancient Art may do so at the cost of an art of an equivalent level. A wraith who



knew Empower but wished to learn the Ancient Art Flawsight (••) would be required to spend 6 Experience Points. A wraith who knew Surge could take Flawsight as his second-level art instead of Ride the Electron Highway, and an older wraith familiar with the Ancient Arts could purchase Gremlinize.

## A Note on Arcanoi

While the list of Ancient Arts is extensive, it is by no means comprehensive. Players and Storytellers are encouraged to create their own Ancient Arts or newer uses of Arcanoi. Wraiths with specialized backgrounds may well have adapted Inhabit to their own peculiar circumstances and come up with variations on the Arcanos that have never been seen before. For example, the ghost of a locomotive engineer could have developed arts relating to sensing what lies along railroad tracks, raising or lowering steam pressure, or affecting switches with which he is not in direct contact. A telecommunications expert might find a way to Claim an entire phone network or send a drone intellect out on the Digital Web while she remained safe in her haunt. Such additional arts should be transferable in the same way the Ancient Arts are, and Storytellers should take great care in assigning levels to new arts. Beyond that, however, the sky (or the Void) is the limit.

## The Ancient Arts

### • Lightning's Bite

Lightning's Bite allows wraiths to generate a small electric charge within any metal object. Anyone holding an object thusly affected receives a startling and painful (though nondamaging) shock. Careful observation will reveal a web of electric blue lines around the object that the wraith affects. Ironically, most older wraiths have no idea of what they're actually doing when they employ Lightning's Bite, and it wasn't until the days of Benjamin Franklin that the art even acquired its modern name.

**System:** To employ Lightning's Bite, a wraith rolls Stamina + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud). The number of successes indicates how many shocks the item is imbued with. No matter how many successes are achieved, Lightning's Bite is never strong enough to cause damage. Rather, three successes on a Lightning's Bite roll would indicate that the next three times the object in question was touched, it would give off an electric shock. A botch shocks the wraith instead and causes one Health Level of damage.

### •• Flawsight

The Alchemists' Guild grew from the applications of this particular Ancient Art, which is really a sort of modified Deathsight for use on devices and constructions, whether in the Shadowlands or the Skinlands. Flawsight allows wraiths to zero in on the points where a manufactured object is most likely to break and to predict when those breaks are likely to occur. When used properly, Flawsight can even predict fracture patterns, lending it a bizarre sort of application in gem-cutting and similar fields.

**System:** Perception + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud) is rolled to activate Flawsight. Every success reveals one flaw in the target object, as well as when it will finally manifest itself. The most imminent flaw is the one that will be noticed first, while those that are further in the future appear in order thereafter. For example, Rafael wants to use Flawsight on his old car, which his sister has inherited. He rolls three successes, noticing that the brake line is worn and will give out within two weeks, and that the speedometer cable is being chewed up and will rip in a month or so. Finally, he notices an incipient leak in the oil pan, but it's six months away from becoming a reality.

Flawsight costs 1 Pathos to use. A botch will hide real flaws and reveal ones that aren't there.

### ••• Sympathy

A wraith can usually Gremlinize only one machine at a time. Sympathy, on the other hand, lets a wraith control an entire series of similar devices in the same way in which Gremlinize lets her control one machine. Sympathy is restricted to simple machines, which cannot have any transistorized or circuit-based components, though they can be electrically powered. Furthermore, the devices must be of the same kind. A wraith cannot Sympathize a sewing machine, two '57 Chevys and a fruit juicer simultaneously. Rather, all of the items being affected must serve the same function. Machines commonly Sympathized include water pumps, gauges and valves, and older models of cars.

**System:** Sympathy is invoked through a roll of Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty is the local Shroud). For each additional machine the wraith wishes to Sympathize, the same roll must be made but at a difficulty increased by 1. The difficulty of a Sympathize roll can never go above 9, however. Sympathy costs 3 Pathos and 1 Willpower for the first machine affected, then one additional Pathos for every device thereafter.

No wraith can use Sympathy on more devices than she has points in Intelligence. Beyond that point, it is assumed that it's simply too much for any one mind to handle. Botches give the wraith temporary Angst at a rate of one point per botch, as well as causing the target machines to malfunction.

## .... Creeping Rot

Wraiths with talent in Creeping Rot have the ability to induce a self-perpetuating weakness into a device. Objects touched with Creeping Rot will rust, decay, and otherwise fall apart in one to four weeks, by which time nearby objects will be rotting as well. Objects up to 10 feet from the original target item will be affected. This art is often used to bring down bridges and buildings and to destroy automobiles in the Skinlands. Users of Creeping Rot are almost automatically in violation of the *Dictum Mortuum* and as such are circumspect about using their ability.

**System:** Utilizing Creeping Rot requires a Stamina + Inhabit roll (difficulty equal to the local Shroud rating). The more successes obtained, the faster the rot spreads. A botch actually strengthens the object in question and renders it immune to further manipulations of this sort.

Creeping Rot costs 2 Pathos and 1 Willpower to use and gives the user a temporary Angst point.

## .... Kinesis

Most uses of Inhabit involve manipulation of objects on a large scale but Kinesis is a way to make individual molecules do an Artificer's bidding. By exercising Kinesis, a wraith can speed up or slow down the vibratory rate of the molecules of any non-living object, thus increasing or decreasing its temperature. Talented practitioners of the art can make icicles appear in July, or cause objects spontaneously to burst into flame.

Not surprisingly, it is rumored that certain elders of the Guild can use Kinesis on living beings or even on other wraiths. No one has ever seen this shadowy ability demonstrated, but tales and legends abound.

**System:** The exercise of Kinesis takes 4 Pathos and 1 Willpower from the practitioner and gives her 2 temporary Angst points. The Artificer in question rolls Dexterity + Inhabit (difficulty of the local Shroud), and the number of successes indicates the change in the target object's temperature. Each success raises or lowers the object's temperature by 30 degrees Celsius (54 degrees Fahrenheit). The temperature change is instantaneous and lasts for one minute per success.

The size of the object affected is determined by the Willpower of the wraith using Kinesis. One pound of material can be heated or cooled for each temporary Willpower point the wraith possesses after spending one to activate Kinesis. Wraiths cannot use Kinesis on more than one object at a time, and a botch has precisely the opposite effect, temperaturewise, of what was intended. A botch also gives the wraith two temporary Angst points.

**Note:** Wraiths attempting to heat or cool air may affect one cubic yard of air for each temporary Willpower point they possess. Heating or cooling liquids is more difficult, but one quart of liquid can be affected for each temporary Willpower point possessed.







## The New Arts



It's not just the older Artificers who have their secrets. Younger wraiths, those with both feet firmly planted in the Information Age, have developed a few tricks their elders never dreamed of. In order to learn any of the New Arts, a wraith of 25 or more years in the Shadowlands must make a

Willpower roll (difficulty 7), otherwise they'll never be able to grasp the concepts being explained to them. Younger wraiths (at least those not cursed with the Technophobic Flaw) who grew up in a world of SCSI drives and microchips have no problem dealing with the particular demands of the new technology and have no additional difficulty in learning the New Arts.

### • Command Line

Command Line lets wraiths give computers simple commands directly, bypassing both keyboard and mouse. Files can be opened or closed, short phrases inputted, windows resized, and cursors moved.


Note: Command Line cannot be used to reformat disks or delete files. The system Commanded will actively resist this sort of activity, and the offending wraith must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 6) or suffer a level of non-aggravated damage.

System: Command Line costs 1 Pathos to use and requires a Wits + Inhabit roll (difficulty 6).

Botching Command Line gives the wraith a temporary Angst point and freezes the system she was attempting to modify. Multiple botched attempts on the same system might well trash it permanently.

### • Reconstruction

Used in conjunction with Ride the Electron Highway, Reconstruction is a method for wraiths to retrieve data that has been erased. Data that has been rescued through Reconstruction will reappear on the disk from which it was originally erased, no doubt confusing the person who originally deleted it. This art can only be used on a storage medium that is currently accessed by a computer. A floppy disk or backup tape sitting out on a table cannot be Reconstructed.



**System:** A wraith must have already gained access to the target system before using Reconstruction. Once inside, the wraith rolls Perception + Inhabit to determine what data had been erased from the source in question (difficulty 6). Once the wraith has decided what information she wants, Intelligence + Inhabit is rolled (difficulty determined by how thoroughly the information has been erased). The number of successes indicates how quickly the data is restored, but a botch destroys an equivalent amount of current data.

Reconstruction costs 1 Pathos to use. It cannot be used to restore information to a disk that is already full, and such attempts will automatically fail.

### ... Wipe Me

Just as Surge causes an electron pulse, Wipe Me creates a localized, extremely powerful magnetic field. It is generally used for erasing tapes, floppy disks, and internal hard drives, but certain enterprising wraiths are fond of employing it to trick automatic navigation systems by pulling them off of magnetic north or scrambling their readings with a quick pulse or three in the wrong place.

**System:** Using Wipe Me requires a Strength + Inhabit roll, with a difficulty of the local Shroud. Each success sustains the magnetic pulse for 5 seconds. A botch turns the effect back upon the wraith, who will be disoriented for a minute per 1 rolled.

### ... Hi, Mom!

Everybody wants to be on television. Wraiths with knowledge of Hi, Mom! can project the image of their Corpus onto a single television screen or monitor and can use the device's speakers to make their voices heard. How clear the image and sound are depends on the number of successes achieved, but the wraith using Hi, Mom! has the choice of whether their face or their entire body appears.

**System:** Hi, Mom! requires a Wits + Inhabit roll with a difficulty of 7. The more successes, the clearer the image and sound quality. The art has a duration of 15 minutes and costs 2 Pathos and 2 Willpower. A botch causes the targeted device to break down or explode at the Storyteller's discretion, and gives the wraith 2 temporary Angst points.

### .... Horizontal & Vertical Control

A wraith who controls the Horizontal & Vertical can throw any image he wants up on the screen of a television or monitor. While the images are static, a series of pictures up to 15 minutes in length can be shown. No attempt to adjust the set or monitor will have any effect on the images shown, save turning the monitor off.

Horizontal & Vertical Control also grants limited control of the speakers of the TV or monitor. While the sound of a sym-

phony orchestra can be recreated, any music tends to be tinny and thin. Single voice quality, however, tends to be very good.

**System:** To use Horizontal & Vertical Control costs 3 Pathos and 2 Willpower, and gives the user 1 temporary Angst point. The art requires a Wits + Inhabit roll (difficulty of 10 minus the wraith's skill at Expression). A botch, as with Hi, Mom! gives the wraith 2 temporary Angst points and trashes the monitor or TV that the wraith attempted to control.

For an additional 1 Pathos and 1 Willpower, the wraith can take control of all of the televisions or monitors in a small area (for example, the electronics department of a department store) and can project the same image onto all of the screens simultaneously. Of course, this increases the consequences of a botch; one blown-out television set is understandable, but the simultaneous blowout of a dozen monitors on three different circuits raises a few more questions.

## Merits and Flaws



Artificers, by specializing their areas of expertise, have gained specific advantages and weaknesses. While other wraiths could conceivably be blessed or cursed with some of these characteristics, they are generally found within the Guild or those who share the Guild's knowledge.

These Merits and Flaws are intended to be used along with the Merits and Flaws in the **Wraith Players' Guide**. Up to seven points each in Merits and Flaws can be assigned during character creation.

### Platform Snobbery (1 point Flaw)

You are so attached to one particular type of computer that you find yourself at a distinct disadvantage when operating on any other type. While this Flaw is purely psychological in nature, it can have serious effects. You receive a -2 to the difficulty of all rolls on your chosen type of computer, but a +2 to the difficulty of any roll on any other platform. Possible specialties include Macintosh, IBM-PC compatible, VAX, UNIX systems, Trash-80s, Atari 2600s and mainframes.

### Forgemarked (2 point Flaw)

You've been at the soulfires so long you look like a piece of charcoal. This goes beyond the usual searing that all Artificers experience, leaving you completely carbonized. You've been completely toasted, and no one can think you're anything but a soulforger. Forgemarked wraiths automatically lose one point from their Appearance score, and the point cannot be regained, even through the use of Moliat.



RITCHIE

### Hammerbitten (3 point Flaw)

Something went horribly wrong during your initiation into the Guild. Perhaps you hammered on yourself a bit too hard or plunged your hand too deeply into the flames. In any case, your off hand is drastically disfigured from the hammer or the forge. All rolls involving two-handed manual dexterity are at a +1 difficulty, and while you can still use your butchered hand to hold things, subtle manipulations like typing are out of the question.

### Entropy Sink (3 point Flaw)

Things just fall apart around you. You probably would have been better off with the Alchemists, but that's not the path you took. Any device you Inhabit becomes prone to breaking down (at the Storyteller's discretion), usually at the most disastrous times. On the other hand, you are at a -3 on difficulty to use the Ancient Arts Creeping Rot and Flawsight.

### Technophobic (4 point Flaw)

You may not have been born before the advent of high technology if you have the Technophobic Flaw; you simply need to be afraid of it. This fear gives you a +2 on the difficulty of all rolls dealing with computers or electronic equipment. Particularly difficult applications of Inhabit on computer systems require a Willpower roll before you even begin.

**Note:** At the Storyteller's discretion, a similar Flaw, Technosnob, could be given to modern wraiths who are unable to deal with older technologies. Wraiths with Technosnob add +2 to the difficulty of any roll dealing with low-tech equipment.

### Virus Carrier (5 point Flaw)

You've been in a sick system, and now you're spreading the disease. Somehow, you've managed to pick up a computer virus in your jaunts down the Electron Highway, and everywhere you go becomes infected. In the Skinlands, people are tracking the virus' vectors and starting to wonder why it's spreading so oddly, between systems that seem to have no connection. Any techno-savvy ghost hunters in the area might already have guessed at the truth. Also, systems that you've visited will be ailing when you return to them, and data you want may well have been destroyed.

### Sense of the Metal (1 point Merit)

You have a good sense of how metal feels, enabling you to bend it to your will more easily. All arts involving metal (such as Lightning's Bite) are at a -1 difficulty, and you gain the same bonus when trying to Gremlinize or Claim something made completely of metal.

## Clean Countenance (3 point Merit)

For some reason the forges have not touched you. Your face is as clean and fresh as the day you first went into the forges. You have no explanation for it, but it does enable you to move freely in wider wraith society without immediately being identified as an Artificer.

## Master Forger (4 point Merit)

Your work with souls is unparalleled. Deathlords clamor for your pieces, and thralls beg to be forged by your hand. Well, maybe not the latter but still, you are a master worker of souls. All forging rolls are made at a -1 difficulty, and your work is so well known that you automatically acquire a point of Status as well.

## Shielded by the System (2-5 point Merit)

You have friends in high places in the Hierarchy. Even though the Guild is officially outlawed, somebody likes you enough not to press you on the issue even when you slip up. For 2 points, it could be that you do good enough work forging for your Legion; 5 points might mean you've gained the favor of a Deathlord.

## Guild Sponsor (1-5 point Merit)

Somebody in the Guild likes you and is pushing to advance your career. This could mean making certain that you're taught Ancient Arts or getting you a comfortable position with a unit that's not likely to ever leave its Citadel. The number of points invested in the Merit determines how powerful the sponsor is: 1 point would be someone who initiated a week before you did, and 5 points may be Lord Ember or Lady Alais.

## New Background: Guild Status



The Guild Status background indicates how high up you are in the labyrinthine politics of the Artificers' Guild. It also indicates how many other Artificers will heed your words...or plot to take your place.

- You've been initiated and told who a few other members are.
- Occasionally they ask your opinion in Guild meetings. Raw recruits look up to you.
- You have a half-dozen protégés, and the Guild elders have noticed you.
- You've recruited dozens of new Guild members, and know who the real movers and shakers are.
- You move and other Artificers shake.

## New Skill: Soulforging



You have achieved the knowledge of how to turn human souls into something useful by the application of brute force and open flame. Not only can you turn a human soul into something else, you have a good sense for what a particular Corpus would function best as.

- Novice: You know which end of the hammer to grab.
- Practiced: You can make a tea tray without injuring yourself.
- Competent: Swords aren't beyond your skill.
- Expert: You can make anything, from any one, at any time.
- Master: Lord Nhudri, I didn't recognize you...

Possessed By: Spectral Smiths, Artificers, Renegade Weaponmakers, Lord Nhudri

Specialties: Weaponsmithing, Oboli, Artistic Ironwork, Stygian Steel, Construction Materials

## Artificer Marks



While not all characters with Inhabit spend time at the forges, most do end up with the distinctive marks of Artifice. While most wraiths simply assume that Artificer marks are a result of spending time in front of the soulfires, those wraiths who spend all of their time hacking systems

soon find themselves scored as well. While prolonged exposure to soulfire does have a cosmetic effect, it is really the mingling of soul and object that gives an Artificer her marks.

The type of work performed by any given Artificer determines the characteristics of her marks. Those who primarily use work in the soulforges tend to acquire marks that are mottled patterns in pure carbon black. Artificers who work primarily with machines, either in the Skinlands or the Underworld, are scored with black marks that shine with an oily gleam. These marks tend to be long and straight, looking almost like slashes gouged in the marked wraith's Corpus. Those wraiths who work in computers often acquire a network of dark gray lines that uncannily resemble circuitry.

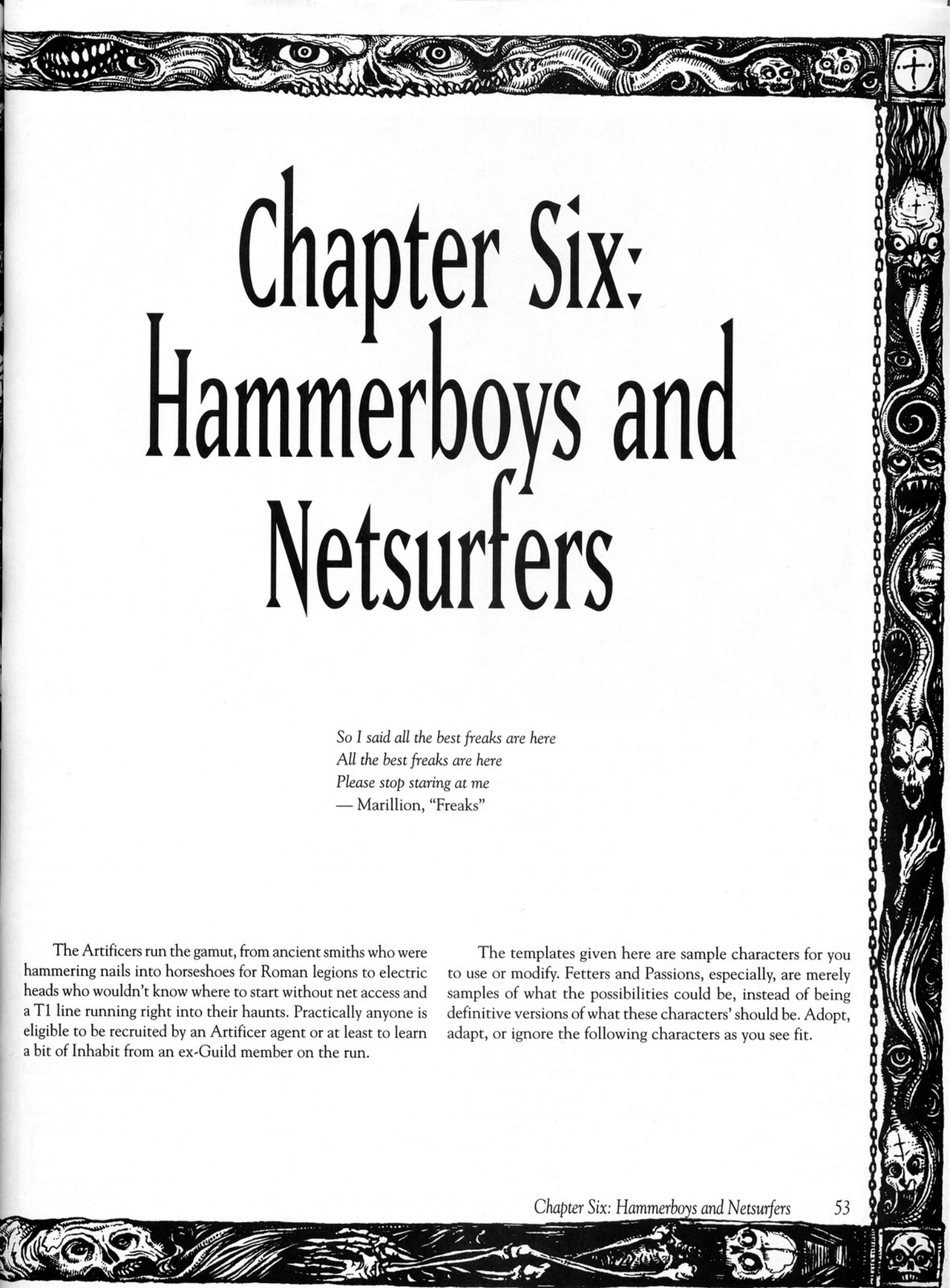
So far as anyone knows, Artificer marks cannot be removed by the Arcanos Moliate.



NET RAGE

YOU'RE NEXT

E. HARPER  
95

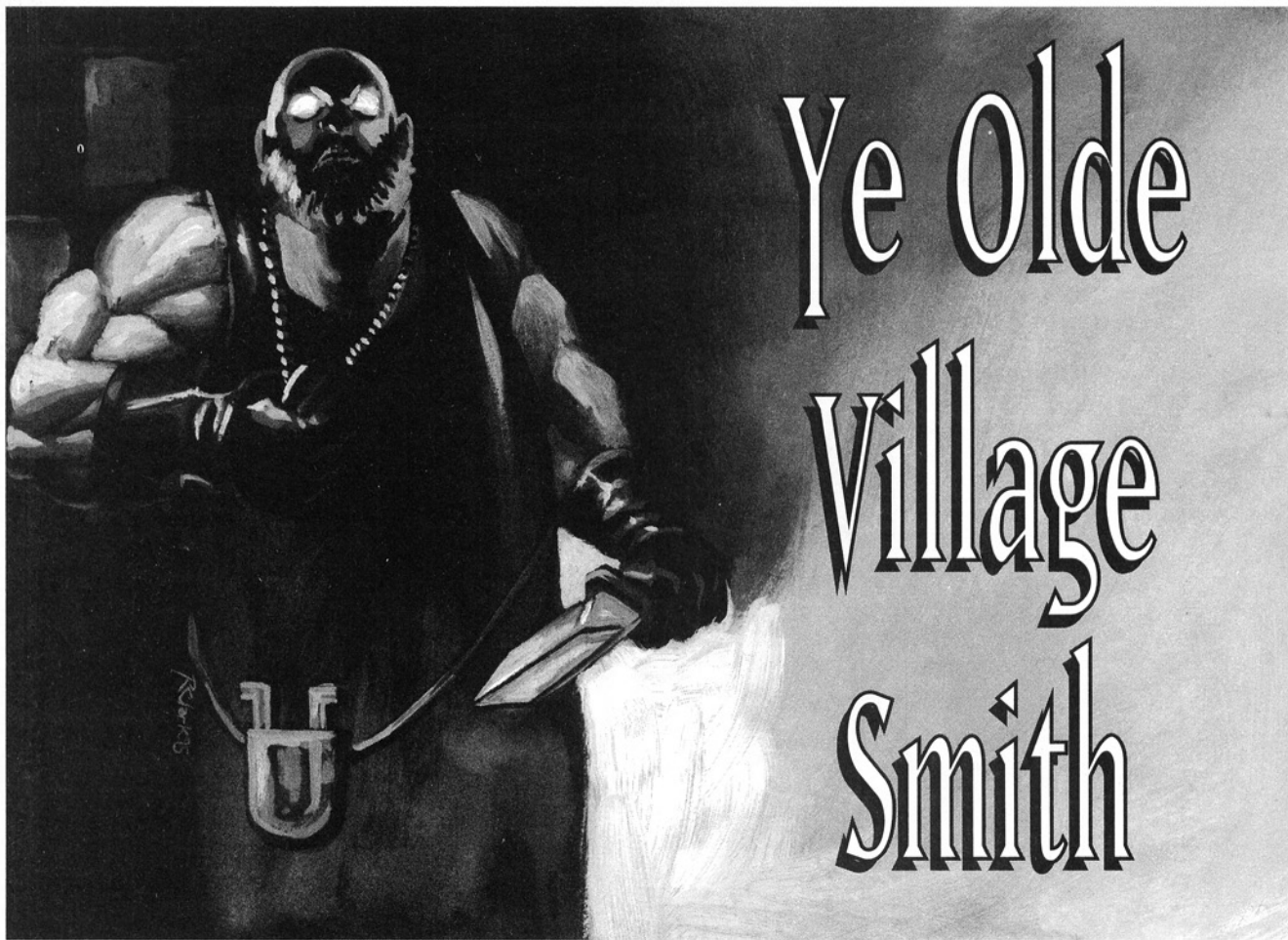


# Chapter Six: Hammerboys and Netsurfers

*So I said all the best freaks are here  
All the best freaks are here  
Please stop staring at me  
— Marillion, "Freaks"*

The Artificers run the gamut, from ancient smiths who were hammering nails into horseshoes for Roman legions to electric heads who wouldn't know where to start without net access and a T1 line running right into their haunts. Practically anyone is eligible to be recruited by an Artificer agent or at least to learn a bit of Inhabit from an ex-Guild member on the run.

The templates given here are sample characters for you to use or modify. Fetters and Passions, especially, are merely samples of what the possibilities could be, instead of being definitive versions of what these characters' should be. Adopt, adapt, or ignore the following characters as you see fit.



# Ye Olde Village Smith

**Quote:** *And ye want me to forge ye a what? Out of who? A daft idea, but I'll see what I can do.*

**Prelude:** Born and bred to the forge, you were a blacksmith descended from a long line of blacksmiths. From nails to wagon axles, you hammered them all out on your anvil, and you took pride in what you did. The neighbors appreciated your work too; that's why so many of them turned out for your funeral when a bloody flux turned your insides to raw meat.

Reaped and inducted into the Legions, you were part of Charon's unsuccessful attempt to replace the Guilds with trained soldiers. As a guildsman yourself in your living days, your heart wasn't in the effort, and your sympathies were noted by a few real Artificers who'd been planted in your unit. When Stygia finally abandoned the project, you were invited into the Guild for real. Glad for the chance to ply your trade honestly, you accepted.

Since then, you've given whatever Legion you've been attached to your utmost effort, knowing that you're not taking the place of another honest tradesman. Time has made you cynical about some of the directions the Guild has taken,

but you're still a loyal member. Your devotion to your craft is the most important thing to you, and Guild membership seems the most honest way to ply your trade.

**Concept:** You've been around for a few centuries, and you've seen a lot of things come and go. Certain of your basic knowledges are timeless and seem just as fresh today as they did all those years ago before you died. New machines like computers escape you, but you're just as happy not knowing anything about them. You prefer the Ancient Arts to the new ones, and on many occasions you've been called upon to teach them to promising new Guild members.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Let others ramble on endlessly; that's not your style. You'll speak, all right, but only when you know what you're talking about and you think the person you're talking to might listen. Outside of the forge you're pleasant enough, but inside you're all business.

**Relics:** Heavy apron and gloves, soulforged knife, Guild medallion, framed notes of appreciation from students of yours, soul-steel horseshoe

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Nature: *Architect* Life: *Ye Olde Village Smith*  
 Player: \_\_\_\_\_ Demeanor: *Curmudgeon* Death: *Consumption*  
 Chronicle: \_\_\_\_\_ Shadow: *The Perfectionist* Regret: *Leaving Labor*

Attributes

Unfinished

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●●○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●●●○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●●○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Bureaucracy	●●○○○
Athletics	●●○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Awareness	●○○○○	Firearms	●○○○○	Enigmas	●○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Investigation	○○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	●○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Melee	●●○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●○○○	Repair	●●●○○	Occult	○○○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○	Soulforging	●●●○○	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Passions		Arcanoi	
<i>Allies</i>	●●○○○	<i>Do Goodwork</i>	○○○○○	<i>Inhabit</i>	●●●○○
<i>Artifacts</i>	●●○○○	<i>(Craftsmanship)</i>	●●○○○	<i>Puppetry</i>	●○○○○
<i>Contacts</i>	●○○○○	<i>Serve the Guild</i>	○○○○○	<i>Usury</i>	●○○○○
<i>Guild Status</i>	●○○○○	<i>(Loyalty)</i>	●●○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>Avoid Conflict</i>	○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>(Desire for Peace)</i>	●●○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○

Fetters

<i>Gravestone</i>	●●●●○
<i>Site of Old Forge</i>	●●●○○
<i>Wagon Axle you Forged</i>	○○○○○
<i>(not in a museum)</i>	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Corpus

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■
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Willpower

● ● ● ● ● ● ● ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Anget

● ● ● ● ○ ○ ○ ○ ○
□ □ □ □ □ □ □ □ □

Thorns

<i>Shade familiar (black cat with glowing eyes)</i>	_____
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Experience

_____
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Pathos

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □ □ □ □
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Dark Passions

<i>Create shoddy work (Perversity)</i>	●●●●○
<i>Terrorize everyone weaker than yourself (Rage)</i>	○○○○○
	●●○○○
	○○○○○





# Wiped-Out Netsurfer

**Quote:** *You know, I might have considered this good security back when I was alive. It's nice to see that death doesn't interfere with your hobbies.*

**Prelude:** You were the FBI's worst nightmare, or so you told your easily impressed friends. Male nerds drooled after you because you were attractive and could grok computers; female ones hated and envied you. You loved the attention, and you loved it more when it came across the nets from people who admired the hacks and break-ins you'd pulled. They all knew who you were, and you reveled in your notoriety.

Of course, eventually the Feds knew who you were too, and they came looking for you. One too many peeks inside the computers at Quantico, and your secret was blown. You saw the men in identical trench coats and sunglasses coming up the walkway to your dorm and panicked. Trying to climb out the fire escape, you slipped and fell to your death. It wasn't until well after your funeral that you found out that you'd been finkered by a hacker buddy who was now working for the NSA.

The Hierarchy bored you to tears, so you hit the road for a Renegade hangout as soon as you found out such things existed. Your biggest Fetter is online anyway, so the move didn't cause you any undue distress. It took you a few weeks to convince your new friends in the underground to trust you, but once they did they pumped you of all of the info you wanted. It wasn't long before you had the knowledge and talent to crack even the systems that baffled you when you were alive. Now you float through the Web looking for interesting little tidbits that your rebel friends might use and making life miserable for the little snot who squealed on you. You've learned your lesson and keep a low profile, but you have plans to pull something big.

**Concept:** You're not so much anti-Hierarchy as anti-authority. Living power structures disgust you as much as dead ones, and you're just as happy bringing either down. Your abilities are all tied into computers and their abuse, though you've learned a surprising amount about what the information you're stealing is used for. You're not the physical type, having spent your living days glued to your monitor, but there aren't too many, Quick or dead, who think faster than you do. At least, that's what you hope.

**Roleplaying Tips:** You have no respect for your elders, primarily because most of them wouldn't understand tech if it jumped up and bit them on their ghostly butts. When you meet someone for the first time, spew as much technical jargon as you can at them. If they flinch, they're worthless. The whole idea of soulforging disgusts you, and for that reason alone you've never even considered joining the Guild. You realize this position might make you unpopular in certain circles, but you're convinced you can handle whatever the Guild throws at you. After all, you've made it this far, haven't you?

**Relics:** Working Apple Powerbook, glasses, buttons that read "MS-DOS: Just Say No" and "Nice Computers Don't Go Down," set of lockpicks hidden inside a pen

Name:  
Player:  
Chronicle:

Nature: *Jester*  
Demeanor:  
Shadow: *The Freak*

Life: *Hacker*  
Death: *Fall While Escaping*  
Regret: *Leaving Unhacked*

*Systems Behind*

### Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●○○○
Dexterity	●●○○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●○○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

### Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●●●○○	Drive	●○○○○	Bureaucracy	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Computer	●●●●●
Awareness	●●○○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●●○○○	Meditation	●○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	●○○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	○○○○○	Repair	●●○○○	Occult	●○○○○
Streetwise	●○○○○	Soulforging	○○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●●○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Science	●○○○○

### Advantages

Backgrounds		Passions		Arcanoi	
<i>Allies</i>	●●○○○	<i>Get the guy who turned you in (Vengeance)</i>	○○○○○	<i>Inhabit Pandemonium</i>	●●○○○
<i>Contacts</i>	●●○○○	<i>Put the Hierarchy's knickers in a twist (Perversity)</i>	○○○○○		○○○○○
<i>Eidolon</i>	●○○○○	<i>Hack new systems (Curiosity)</i>	●●○○○		○○○○○
<i>Haunt</i>	●○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
<i>Memoriam</i>	●○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○

### Fetters

<i>Favorite MUSH</i>	●●●○○
<i>College Terminal Room</i>	●●●○○
<i>Old Apple II Computer</i>	●●○○○
<i>Net provider's mainframe</i>	○○○○○
<i>Favorite Newsgroup archive site</i>	○○○○○

### Corpus

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### Anest

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### Willpower

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### Thorns

*Bad Luck, Shadow Call*

### Experience

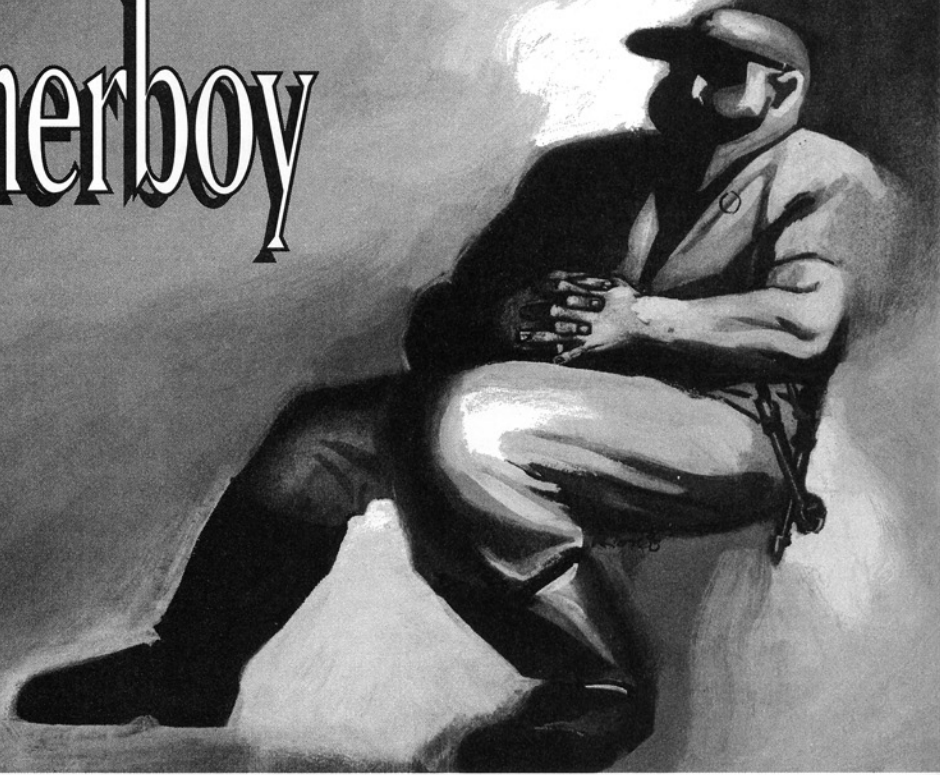
### Pathos

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### Dark Passions

<i>Crash the Net (Twisted Ambition)</i>	●●●○○
<i>Get other Hackers in Trouble (Hatred)</i>	○○○○○
	●●●○○
	○○○○○

# Hammerboy



**Quote:** *The problem with Stygia is that the guys running it are all soft. Desk-job types, never had to do an honest day's work in their lives. Betcha they wouldn't know hard work if it jumped up and bit 'em on the ass. Now if I was in charge...*

**Prelude:** A blue-collar worker in life, you were a devoted union man at a time when unions were losing their power with frightening speed. It was all management's fault, of course. Those bastards never gave a damn about their workers, and they forced your union to make one giveback after another. You resolved that this had to stop, and you were the one to make it stop. You ran for union office, and within a few years, you were sitting on negotiating committees opposite the suits. Unfortunately, they had the training and the lawyers, and all you had was the conviction that your people were being screwed. When an agreement was finally reached, you were the one who had to go back to your fellow workers and say "This is what we have to give up if we want to keep our jobs." You could see the effects of your betrayal in their eyes, and it was too much for you. You blew your brains out the night the contract was ratified by a near-unanimous vote.

Routinely Reaped, you settled into the unglamorous death of a standard Hierarchy citizen. It drove you crazy, though, just existing and not doing anything. You looked around and recognized the same sort of ongoing manipulation that got your union hung out to dry when you were alive, and you hated it. It was an entire afterlife full of the suits, and

none of them actually produced anything. The only ones worth a damn were the guys in the forges, and you weren't shy about letting people know your opinion. It took less than a month for a recruiter for the Guild to look you up, and since then you've been happy as a clam. The initiation rituals scare some people? Hell, that's nothing, you they should have seen what you had to go through to join the Teamsters.

**Concept:** While you weren't exactly a mechanic in life, you at least got your hands dirty, and soulforging is the only thing in death that is the same sort of honest labor. You do your job and you're proud to do it. You look on the Guild in the same way you looked on your union. Sure, it's tough getting in, but it's always there for you. You're going to do what you can for it, and God help anyone who badmouths it while you're around.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Radiate contempt for anyone in the Underworld, from the Deathlords on down, who doesn't work with his hands. As this includes pretty much everyone outside of the Artificers' Guild, you're not too popular outside of Guild circles. Still, you do good work quickly, and even those sniveling bums from the other Guilds have to respect that. Wraiths who aren't members of the Guild but who use Inhabit are scabs as far as you're concerned, and you should treat them accordingly.

**Relics:** Baseball cap with Chicago Cubs logo, relic Knights of Columbus lapel pins, loose change, socket wrench and screwdriver, Guild medallion

Name: Nature: *Conformist* Life: *Union Official*  
 Player: Demeanor: *Tradionalist* Death: *Suicide*  
 Chronicle: Shadow: *The Monster* Regret: *Having "betrayed" the Union*

Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●○○○○	Wits	●●○○○

Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●●○○○	Drive	●●○○○	Bureaucracy	●●○○○
Athletics	●○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Computer	○○○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Firearms	●●○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	●●●○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Investigation	●●○○○
Dodge	○○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Melee	●●○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Performance	●○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●●●○○	Repair	●●○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Streetwise	●●○○○	Soulforging	●●○○○	Politics	●○○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Stealth	○○○○○	Science	○○○○○

Advantages

Backgrounds		Passions		Arcanoi	
<i>Allies</i>	●●●○○	<i>Protect your people-</i>	○○○○○	<i>Embodiy</i>	●○○○○
<i>Artifacts</i>	●○○○○	<i>Living and Dead (Love)</i>	●●●○○	<i>Inhabit</i>	●●○○○
<i>Guild Status</i>	●○○○○	<i>Avenge the screwing the</i>	○○○○○	<i>Outrage</i>	●○○○○
<i>Memoriam</i>	●●○○○	<i>Union got (Vengeance)</i>	●●●○○	<i>Puppetry</i>	●○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>Serve the Guild (Loyalty)</i>	●●○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>Hurt anyone who dismisses</i>	○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>what you do (Pride)</i>	●○○○○		○○○○○

Fetters

<i>Mack Truck</i>	●●●○○
<i>Family Home</i>	●●●○○
<i>Wedding Picture</i>	●●○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

Corpus

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Willpower

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Experience

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Pathos

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Angst

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Thorns

<i>Aura of Corruption (Grating Voice),</i>
<i>Pact of Doom, Bad Luck</i>

Dark Passions

<i>Share the suffering of the poor</i>	○○○○○
<i>bastard you're forging (Guilt)</i>	●●●○○
<i>Destroy the "Suits" (Hate)</i>	●●●○○
<i>Wreck the Union (Twisted Love)</i>	●●○○○

# Ex-Artificer



**Quote:** *You hide me, I'll teach you what you need to know. Deal?*

**Prelude:** A television repairwoman in life, you were snapped up by the Guild recruiters upon your death for your expertise with electronics. This was all well and good, but when they started cloaking what they were doing in hellfire and brimstone, it bothered you. When they made you stick your hand in soulfire and bring a hammer down on you, it bothered you a lot. You actually screamed during your initiation ceremony, and that brought you some unpleasant attention from the elders of the Guild. Pretty quickly, you decided that you needed to get out.

However, you didn't go through all of that agony for nothing. You've bided your time and learned what they would teach you. When you had wrung as much out of your teachers as you were able, you knew it was time to cut and run. Besides, if you'd hung around much longer, you might have started to believe some of the crap they were slinging.

A friend with a little bit of Argos helped you out and got you out of your home Necropolis. While you haven't seen your face on a "Wanted" poster, you're pretty sure that the Guild is intent on hunting you down. What would follow your capture would be unpleasant in the extreme, so you've been running and hiding ever since.

You've mostly fallen in with Renegade bands over the past couple of years. The basic deal: you teach them as much Inhabit as they want to learn in exchange for a place to hide from the long arm of the Guild. You know there are others out there like you, and you're certain that if you all got together, the Guild wouldn't be able to hunt you down with impunity. Where to start, though, is the question.

**Concept:** You loathe the Guild and everything it stands for. Inhabit is a useful skill: why drape all the BS on top of it? Besides, slavish has never been your thing. Your biggest asset is your skill in Inhabit, but you're quite proficient at Stealth and Subterfuge. On the run from the Eldest Guild, you have to be.

**Roleplaying Tips:** Trust no one. Always cover your tracks, and have all of the exits out of a room clearly labeled in your mind. The fertilizer could hit the fan at any minute, so be prepared to duck out of the spray. Friends are hard to come by, but there's always someone willing to help you out if you teach them something.

**Relics:** Series of maps, working 9mm with ammo, list of Renegade and other contacts

Name: Nature: *Loner* Life: *Television Repairwoman*  
 Player: Demeanor: *Critic* Death: *Automobile Accident*  
 Chronicle: Shadow: *The Pusher* Regret: *Never Opening Your Own Shop*

### Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●○○○	Charisma	●●○○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●○○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●●○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●●○○

### Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●●○○○	Drive	●○○○○	Bureaucracy	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Computer	●●○○○
Awareness	○○○○○	Firearms	●●○○○	Enigmas	○○○○○
Brawl	●●○○○	Leadership	●●○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	○○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	○○○○○	Melee	●○○○○	Linguistics	○○○○○
Expression	○○○○○	Performance	○○○○○	Medicine	○○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Repair	●●○○○	Occult	○○○○○
Streetwise	●○○○○	Soulforging	●○○○○	Politics	○○○○○
Subterfuge	●●○○○	Stealth	●●○○○	Science	○○○○○

### Advantages

Backgrounds		Passions		Arcanoi	
<i>Allies</i>	●●○○○	<i>Stay one step ahead of the Guild (Self-Preservation)</i>	○○○○○	<i>Argos</i>	●●○○○
<i>Artifacts</i>	●●●○○	<i>Kill the drunk driver who killed you (Revenge)</i>	●●○○○	<i>Castigate</i>	●○○○○
<i>Contacts</i>	●○○○○	<i>Save the others from the Guild (Altruism)</i>	●○○○○	<i>Inhabit</i>	●●○○○
	○○○○○	<i>Pass on what you know (Pride)</i>	●●○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○				○○○○○
	○○○○○				○○○○○

#### Fetters

<i>TV Repair Shop</i>	●●●○○
<i>Old Tool Kit</i>	●●●○○
<i>Pet Cat (Now on the streets)</i>	○○○○○
	●●●○○
	○○○○○
	○○○○○

#### Corpus

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#### Willpower

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#### Angst

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#### Thorns

*Devil's Dare, Trick of the Light*

#### Experience

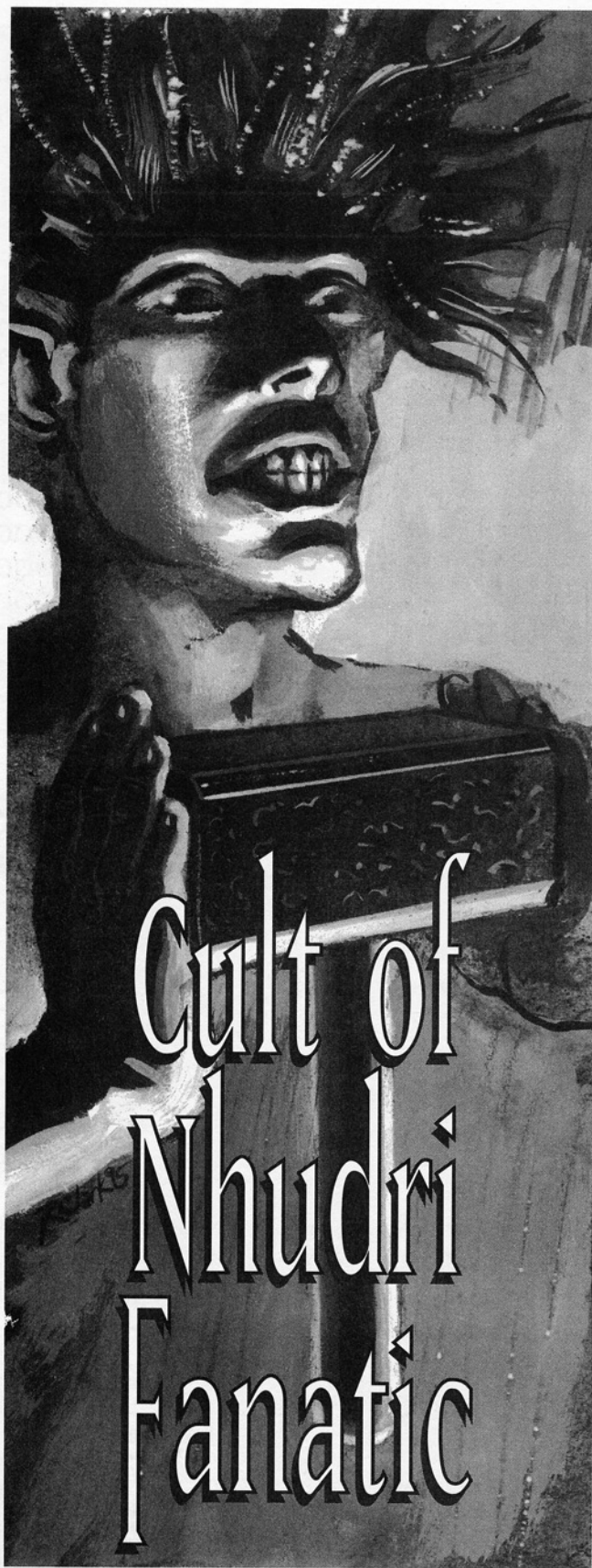
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#### Pathos

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#### Dark Passions

<i>Get soulforged into Oblivion (Self-Hatred)</i>	●●●○○
<i>Create destruction where ever you go (Sakism)</i>	●●○○○
<i>Drag the Guild down to its doom (Vengeance)</i>	●○○○○
	○○○○○



# Cult of Nhudri Fanatic

**Quote:** *Our Lord has shown me the secrets of soulfire and steel. Would you like to learn more about them? I'd be glad to show you, and my workshop is nearby...*

**Prelude:** You drifted through life, never really specializing in anything. You picked up a bit of computer knowledge here, a bit of other things there, but nothing that added up to a calling. You dabbled in everything from Dianetics to working on a construction site, but you always had a sense that you were missing something; that when you died you'd leave nothing memorable behind you.

Sad to say, you were right, and when it came time for the big dirt nap, no one even attended your funeral. Nothing you did, nothing you said lived on after you because you hadn't said anything interesting and you hadn't done anything at all. You arrived in the Shadowlands and were immediately Reaped and sold as a Renegade by an amoral freelance soulhunter. At the last minute, you were pulled off the scrap heap by the local soulsmith who recognized some innate talent that you possessed.

He had you trained and inducted, and now the Guild is your everything. Imagine: religious fulfillment and the opportunity to do something productive, something that will last. The teachings of the Book touched something inside you, and you knew instinctively that they were the unvarnished Truth. These days, all that you do is for the greater glory of Nhudri and the Guild, praised be the Hammer and the Hand that wields it!

**Concept:** You're attached to a band of Legionnaires in one of the outlying Necropoli. Officially you're the weaponsmith for the brigade you're stationed with, but you make sure that the Legionnaires bother you as little as possible. Your smattering of knowledges come in handy here, out on the fringes of wraith society, but they just help with your cover. You're really here to bring more souls to the greater glory of Nhudri, whether by recruiting them to the Guild or hammering them into steel.

**Roleplaying Tips:** The people out to kill Salman Rushdie have nothing on you for clarity of purpose or devotion to religious duty. Discussion about anything except soulforging bores you to tears, but when the conversation turns to your favorite topic, your eyes glow with (un)holy delight. Never talk about the revelations you've been given with outsiders, unless you're either going to kill or induct them.

**Relics:** Hammer, soulforge with basic equipment, blackened Guild medallion, copy of the *Book of Nhudri*

Name:  
Player:  
Chronicle:

Nature: *Fanatic*  
Demeanor: *Visionary*  
Shadow: *The Martyr*

Life: *Aimless Drifter*  
Death: *Slipped in Bathroom and  
hit head on sink*  
Regret: *Not having done anything*

### Attributes

Physical		Social		Mental	
Strength	●●●○○	Charisma	●●●○○	Perception	●●●○○
Dexterity	●●●○○	Manipulation	●●●○○	Intelligence	●●●○○
Stamina	●●○○○	Appearance	●●○○○	Wits	●●○○○

### Abilities

Talents		Skills		Knowledge	
Alertness	●○○○○	Drive	○○○○○	Bureaucracy	●○○○○
Athletics	○○○○○	Etiquette	○○○○○	Computer	●●○○○
Awareness	●●●○○	Firearms	○○○○○	Enigmas	●●○○○
Brawl	○○○○○	Leadership	○○○○○	Investigation	●○○○○
Dodge	●○○○○	Meditation	●○○○○	Law	●○○○○
Empathy	●●○○○	Melee	○○○○○	Linguistics	●○○○○
Expression	●○○○○	Performance	●●○○○	Medicine	●○○○○
Intimidation	●○○○○	Repair	●○○○○	Occult	●●○○○
Streetwise	○○○○○	Soulforging	●●●○○	Politics	●○○○○
Subterfuge	○○○○○	Stealth	●○○○○	Science	●●○○○

### Advantages

Backgrounds		Passions		Arcanoi	
<i>Allies</i>	●●●○○	<i>Serve Lord Nhurdi</i>	○○○○○	<i>Castigate</i>	●○○○○
<i>Eidolon</i>	●○○○○	<i>(Religious Love)</i>	●●●○○	<i>Inhabit</i>	●●○○○
<i>Havat</i>	●●○○○	<i>Serve the Guild</i>	○○○○○	<i>Lifeforb</i>	●○○○○
<i>Wealth</i>	●○○○○	<i>(Loyalty)</i>	●●●○○	<i>Moliate</i>	●○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>Smelt all unbelievers</i>	○○○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○	<i>(Fanaticism)</i>	●●○○○		○○○○○
	○○○○○		○○○○○		○○○○○

### Fetters

<i>Sink you cracked head on</i>	●●●○○
<i>Teddy bear</i>	●●●○○
<i>High school yearbook</i>	●●○○○
<i>Old newspaper clipping</i>	○○○○○
<i>with your picture</i>	●○○○○
	○○○○○

### Corpus

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### Anest

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### Willpower

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### Thorns

*Death's Sigil (3 pt.-eyes that glow a bloody red and an omnipresent odor of smoke), Dark Allies*

### Experience

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### Pathos

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ ■ □
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### Dark Passions

<i>Torment everyone living who's forgotten about you (Envy)</i>	○○○○○
	●●●○○
<i>Expose the Cult as a fraud (Cynicism)</i>	●●●○○
	○○○○○



# Appendix: Who Was Who



RITCHIE



## Lord Ember

The Master of Apprentices, Lord Ember has gone by his *nom de forge* for so long that even he has forgotten his real name. He claims to have been Apprenticed to Nhudri himself and has held his current title in the Guild since before it was banished by Charon. Indeed, he used the breaking of the Guilds as a convenient way of ridding himself of certain political opponents; since then he has enjoyed a sort of protected status in Stygia. He has played the role of a model citizen, volunteering his services to the various Legions numerous times.

Ember's mansion in Stygia is positively Ghormengastly in scope, with hundreds of chambers, dozens of towers and scores of cellars carved into the bowels of the Isle of Sorrows. Here many of the Guild's new Apprentices are hidden; here rest the Guild's stockpiles of arms imbued with Arcanoi, here squat the forges that hum and belch black smoke as they are worked day and night. Through a cunning arrangement of flues and ducts, the smoke of the forges escapes into the sky over Stygia at a hundred different points, none located anywhere near Ember's mansion. There are literally dozens of doors at strategic points around the isle, and the house is such a maze that Lord Ember can be entertaining a Deathlord in the parlor while an Apprentice is instructed ten feet away; neither aware of the other's presence.

Ember's primary obsession, cloaked in rationality, is to return the Guilds to prominence in Stygia. This radical notion, combined with his high visibility outside of the Guild, makes his existence precarious in the extreme. Most politically inclined Artificers fully expect him to be unmasked soon and are already jockeying for position with an eye toward replacing him.

## Duncan Bessemer

The laws of Stygia state that only thralls, criminals and Spectres can be fed to the forges. Laws, as Duncan Bessemer knows very well, were made to be broken. Few Artificers are as feared, as hated or as fiercely hunted by both Hierarchy and Heretics.

Born in 1767 on the Isle of Skye, Bessemer worked as smith and later, as a foundry worker in a factory that made cannon for His Majesty King George. A handsome man, he became involved with a local beauty, the lovely Mrs. Eudora Wayland. Unfortunately, Mr. Wayland was the foreman of the foundry where Bessemer labored, and it didn't take long for him to uncover his wife's duplicity. Less than two weeks later, Wayland tipped both his wife and her lover into a vat of molten metal. Eudora's spirit fled to wherever the souls of the righteous go, but Duncan became a wraith.



RITCHIE

Reaped by a bored Hierarchy functionary and scheduled for the forge, Bessemer was rescued at the last minute by the woman who had been scheduled to smelt him. Officially the staff smith for the 3rd Division of the Skeletal Legion, she was also a Journeyman Artificer with ambitions of climbing higher. She saw in Duncan a potential apprentice of unlimited gifts and malleable personality. Diverting him from the forge, she had him trained, initiated and turned loose in a position subordinate to hers with the same Legion.

With his natural aptitude for metalworking, Duncan quickly mastered the secrets of soulforging, and became no mean hand at Inhabit. He enjoyed his work at the forge – a little too much, some said – and achieved a rate of production unmatched since the days before Nhudri took apprentices. When his Mistress was shipped out with much of the rest of the Skeletal Legion to fight the Jade Empire, he remained and rapidly assumed his teacher's place in the councils of the Guild.

One of the perks of Guild status is being able to choose the souls you work with. Through use of this privilege, Bessemer was able to obtain for himself the Corpus of one Johnny Cope, a British general of ill repute in Scotland who had taken

up with Renegades after his death. Bessemer, more a Scots patriot in death than in life, took his time working Cope and found himself enjoying every minute of the Englishman's agony. Six months later, once Cope had finally been hammered into a lovely representation of a hawthorn branch in bloom, Duncan went looking for a new victim.

Bessemer's obsession with torturing those who oppressed Scotland has turned into a more general fixation on "collecting" the souls of those who were famous in life and hammering them into works of art. Many of the living world's foremost citizens ended up decorating the homes of the leading citizens of Stygia. Eventually Bessemer's desire for raw materials outstripped the legal methods for getting them, and rather than curb his appetites, he sought other channels to sate them. It took decades for his sickness to be uncovered, and when the Legionnaires finally came for him, he easily avoided capture.

No one claims knowledge of Bessemer's whereabouts today, though there is strong suspicion that the Guildmasters are hiding him for their own purposes. In the meantime, every celebrity and politician who comes into the Shadowlands learns to shudder at the name of Duncan Bessemer.

## DaisyChain

Most people aren't aware that DaisyChain (real name: Daisy Lucinda Mickelstein) is dead. The vast majority never knew she existed, but those who know her online haven't yet tumbled to the fact that she's now deceased. She posts to the UseNET just as frequently, still pulls hacks that are the stuff of legend, and shows up at conventions precisely as often (i.e., never) as she did when she was alive. So while police, NSA and FBI agents, and hackers-turned-stooges go bananas trying to track down the mysterious DaisyChain, she sits in the Shadowlands and laughs.

A hacker *par excellence*, Daisy's demise was a combination of malnutrition from her ramen-heavy diet and a bad case of influenza that she was determined to tough out. Her weakened system couldn't fight the bug off, however, and as a freelance programmer she had no medical insurance. By the time she bit the bullet and decided to go to the hospital, it was too late.

Once dead, Daisy never actually joined the Artificers Guild. She was Reaped by a Renegade band who'd had their eye on her for a while (and through Puppetry, helped her hold off on calling for medical help) and taught the rudiments of Inhabit by a renegade Apprentice named Solly Richardson. The pupil soon outstripped the master, however; less than a year later DaisyChain was pulling off hacks of greater sophistication than she ever had done while alive. By Gremlinizing

the central mainframe of the NorthStates Bank of Philadelphia, she was able to have every ATM the bank owned start spitting bills into the air, while every screen displayed an ASCII daisy. And that was only the beginning. Among hackers, her name is legend. In Stygia, she's among the most wanted Renegades for her flagrant violation of the Dictum Mortuum. Fortunately for her, she never goes anywhere near Stygia...at least not if she can help it.

## The Porrohman

Supposedly a spirit who watches over those who labor in steel mills and forges, the Porrohman is real enough. The wraith of a blacksmith who served the Roman legions in Albion, in life Porrohman forged the blades of the troops who built Hadrian's Wall. Fettered to the Wall itself, he's spent centuries wandering the north of England and Scotland slyly slipping aid to the soot-stained men who make the steel that's built the West. A Gremlinized blast furnace halted from incinerating a fallen man, a Claimed steel chain's weak link made known through ghostly whispers, an assembly line Surged into silence before a hand can be mangled; all of these are the work Porrohman does for the living. Thus far his actions have not come to the attention of those authorities who might frown on this sort of activity, and there is a conspiracy of silence between Porrohman and those he helps.

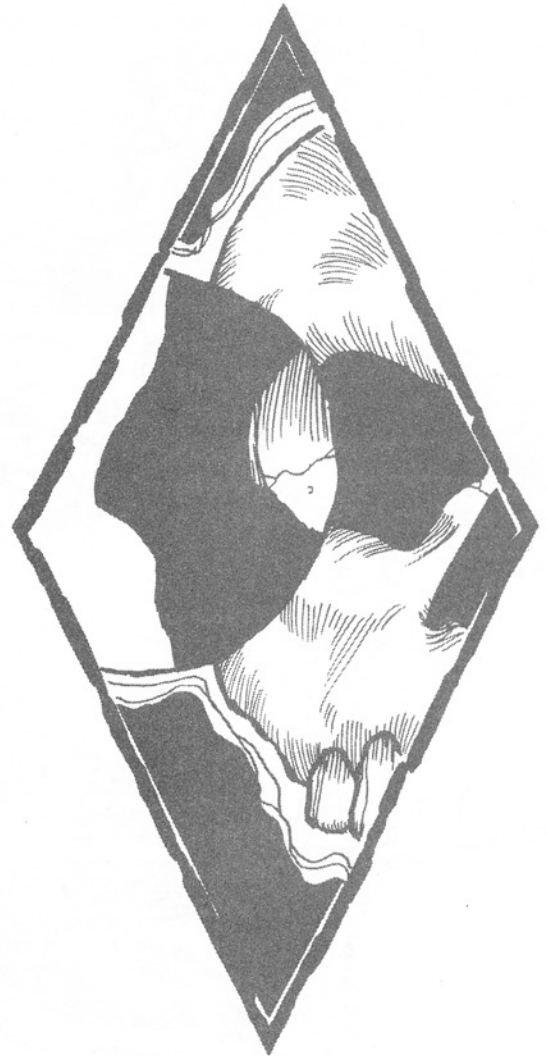




RITCHIE

In the Shadowlands, Porrohman sits high in the Guild's councils, having achieved Master status while the Roman Empire was still a going concern. Suspicious of modern electronics and frankly computerphobic, he is a conservative voice when it comes to debating the future of the Guild. As far as Porrohman is concerned, the Internet is a fad and resources should not be wasted on it.

Over eight feet tall and completely blackened, Porrohman is fiercely loyal to the Guild, almost to the point of unreason. His devotion to his fellow Artificers (and his living protégés) is matched only by his disdain and loathing for those who have left the Guild or who use Inhabit but who have never joined the Artificers. He has gone on record as advocating making an "example" of these traitors and has taken the matter into his own hands on several notable occasions.



Name:  
Player:  
Chronicle:

Nature:  
Demeanor:  
Shadow:

Life:  
Death:  
Regret:

### Attributes

#### Physical

#### Social

#### Mental

Strength _____ ●○○○○	Charisma _____ ●○○○○	Perception _____ ●○○○○
Dexterity _____ ●○○○○	Manipulation _____ ●○○○○	Intelligence _____ ●○○○○
Stamina _____ ●○○○○	Appearance _____ ●○○○○	Wits _____ ●○○○○

### Abilities

#### Talents

#### Skills

#### Knowledge

Alertness _____ ○○○○○	Drive _____ ○○○○○	Bureaucracy _____ ○○○○○
Athletics _____ ○○○○○	Etiquette _____ ○○○○○	Computer _____ ○○○○○
Awareness _____ ○○○○○	Firearms _____ ○○○○○	Enigmas _____ ○○○○○
Brawl _____ ○○○○○	Leadership _____ ○○○○○	Investigation _____ ○○○○○
Dodge _____ ○○○○○	Meditation _____ ○○○○○	Law _____ ○○○○○
Empathy _____ ○○○○○	Melee _____ ○○○○○	Linguistics _____ ○○○○○
Expression _____ ○○○○○	Performance _____ ○○○○○	Medicine _____ ○○○○○
Intimidation _____ ○○○○○	Repair _____ ○○○○○	Occult _____ ○○○○○
Streetwise _____ ○○○○○	Soulforging _____ ○○○○○	Politics _____ ○○○○○
Subterfuge _____ ○○○○○	Stealth _____ ○○○○○	Science _____ ○○○○○

### Advantages

#### Backgrounds

#### Passions

_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
_____ ○○○○○	_____ ○○○○○
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#### Arcanoi

#### Corpus

#### Specialty

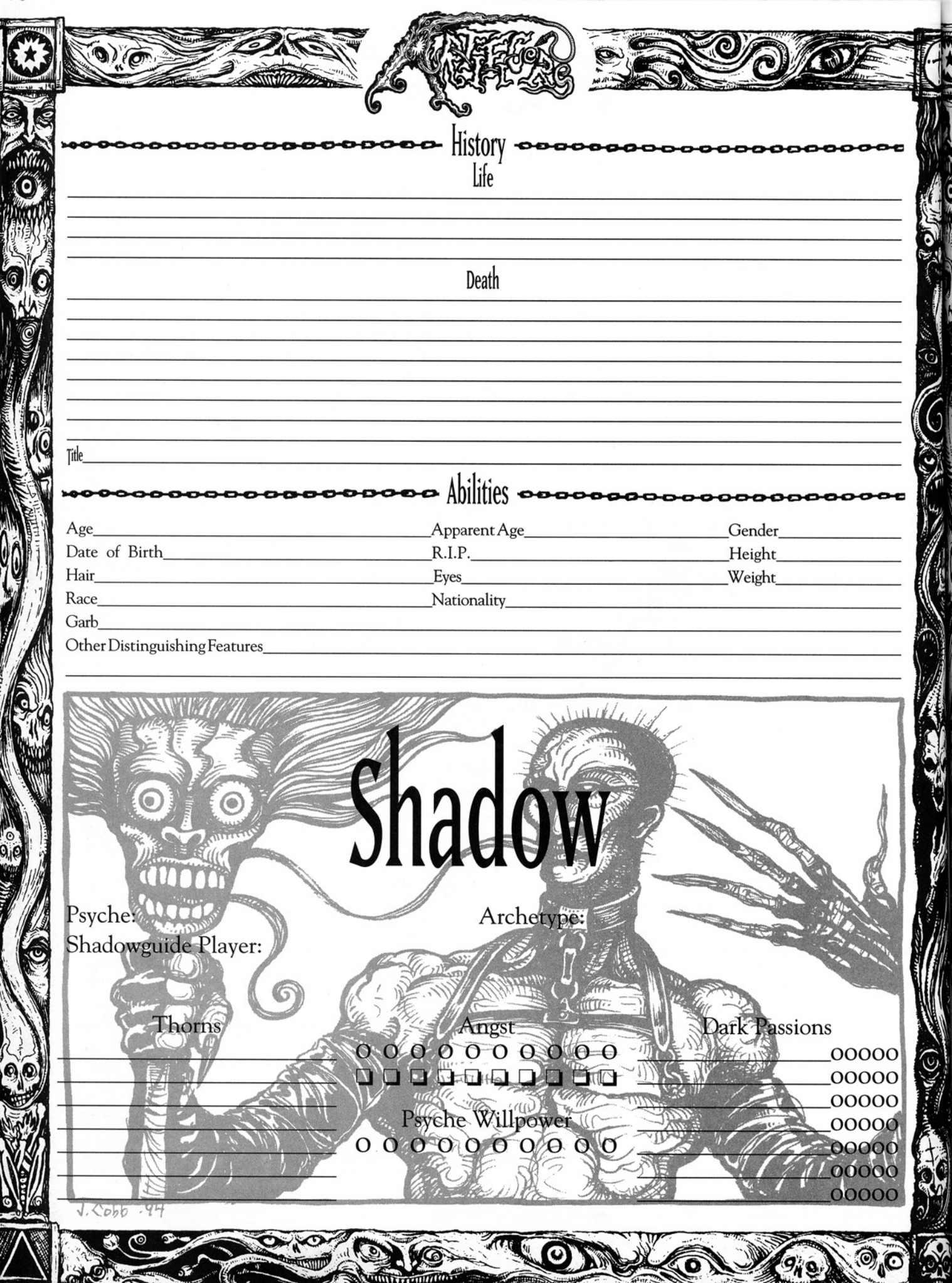
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_____ ○○○○○	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____
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#### Guild Marks

#### Pathos

#### Renegade Attachment

<b>Forge Markings</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/> <input type="checkbox"/>	_____
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History  
Life

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Death

Title \_\_\_\_\_

Abilities

Age \_\_\_\_\_ Apparent Age \_\_\_\_\_ Gender \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_ R.I.P. \_\_\_\_\_ Height \_\_\_\_\_

Hair \_\_\_\_\_ Eyes \_\_\_\_\_ Weight \_\_\_\_\_

Race \_\_\_\_\_ Nationality \_\_\_\_\_

Garb \_\_\_\_\_

Other Distinguishing Features \_\_\_\_\_

# Shadow

Psyche:  
Shadowguide Player:

Archetype:

Thorns

Angst

Dark Passions

_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____	○○○○○
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_____	Psyche Willpower	_____	○○○○○
_____	○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○	_____	○○○○○
_____		_____	○○○○○



Expanded Background

Allies

Contacts

Eidolon

Guild Status

Contacts

Status

Memoriam

Mentor

Notoriety

Wealth

Artifacts

Relics

Forge Description

Favorite Haunts

Location

Description





### Merits & Flaws

Merit	Type	Cost	Flaw	Type	Bonus

### Fetters

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### Experience

Total: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total Spent: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Spent On: \_\_\_\_\_  
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### Ancient/New Arts Known

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### Forge Markings

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### Guild Standing & Contacts

Standing \_\_\_\_\_  
 Rank \_\_\_\_\_  
 Guild Contacts \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

Hunted by Guild: \_\_\_\_\_

### Combat

Weapon	Difficulty	Damage	Conceal	Range	Rate	Clip

Maneuver	Accuracy	Damage
Bite	5	Strength +1
Punch	6	Strength
Grapple	6	Strength
Claw	6	Strength +2
Kick	7	Strength +1
Body slam	7	Special; see Options

Armor: \_\_\_\_\_



# GUILDBOOK:



## Spirits in the Material World

*So, kid, you thought you were hot stuff on the nets while you were alive. Ever hack anything from the inside before? Didn't think so. Well, don't worry, back then you were only human. Now you're something else.*

*See you on the inside!*

— Kathryn Chan, Renegade Artificer

## Taste the Hammer and the Flame!

In the darkest heart of Stygia, they wait for you.

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