

THE SEA OF CHAOS



A Storyteller's Guide to the Tempest
for Wraith: The Oblivion™

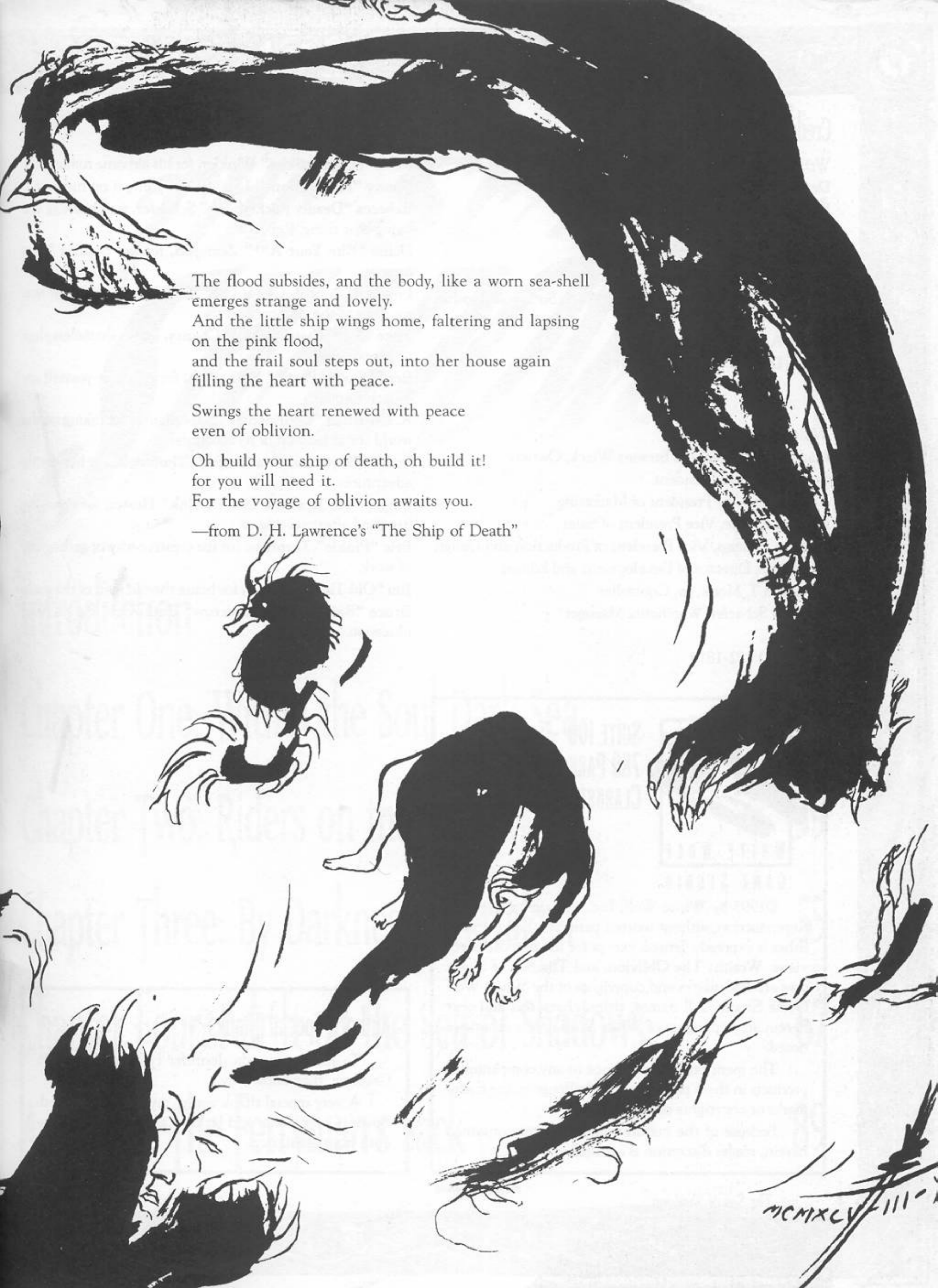
J. Miracola



THE SEA OF SHADOWS

A Storyteller's Guide to the Tempest
A Sourcebook for **Wraith: The Oblivion**





The flood subsides, and the body, like a worn sea-shell
emerges strange and lovely.

And the little ship wings home, faltering and lapsing
on the pink flood,
and the frail soul steps out, into her house again
filling the heart with peace.

Swings the heart renewed with peace
even of oblivion.

Oh build your ship of death, oh build it!
for you will need it.

For the voyage of oblivion awaits you.

—from D. H. Lawrence's "The Ship of Death"



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Credits:

Written by: Nicky Rea
Developed by: Jennifer Hartshorn
Editing: Annie Schultz
Additional Editing: Cynthia Summers
Art Director: Richard Thomas
Layout and Typesetting: Kathleen Ryan
Art: John Cobb, Jeff Miracola, E. Allen Smith, and Joshua Gabriel Timbrook
Cover Art: Jeff Miracola
Cover Design: Lawrence Snelly

White Wolf, Inc. Execs

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Call (404) 292-1819



SUITE 100
780 PARK NORTH BLVD.
CLARKSTON, GA 30021

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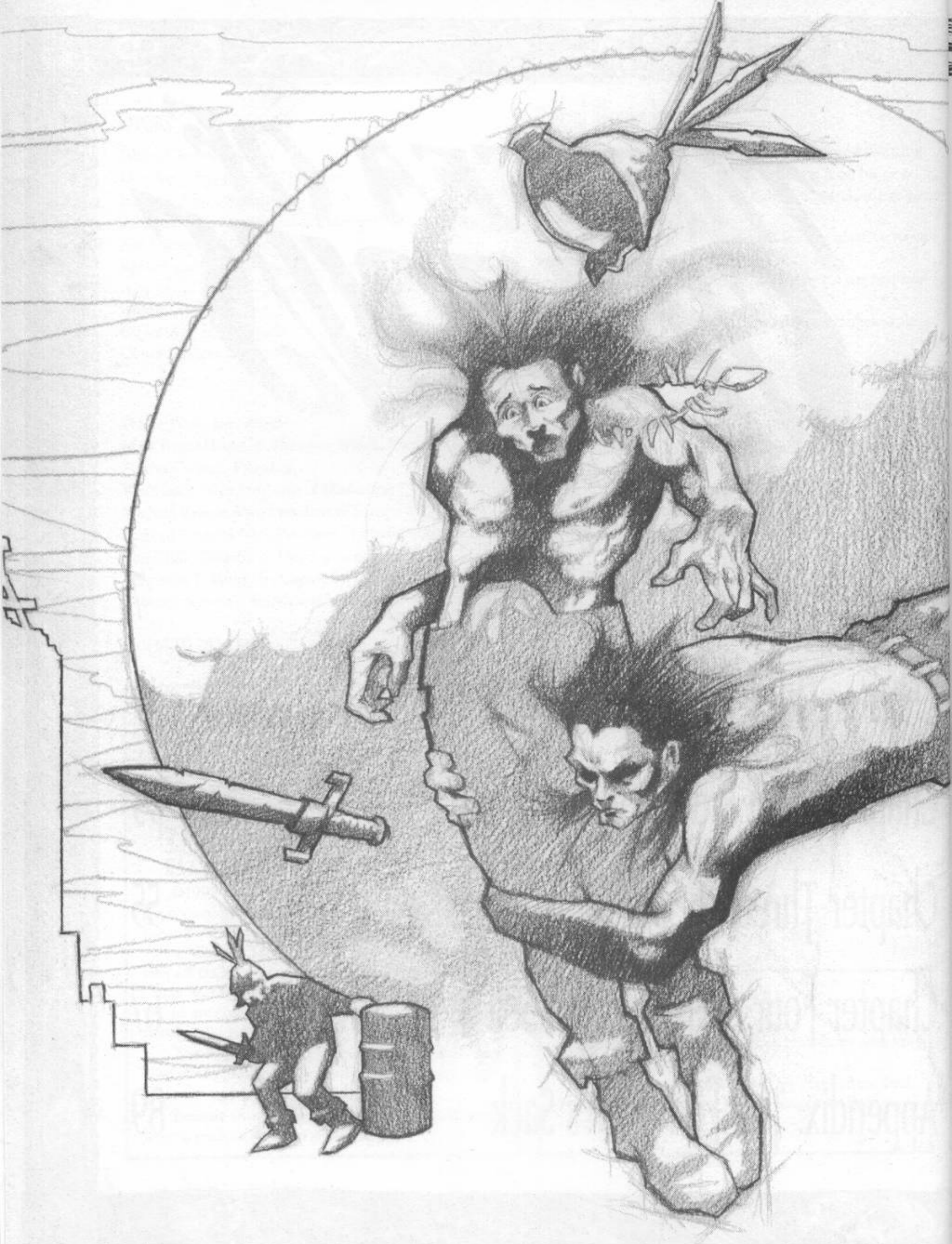
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V. MIRACOLA



Introduction

*"Don't look, don't look," the shadows breathe,
Whispering me away from you...*
— The Cure, "Burn"



I heard them coming long before they reached me. I knew I had overstayed my welcome in the Necropolis: gathering one more piece of information, acquiring that last bit of juice. I'd be sorry to leave. For an area controlled by the Hierarchy, it wasn't too bad. Different areas are more heavily patrolled than others and those of us on more covert business tend to stay far away from the Citadel. Now the Legionnaires were headed for my safe house. Someone might have sold me out. Maybe I just got careless. It was time for Johnny Liar to go.

"Come on," Twin whispered, "We can take them. Why run from them again? They may have powerful relics or Artifacts."

"That's exactly why we can't face them," I replied, "They may be too powerful for us."

"Have I ever let you down?" Twin sounded hurt, but still excited, like he thought we could really win a confrontation with the Legionnaires. I knew that over-confident tone. He'd gotten me in trouble before with his wheedling assurances.

"We can't win," I finally said, "Let's go now before they find us. It won't do our circle any good if we never get back to report what we know."

"Don't give me that shit. They aren't your Circle, they're your clients. You're not going to tell them what you know unless they pay real well and we both know it." Twin paused for a moment.

"We can take them, Johnny! I know it," he pleaded, "Just give it a try. If I'm wrong, we can always escape into the Tempest."

"No, Twin."

"You're just afraid. We could ambush them. They have some really good stuff..."

"We're here for information."


"Who better to tell us about the Hierarchy's plans than a Legionnaire? We'll capture one."

I thought about it. If we could capture a Legionnaire, we might find out secrets that we could never discover on our own. And some Legionnaires carry weapons fashioned of Stygian steel. I sure wouldn't mind having one of those. Maybe Twin was right this time.

"You'd better be right," I said at last.

"I'm right! We'll ambush them and capture one. Use Tempest Threshold to open a way into the Tempest for us to jump through. It'll be worth it."

The inside of the oil drum where I hid was old and rusted. Tipped slightly on its side and leaning against an old mattress frame, it provided a good vantage point. I piled up several crates, leaving a small alleyway between them. I hoped this would attract the searchers' attention more than my open-ended oil drum. The Legionnaires were moving through the area, meticulously searching both sides of the street. A few of them had barghests. I laughed a little to myself, knowing the Oblivion-sniffers wouldn't find me. Twin was right. As split apart as they were while they were searching, a surprise attack could take one out in no time. I was ready.



One Legionnaire fell for it. Chalk another one up for Johnny Liar. He started slowly moving down between the crates. Quietly, I climbed out of the oil drum and crept over to grapple him.

"Do it!" hissed Twin. I could feel his strength added to my own. We tackled the Legionnaire, toppling him to the ground and straddling him. His sword clattered to the ground. Twin and I grabbed for it. Then I felt the first white-hot pains rip through my back. Blistering cold leapt from the wound in my back and tore throughout my body...slowing me...numbing my mind. As I screamed in agony at the metal's bite of Oblivion, I recalled that Legionnaires always work in pairs, at least. Twin giggled.

"That's right, Johnny Liar," he leered, "Never less than pairs. Forgot something, didn't you?"

Why didn't Twin help me? Didn't he realize they'd take us in for questioning? We'd be collared and made into Hierarchy slaves. We might even be smelted down into coins. Summoning all my of concentration, I ripped open the membrane and tumbled into the seething Tempest.

"Johnny?"

The voice was warm and caring; a velvety caress to my battered mind. I opened my eyes and stared into the vault of midnight above my face. Brilliant, silvery stars were scattered across the immense sky. They winked and twinkled overhead. I felt a gentle, rocking motion and heard the splash of water lapping near me. A dark pole or paddle was lifted momentarily above the waves, then dipped into them again. I was cuddled in the embrace of a reed boat; its curved sides reminded me of an old Irish curragh.

Craning my head back, I got a look at the steersman. He was tall, proudly erect and covered with a dark, hooded robe that afforded me no glimpse of his face. The being was a Ferryman. Ha! Now I was safe. Even if they managed to follow me into the Tempest, no Legionnaire would screw with a Ferryman. No wonder everything seemed so calm.

I had expected to jump into the worst part of the Tempest. Not that there are any good parts, but not having the luxury of looking in before I leapt almost guaranteed a nasty surprise or two. That's just the way the old Sea of Shadows is. Speaking of Shadows, I wondered where Twin had gone. The last I'd seen of him he was laughing at me. Now here I was, not even wet. Where was he?

"You're a Ferryman, aren't you?" I asked my hooded savior. He bowed his head in assent.

"That means you have to protect me and get me through the Tempest, right?"

"That is the usual custom," he replied, "Although we have yet to strike a bargain for my services."

"Do you know where I want to go?" He nodded again. I admit it. I was impressed. I'd heard a lot about the Ferryman, but I'd never met one before.

"What do you want?" I inquired, hoping that I had enough of whatever coin he demanded.

"A mere portion of your time."

That sounded promising. I sat up, looked around and noticed the golden sheen to the channel of water on which we were traveling. The wind was a gentle breeze, yet strong enough to bring the oily, rancid, sea-scent to my attention. Where were the howling gales and Spectred waves that I always found in the Tempest?

"Do not worry," the Ferryman soothed, "Nothing shall harm you as long as I am near."

"So what about this time thing?" I asked, "How much time do you want?"

The Ferryman gently lifted his paddle and skimmed it along the surface, turning us onto another shimmering, golden pathway that crossed the one we were on.

"The amount of time required depends upon you," the Ferryman stated.

"Could you be a little more specific?" I asked, "If you know where I want to go, you must know I have information that a lot of people want. I can't stay away too long. Everything will change and the information will be of no use to them. What do you want me for anyway?"

"I have need of a double for a few hours," he explained, "You are very skilled in Argos. You would be able to take my place and steer my boat through the Tempest while I am briefly gone."

"You mean you want a day off?" I smiled. Actually, I wasn't really sure I could fill in for a Ferryman. I'd heard they're pretty tough. I felt Twin nudge me.

"Sure you can," he whispered, "You know you want to. Besides, who's going to mess with a Ferryman?"

"Where the hell have you been?" I demanded angrily, "You weren't much help back there."

"I'll make it up to you. Come on, this'll be fun." I could feel Twin bending my will, persuading me to give in.

"What's the catch?" I questioned the Ferryman.

"There is none," came the calm reply, "You take my place, steer my boat and pretend to be me. In exchange, I'll take you where you want to go. You could, of course, leave my protection and try to make it on your own. But why not play it safe and earn my gratitude?" Framed in the dim glow of the night sky, he lifted his head enough for me to make out the outline of a shadowy face.

"What do I have to do?"

"As I said, merely steer the boat," he said, then he paused, "However, there are two conditions. You must guide the boat to the end of this byway; you cannot abandon my boat or turn aside from this path, for then I will not know where to find you when I return. Second, you must not pick up any passengers, for they might discern that you are no true Ferryman. Are we agreed?"



I considered it over and over, searching for a flaw. Not that I didn't intend on lying anyway.

"Let's do it," Twin urged, "Hey, our own Ferryman's boat. We could make a killing with this thing." Yeah, we could.

"How long will you be gone again?" I asked.

"A few hours, no more."

It wasn't a lot of time, but if I took a shortcut I knew, maybe we could fit in a quick smuggling operation, then sell the boat. It would take the Ferryman some time to track us down — if he even bothered. After all, he was probably doing something just as underhanded as our scheme, then trying to cover it up with this double scam.

"Sure. Why not?" I said. He nodded. Reaching behind him, he pulled out a dark, hooded robe. I slipped it on and pulled up the hood.

"I hope I don't have to navigate by the stars," I quipped, gesturing toward the pinpricks of light above our heads.

"You do not. In any case, those are nihils, not stars. Now, listen closely. You must grasp the oar gently with both hands, then propel the boat with light strokes. If you pull too hard, you will tire and you may lose your grip on the oar. You must not lose the oar. The boat cannot be steered without it. Remember, stay in this channel, pull the oar softly through the water and pick up no passengers." The Ferryman slipped the oar into my hands then lowered himself over the side of the boat. "Until later." He stood on the surface for a moment, then slowly sank out of sight.

"He's gone. Let's get out of here," Twin urged.

Now that I held the oar, I could see and feel the Tempest raging around me in every direction. It seemed removed somehow, as though it had no power to touch me. The soul-freezing powers of Oblivion lay all around me, but I felt no cold. Shrieks and moans howled alongside the wind as Twin and I laughed at the powerlessness of the Sunless Sea. It held no threat to us so long as we remained in the boat. The current grew a little stronger and I carefully guided the oar through the soul-drek. The grimy liquid stained the oar a darker hue with each pull.

"Help me!" A feminine voice lifted above the sound of the wind and I saw a pale and wretched-looking girl of about seventeen swimming determinedly toward the boat. I lifted the oar slightly above her grasping, desperate arms; then I noticed the sharks encircling her. Yeah, I knew they were Spectres in shark-form, but did she? I wondered how new she was.

"Please...please help me," she sobbed.

I started to lower the oar. Twin poked me.

"What are you doing? If you're going to risk your butt to save her, get something in return." He was right. Those were Spectres harassing her. They could turn on me if I helped her.

“What’ll you give me if I save you?” I called, dipping the oar slightly, taunting her, so that she would make a futile lunge for it. Twin laughed.

“Anything,” she sobbed.

“How about that bracelet you’re wearing?” I knew it had to be a relic.

“No, its...yes, take it!” she screamed as a Spectre-shark nearly severed her arm.

I leaned over the side of the boat and unhooked the bracelet, keeping one hand firmly on the oar.

“Climb in,” I offered.

“See if she has anything else,” crooned Twin, “If not, we can always sell her along with the boat.”

She dragged herself over the edge and flopped in, knocking me into the small space afforded by the boat. I lost my balance and dropped the bracelet into the murky sea. I made a wild grab for it as Twin shrieked, “Get it!”

Somehow, I lost my grip on the oar. A Spectre-shark wrenched it from my grasp and arrowed rapidly away from the boat.

“You stupid bitch!” I screamed at the girl, slapping her as she tried to sit up.

The boat began to spin in lazy circles, crossing the golden path, then looping off of it, then back on as we turned and turned. The wind became a fury, buffeting us from side to side. Black, greasy waves filled with screaming faces and crowned with goutts of foaming blood crashed over our little craft, drenching us in the foul matter.

“Get out! We’re too heavy!” I shrieked at the girl, trying to manhandle her back out of the boat. She seemed terribly heavy and I moved so slowly that she easily evaded me. My back began to hurt again. I’d forgotten the wound that the Legionnaire had inflicted. Now it began to burn and throb with pain.

“You get out, Johnny,” she calmly replied, smiling at me with her toothy shark’s grin, “If you can.”


I’d had enough of this. The boat began to pitch and bounce, swirling in progressively smaller circles. Soul-ichor flooded the bottom of the craft and the winds roared insanely. Time to call on the old Argos and abandon ship. I summoned up my Passion to fuel the Art. Nothing came...not a flicker.

I tried again, to no avail. Twin snickered.

“Johnny?” he whispered.

“What?” I barked in reply. I really wasn’t in the mood for one of his idiotic scenes.





"Look around you." he said. The girl stared at me with mirror-bright eyes and licked her lips sensuously. I desperately glanced around.

We were spinning in the center of a giant vortex, falling farther and farther down every minute. Far below us lay a deep crater, black and pulsing and, I sensed, hungry. The sides of the vortex now rose a hundred feet above us. She moved toward me, stretching out her impossibly long arms to enwrap me and pull me close. Her skin was made of rotting, squirming maggots; her red lips a raw and bleeding wound.

"What will you give me to save you, Johnny?" she cackled.

I tried again to use my Arcanos to move through the Tempest, and I felt the stirrings of the power. Shoving her away, I leapt upward and out of the boat — held fast, my feet were glued to the boat as if nailed there.

"Twin, help!" I screamed.

"Why?" he asked, "You're finally where I want you."

"No!" My back was afire, the waves were closing together overhead and I struggled frantically to free my feet, tearing and rending myself in my desperate attempt to escape the Oblivion which I now knew lay beneath me.

"Feeling Harrowed yet?" asked Twin conversationally.

"What about the girl? She's innocent!" I cried.

"You don't really care about the girl," sneered Twin.

"What about her?" the girl answered, shrugging into another dark, hooded robe which lay in the bottom of the boat. I suddenly realized that I was looking at the Ferryman.

"Pay no attention to the girl," he rasped, "She never existed. But I am surprised at you, Johnny Liar. You promised to follow the channel to the end, and, for once, you kept your word. And you see, I kept mine. I've brought you where you really wanted to go all along."

The Spectre-Ferryman grinned within his hood. The roar of the vortex overwhelmed all sound, but I felt the lash of his laughter as I slipped into the eternal Void.

The Tempest



Out of the south cometh the whirlwind; and cold out of the north.

— Job: 37, ix, *The Holy Bible*

Like a vast, terrifying, storm-tossed ocean, the Sea of Shadows is the roiling, unknowable expanse of violence known as the Tempest. Wraiths who would travel from one area of the Underworld to another must brave its Spectre-haunted depths, while those who fall unwillingly into it must battle for their very existence against their own Shadows. The Sea of Shadows surrounds, and some

say permeates, the entirety of the Underworld with the exception of the Shadowlands, that it encapsulates. Cold and gloomy, it hinders travel between the inner realms and the Shadowlands and collects the nightmares and memories of those who pass through it, spewing them out in an eternally raging storm. It is an inescapable, inexorable force that may regurgitate the horribly destructive storms known as Maelstroms in response to upheavals in the Skinlands, great changes in the Shadowlands, or as a prelude to either. Maelstroms roar through the realms and Shadowlands, leaving vast destruction and change in their wake.

It is easiest to think of the Tempest as a huge and furious ocean in which Stygia and the Far Shores exist as realms. Other realms lie within the Sea of Shadows' embrace as well, whether they are mere islands or whole continents. Some host strange beasts, others hold ports that serve as gateways to Necropoli. Many are dream realms, bitterly beautiful and evocative of all a wraith holds dear, afloat on the surface for only a small time before sinking into the depths once more. Others are places of nightmares and agony: Malfean Citadels, inhabited by hordes of Shades, where tortured, screaming wraiths are drained and twisted into Spectres for the amusement of the Malfean overlord. The voracious maw of the ever-hungry whirlpool of Oblivion waits beneath the Tempest's surface. The lightless Void is annihilation personified. It chews up and vomits forth every shred of a wraith's identity. Who knows what other horrors might lay-in-wait beneath the surface in the inky depths below? This is how most wraiths perceive the Tempest.

The Sea of Shadows is more than an infinitely powerful, vast, sunless sea. It is also a lake of cold fire, burning through a wraith's self-delusions and setting flame to her Passions. In some areas, the Tempest feels like quicksand; its sandy, shifting liquid inexorably pulling those who would pass through it down and into itself, sucking greedily at their fears. Other portions are like seas of broken glass, filled with the cast-off, sharpened filings of Stygian metal. The pieces are too small to be worked, but large enough to wound a wraith who passes through with the soul-bite of Oblivion. It is a sea not of murky, viscous water, but of souls; every drop is the pure essence of negative emotions — despair, hatred, greed, envy, sadistic glee and overwhelming pride — that has been squeezed out of countless souls and distilled into midnight soul-ichor. The screaming faces and torn bodies of those dread souls are caught within and reflected throughout the liquid darkness. Immersed inside these fluids of foulness, Spectres are whelped like half-term abortions, to swarm and torture those who would brave passage through their mother's birth canal. Others claim there's nothing there at all.

How to Use This Book

The Sea of Shadows is a sourcebook for both Storytellers and players of Wraith. Within this book is information on the following: the Tempest, its original purpose and how it became twisted; the geography of the Underworld and its relation to the Umbra; nihilis; Spectres; Harrowings; Artifacts; pregenerated Storyteller characters and an adventure suitable for any troupe. Though portions of the book should be reserved for the Storyteller, much of the information may be given (as hard-earned knowledge) to characters who have traversed the Tempest or who survive a Harrowing.

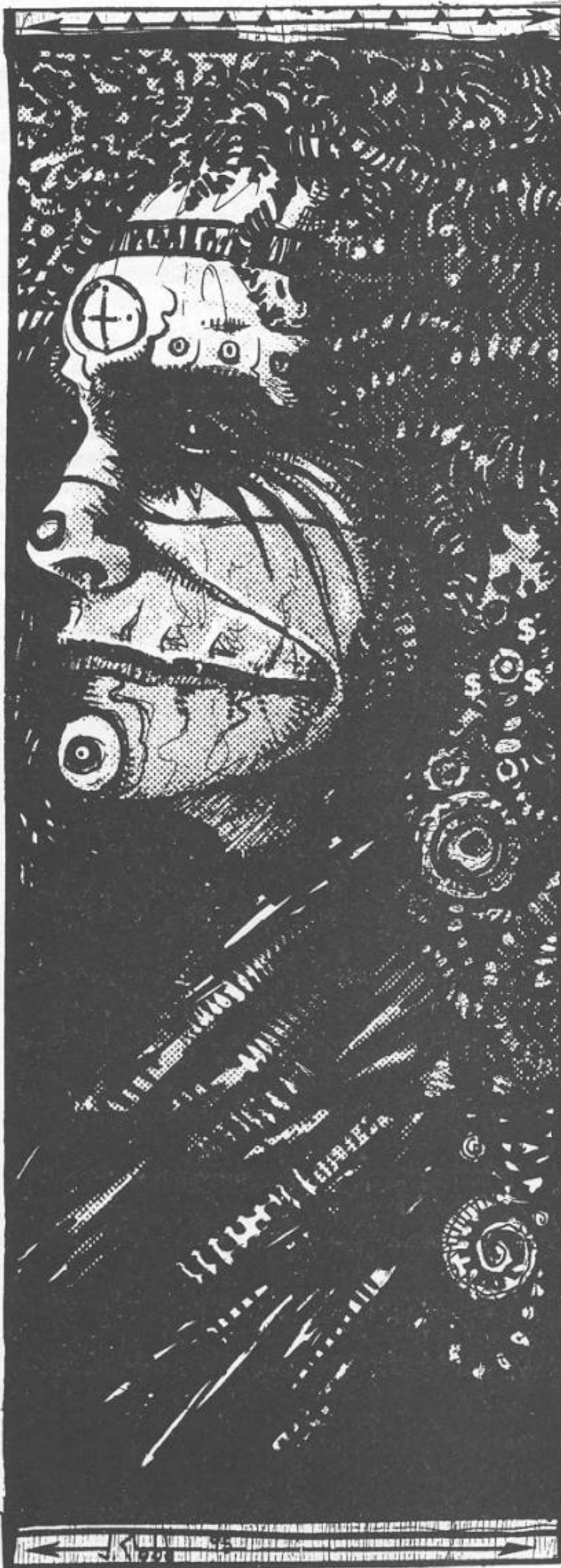
Since players are players, they will probably voraciously read the book and memorize everything in it. It is suggested that the Storyteller use what is included within this book as a jumping-off point to create her own stories, Harrowings, Storyteller characters and Artifacts. Customizing material is one of the best ways to internalize the mood and setting. It leads to more exciting descriptions and interactions. Besides, it's hard to scare people when they already know what will happen.

If *The Sea of Shadows* is being used in an ongoing chronicle, the Storyteller may want to utilize it to do several things: to move characters out of the Shadowlands and into other areas of the Underworld (or vice versa), to manufacture more fiendish Harrowings based on the longer method discussed in Chapter Three, to familiarize the players with the ways of crossing the Tempest and the dangers therein and to introduce ongoing villains who can appear to plague the characters, then disappear back into a stronghold within the depths of the Tempest. Chronicles that are just starting could also benefit from the uses detailed above, but might focus, from the beginning, more on the Underworld and the Tempest.

Players may (with Storyteller permission) read through various sections for ideas on personality, Passions, relics, Artifacts or Fetters. They may wish to have their characters know (or know of) one or more of the Storyteller characters, a particular realm, a special Artifact or a rumored way to cross through the Tempest. They could also harvest ideas for stories they'd like to see told. Sometimes a little prior information can enhance the story for those involved. This could give the story greater depth and reality, while heightening any fear or trepidation the players might feel. A little knowledge is indeed a dangerous thing, particularly in *Wraith*.

Theme

The Sea of Shadows should be terrifying. It is the personification of the unknown which may sweep characters away or trap them as near-mindless servants of Oblivion, doomed to spend eternity corrupting and destroying others. The Tempest is a frontier that must be crossed. It's a place where Spectres wait in ambush and Maelstroms churn



through the depths, obliterating paths and catching wraiths up in their change-embrace, leaving them twisted with corruption. Oblivion waits within the Tempest, greedily sucking down all who are too weak to resist the demand of its siren's call. In this realm of terror, wraiths' Shadows revel and shriek, beating at the bars which hold them in check and demanding that they have their turn at control. Within the Tempest, wraiths must face their fears, shortcomings, shame and desires. The theme is confrontation: confrontation of the unknown, confrontation of the Spectres that haunt the Sunless Sea's murky vastness and most importantly, confrontation of the self.

In the end, the Tempest is only the staging area where the battle rages between a wraith's lighter and darker sides. Each trip through the Sea of Shadows is a journey of self-exploration and a confrontation of all that is most foul within oneself. Spectres, wraith-slavers, Maelstroms and whirlpools, may be no more raging than each wraith's unconscious bent on destruction and consumption. Many times the wraith may keep to the safe path, refusing to see that which gibbers within herself. She may travel from one area to another within the Tempest with relative ease. Sooner or later, however, she must face that which holds the key to her innermost soul, her own unconscious, that dark mirror which wraiths call the Shadow. Recognizing it and overcoming its base urges result in the culmination of the journey, and allows the triumphant wraith to once again emerge from the Tempest to a safe and familiar

place — for a while. Those who fall to their Shadow's tricks and blandishments must still confront their dissolution as they are sucked into Oblivion and destroyed.

Mood

The Tempest is a realm of terror where wraiths must confront their worst nightmares and survive or be destroyed. Virtually anything can happen in the Sea of Shadows, and that can cause great fear as the wraith must battle the unknown without knowing what weapons might best serve the purpose. The stakes are high — continuation, loss-of-self or destruction. Because so many possibilities are inherent in the Tempest, it cannot be adequately experienced by sticking to just one mood. Although the underlying mood might be horror or terror, uncertainty or anger, these are best seen in juxtaposition to that which is normal, unthreatening or beautiful. Certainly bittersweet longing for that which the wraith has lost, unendurable sorrow, even a sense of confusion and desperation as the wraith tries to remember her past are dominant moods. But joy, relief and even humor have their place. As long as the Storyteller keeps in mind the basic theme — confrontation — and the underlying mood, any other mood, from exhilaration at beating a Harrowing to despair over losing a beloved Fetter, is not only possible, but also helps to set off the dominant mood by comparison.



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Setting

Many settings within the Tempest are detailed in this book. Their variety should be an indication of what is possible in the Sea of Shadows. Any conceivable setting can be found within the Sunless Sea. Mythic kingdoms, lands of ultimate horror inescapable prison realms, beautiful faerie glades, desolate and deadly oceans, storm-tossed cloud cities and dozens of other realms swirl through and under and over the Sunless Sea, awaiting discovery. Settings are limited only by the Storyteller's imagination and the players' desires and interest. Whether these realms are reality, a reflection of a wraith's innermost desires or a phantasmal fantasy is ultimately for each troupe to say. Some troupes will feel more comfortable with set, stable realms which are the "real, true" setting of Wraith; others will enjoy topping one another with more and more fantastic dream reflections. Some will appreciate the inherent horror of playing out their Angst and Passion against a backdrop that is no more than the symbolic, physical representation of their unconscious minds.

The Storyteller should feel free to change descriptions whenever the characters leave an area and return to it later. When doing so, however, certain portions should remain the same so that the players don't become hopelessly lost in a tangle of unfamiliar places. If the characters leave an island where orange and coconut trees shade a white, scimitar-shaped beach, but later return to it, they may find that the beach is now the purest black sand, or the trees have become stately pillars. Enough should be familiar so that they recognize the place. This reflects the passing through of minor Maelstroms or a change in the characters' perceptions.

Information Within the Book

The chapters in *The Sea of Shadows* are each based around a particular kind of information:

Chapter One: Within the Soul-Dark Sea

This chapter focuses more fully on what the Tempest is, the positions of various realms within it and information on the byways and areas surrounding the more stable realms. Also covered are a few unstable realms, nihilis and other openings into and out of the Tempest, time and movement within the Tempest and the Underworld's relation to the Umbra.

Chapter Two: Riders on the Storm

Spectres, monsters and ravaging creatures, the denizens of the Tempest, are examined in this chapter. Also noted are the Great Maelstroms and the smaller ones (called Soul-Storms) that move through the Sunless Sea, warping and changing those they overcome. Also covered are less-menacing beings such as the enigmatic Ferrymen.

Chapter Three: By Darkness Overtaken

Chapter Three explores Harrowings. It examines their original purpose, why and how they have changed and focuses on several different types. A few optional suggestions on new systems for running Harrowings, making them more or less deadly, are also included.

Chapter Four: Adrift on the Sea of Shadows

This chapter is a ready-to-run adventure that can be used for any troupe and adapted to an existing or starting chronicle. Much of the action occurs in the Tempest. Several locations and choices exist which may be explored in accordance with the players' actions or at the Storyteller's whim.

Appendix: The Ferryman's Sack

Several Artifacts and new Arcanos are included in the Appendix for quick and easy reference.

Lexicon

If an entry does not appear here and is not defined in the text, consult the Lexicon in *Wraith: The Oblivion*, p. 31.

Angelics: Plasmic entities that seem like the classic idea of angels; they are usually benign.

Barrow-flame: A cold flame that burns wraiths like a normal fire would burn the living.

Byways: Semi-permanent paths, roads, rails and rivers that run through the Tempest and connect the inner realms. Utilizing byways is the safest method of crossing the Tempest.

Channels: Liquid byways. Technically, they are no different from normal byways.

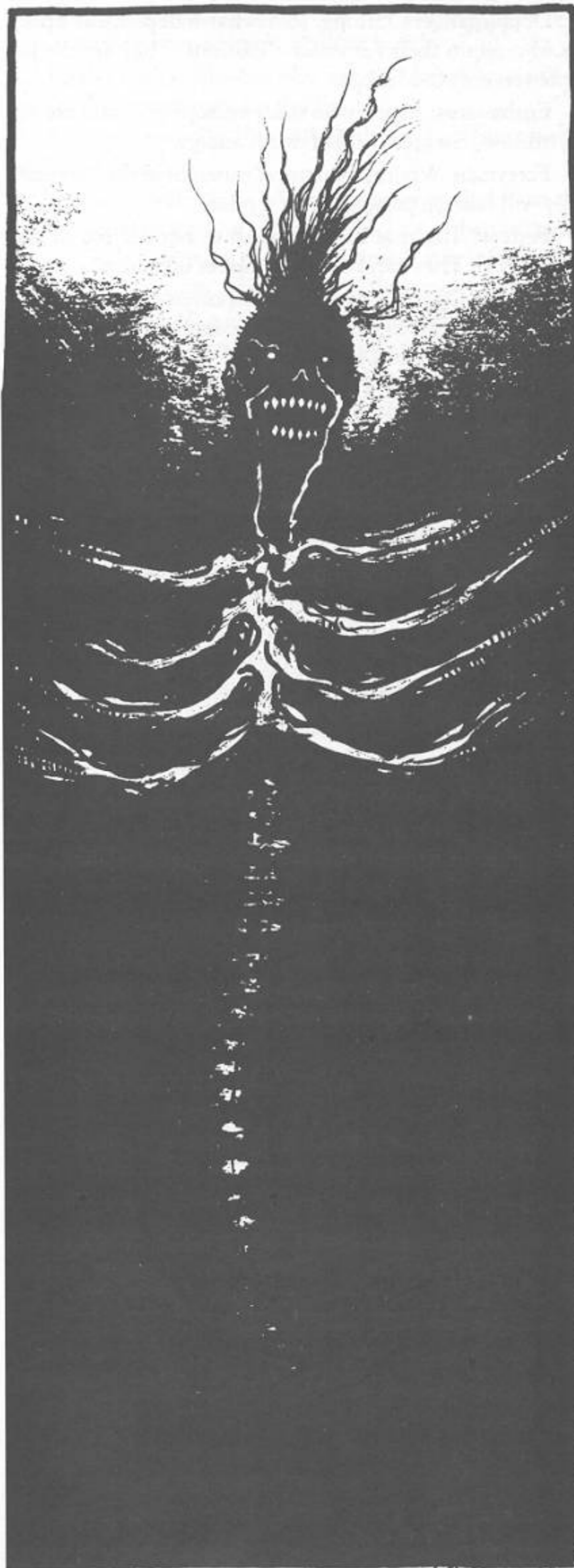
Darklight: An Artifact produced by the Soul-Pirates of the Far Shores. It provides illumination without calling attention to them by shining within the darkness of the open sea.

Dark Umbra: Another term for the Underworld, used mostly by Garou and mages.

Deliriums: Plasmic entities (creatures) that resemble bizarre and unusual near-animals (lion-headed snakes, for example).

Demonics: Plasmic entities that seem like the classic idea of demons; they are usually inclined to be evil.

Destruction Harrowings: Harrowings which have no quarry or target (such as a Fetter or Passion), but try to directly consume the wraith with Oblivion.



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Introduction

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Doppelgangers: Strong, somewhat-independent Spectres who retain their Fetters and Passions. They are the favorite servants of Malfeans.

Euthanatos: Mages who study entropy and who are often filled with a great deal of death energy.

Ferrymen: Wraiths who travel throughout the Tempest. They will take on passengers for a price.

Fetters: Ties that bind a wraith to her old life in the living world. They can be people, places or things.

Hidden Ones: Displaced or dispossessed wraiths who have nowhere else to go. They form communities along the banks of the River of Death.

Isle of Sorrows: The rocky island at the delta of the River of Death. Stygia is built on it.

Labyrinth: The horribly winding passages, tunnels and stairs which lead to Oblivion at the heart of the Underworld.

Lake of Cold Fire: A Shifting Zone that tests a wraith's Passions.

Land of Bedlam: A Shifting Zone where the resident wraiths' insanities are given physical form.

Legendaries: Plasmic entities that resemble legendary creatures like unicorns or dragons.

Lost Souls: Souls who have never had their cauls removed or who remove their own; they wander the Tempest.

Miasma: A Shifting Zone that plays havoc with a wraith's memories.

Monastics: Groups of wraiths that reside along the River of Death. They usually practice one religion and are not as likely to kidnap wraiths to "convert" them as are Heretics associated with the Far Shores.

Necropolis Ports: Openings to various Necropoli which afford wraiths an easier path to travel to and from them.

Nephandi: Corrupted mages who serve demonic masters called Malfeans. They may or may not be the Wraith Malfeans.

Nephwracks: Doppelgangers who have been twisted and devolved by the powers of Oblivion to such an extent that they can no longer pass for normal wraiths.

Nightmare Ride: Another name for a Harrowing; occasionally used to describe a particularly extended Harrowing.


Nihils: Holes into the Shadowlands from the Tempest. They are like festering sores, allowing Spectres and Maelstroms easy access to the Shadowlands.

Ocean of Acid: A Shifting Zone which harms wraiths who are caught in it.

Phantasies: Plasmic entities who resemble normal animals. Sometimes known as "road kill."

Pirates: Groups of wraiths who waylay others in the Tempest and rob them of their material (plasmic) goods.





Plasmic Entities: Creatures made of plasm who inhabit the Tempest. They are not Malfeans or wraiths.

Pool of Bittersweet Remembrance: A Shifting Zone in which wraiths may remember some heretofore forgotten piece from their past.

Quagmire: Shifting Zone in which wraiths can become trapped.

Quarry: The object of a Harrowing; a Passion or Fetter.

River of Death: The main byway through the Tempest.

Sargasso Sea: Shifting Zone in which wraiths may become mired.

Sargasso Spectres: The Spectres who inhabit the Sargasso Sea and attack the wraiths caught in it.

Sea of Broken Glass: Shifting Zone in which Stygian metal dross is suspended, it causes injury to wraiths who pass through.

Sea of Shadows: Name sometimes used to describe the Tempest; in actuality, the Sea of Spectres that surrounds the Labyrinth.

Sea of Souls: The sea and seawall made up of Moliated and bound thralls that surrounds Stygia and affords it some protection from Maelstroms.

Shard Spectres: Spectres who inhabit the Sea of Broken Glass. They have shards of Stygian steel imbedded in their bodies.

Shifting Zones: Areas within the Tempest that may appear randomly and almost without notice.

Soul-Pirates: Slavers who capture wraiths to use as thralls. They work only for the Far Shores.

Soul-Storms: Smaller Maelstroms that can twist a wraith's body or mind.

Stygian Steel: Metal which has been crafted from the smelted souls of wraiths and alloyed to ore mined from the Venous Stair (a portion of the Labyrinth). It is infused with the cold of Oblivion. Also known as darksteel.

Sunless Sea: Name sometimes used to describe the Tempest; in actuality, a vast sea lying between Stygia and the Far Shores.

Target Harrowings: Harrowings which have a target or quarry (a Passion or Fetter). Rather than directly attacking the wraith, these Harrowings try to destroy their quarry in order to weaken the wraith.

Tempest Fugit: Shifting Zone in which time is greatly speeded up.

Weeping Bay: The half-moon shaped bay where Charon was lost. It serves as the Port of Stygia.

Wyrds: Plasmic entities who look like weird, alien creatures and have radically different thought processes.





Chapter One: Within the Soul-Dark Sea

The Tempest is the vast, underworld ocean and unceasing storm that separates one realm from another in the land of the dead. Once it was but a placid sea o'er which we crossed, ferrying our charges whence they would go. The great sea spread outward from the mighty River of Death. We built our boats from the reeds which grew along the river and sailed up and down its length and across the Sunless Sea to the Far Shores, carrying countless souls to find their rest. Those days are no more. None among us now knows or remembers what grave truths or foul lies caused the change. We only know, to our sorrow, its result.

— from the Journal of Actemaeon, Ferryman



The Geography of the Underworld

Direction and Distance

*At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is,
But neither arrest nor movement. And do not call it fixity,
Where past and future are gathered. Neither movement
From nor towards,*


*Neither ascent nor decline. Except for the point, the still point,
There would be no dance, and there is only the dance.*

*I can only say, there we have been: but I cannot say where.
And I cannot say, how long, for that is to place it in time.*

— T. S. Eliot, "Burnt Norton"

In the Skinlands, there are dependable determinants for direction. Gravity provides a "down" and "up," while the cardinal directions tell us which way north, south, east and west lay and the sun provides a handy east-west direction finder for those without a compass. Consensus has made measurement an easy task, with miles or kilometers serving as references that everyone understands. Even in space, the distance to the sun, moon, and other planets can be measured.

That just doesn't work in the Underworld. Gravity isn't constant; neither is direction. This, along with the Tempest which limits movement from one place to another, presents quite a problem to those wraiths who need to travel. The Underworld isn't really under the ground or inside the earth, as many would believe, but lies within a hyperspace dimension superimposed over and contiguous to the real world. Held apart by the Shroud, the Shadowlands touch on and overlap the Skinlands. To some degree, they take their shape from them. Below the Shadowlands (or beside, behind or simply apart from the Shadowlands) lies the rest of the Underworld. Vast, uncharted worlds may spin inside the Underworld. These may be other realms which have never been explored, save perhaps by Spectres. Those portions which



are known lie relatively close to the Shadowlands (or close to the surface of the Sunless Sea). That's the problem with explaining exactly *where* things are in the Underworld. There are many different interpretations and all are correct.

To some extent, direction and distance are subjective. Each wraith determines for herself how far away something is and in what direction it lies. Wraiths using Argos find their way through the Tempest to their destination by going in the "right" direction (assuming they are successful in their use of the Arcanos). "Right" is alternately defined as "the way everyone believes the place lies," "the way I know," "where it was last time," "the easiest way through," "wherever I want it to be," and "whatever works." Because of the first definition, the consensual one, it is possible to make byways through the Tempest to well-known locations. These are like major highways or sea lanes, defining a consistent route for wraiths to follow. At least, that's what most wraiths believe. In actuality, the byways change as much as the rest of the Underworld, but the Ferrymen and other wraiths who travel upon them unconsciously adjust to compensate for this.

Some wraiths, particularly the Ferrymen, are aware of the dual nature of the Underworld. They know that at one and the same time, the Underworld is a tangible place in which many wraiths interact, as well as a subjective reality inside their own subconscious. Distance is as much a matter of the symbolic struggle within oneself as it is an actual measurable quality. Placement depends as much on the wraith's own choice as on the chaotic nature of the Tempest.

"Up" may actually be down, sideways, within or have no relation to anything else at all. Stygia may not be *across* from the Far Shores, but above, below, beside or around. To some extent, it really doesn't matter. Wraiths were mortals once and still tend to think in mortal terms concerning such things as direction and distance. While it is not entirely accurate, the geography of the Underworld is explained in those familiar terms. That is, after all, the way the wraiths usually perceive things to be.

During Harrowings and Maelstroms, of course, all bets are off.

Time and Movement

Time is subjective and distance relative within the Tempest. The most aesthetically pleasing way to run journeys through it is for the Storyteller to take "as long as it needs to." In other words, if the game is focusing on other things and the characters are just passing through on their way to the real encounters, it's fine to do a brief description and let them pass through without incident (provided they make their Argos roll). On the other hand, if getting there is half the fun, the Storyteller will undoubtedly have some juicy

encounters planned within the Tempest and things will take considerably longer. There are some instances in which it is necessary to know how long a trip through the Tempest will take. Sometimes the characters have a limited amount of time to accomplish some objective; sometimes they just need to know how much juice they'll have to expend to get their relic car from one place to another. The following should be used as a rule of thumb for judging time and costs for movement through the Tempest. Like all rules, if the action calls for something else, feel free to disregard them in favor of more excitement or better roleplaying opportunities. This is an option to help deal with questions, not a series of hard and fast laws.

Swimming or Flying

Whether swimming or flying, a wraith usually takes at least one hour to move from one major realm to the next closest one when utilizing a major byway. For example, traveling from Stygia to the first Renegade outpost along the River of Death takes at least one hour. That outpost to the next one along the river takes another hour.

When utilizing minor or little-known byways, the wraith takes three times as long to get from one area to another. For instance, if the wraith is in a small Heretic hideout that is an hour away from Stygia along the River of Death, and uses a back trail to travel back to Stygia so as not to be seen by patrols of Legionnaires, the journey takes at least three hours.

If the wraith is not using a byway, the journey takes ten times as long because the wraith must constantly try to re-adjust to the wild currents, winds and other problems (including lack of landmarks) just to get where she's going.

Note that these are considered "standard" times (see *Orienteering in Wraith: The Oblivion*, p. 140). They may be altered by making an exceptionally good roll on *Orienteering*, or by using the Argos power of Flicker. Some "standard" travel times between well-known places along major byways:

Journey	Time
Stygia to Far Shores	2 weeks
Stygia to Labyrinth	1 week
Stygia to nearest Necropolis port	2 hours
One Far Shore to another Far Shore	1 hour

All travel times are for traveling *within* the Tempest, from place to place and realm to realm. These travel times are not indicative of travel times when inside a realm or Necropolis, in the Shadowlands or when visiting Fetters.

It should also be noted that when a wraith is taken for a Harrowing, the effect is instantaneous. The wraith is suddenly in the labyrinth.

Relic and Artifact Vehicles

Vehicles provide a way for numerous wraiths to all travel through the Tempest together. They vary from the Ferrymen's reed boats to Artifacts such as the Stygian trains and cruisers or relic motorboats and trucks. In general, the differences in vehicle types are as follows:

Stygian vehicles are Artifacts made of Stygian metal and can harm or kill wraiths by running them over. They are steered by a wraith with a high level of Argos and generally carry lots of wraiths. Many of them are military vehicles. Aside from the Pathos used to power the wraith's Argos, no other "fuel" is needed.

The Ferrymen's reed boats are magical Artifacts capable of many strange feats and changes in appearance. Only Ferrymen can steer their boats so they avoid most of the troubles of the Tempest. Others may steer the boats in emergencies, but only Ferrymen know how to power the inherent magic in the craft.


Relic vehicles usually are smaller, carry fewer wraiths and must be powered by Pathos. Someone with Argos must drive the vehicle and spend the normal Pathos to activate her Arcanos. Aside from this expenditure, the vehicle requires extra Pathos for fuel. When first starting out and for every six hours of travel time (or approximately half a day) thereafter, another Pathos point must be spent by *someone* traveling within the vehicle; it need not be the driver. If nobody gives the vehicle a Pathos point to continue, it glides to a stop. If it is on land, it sits there; in the sea, it bobs on the water and then may drift into a nasty area.

Standard time in any vehicle is half that of swimming or flying (i.e. it takes only one week to travel from Stygia to the Far Shores in a vehicle, as long as it stays on a major byway). It is rumored that Stygian craft can put on extra speed at need or even jump from one area of the Tempest to another, but the means by which they do so is little understood. The Ferrymen's boats, although they seem slow, can often reach areas far away from their original position in a matter of moments, should the Ferrymen choose. Spectre ships are said to utilize Angst in place of Pathos and are said to be frighteningly swift when in pursuit of wraiths.

Maelstroms and Travel

Maelstroms move far faster than any vehicle with the possible exception of the Ferrymen's boats. When wraiths are caught in the Tempest during a Maelstrom, their only recourse is to try to ride it out. It is almost impossible to get to the Shadowlands from the Tempest or from a realm as a Maelstrom is building up or during its fury. One possible way to enter the Shadowlands is through nihilis, but these are usually blocked from the other side or swarming with Spectres. Legend holds that there are portals to the Shadowlands somewhere deep within various Labyrinth entryways. Of course, these too are teeming with Spectres preparing for invasion.





Sometimes it's best to just ride out the Maelstrom and hope to endure it. Oftentimes, heading out to the open sea is a way to escape the worst fury of the storm as it rushes by and dashes itself against the realms and fills the byways. Though the open sea will have many smaller Maelstrom storms within it due to the intense, surrounding activity, there is a far greater chance that a wraith can survive there. Heading straight into the Maelstrom or trying to run before it is suicide unless the wraith is within a minute or two of a major realm like Stygia.

Byways often become impassable during Maelstroms. Those that are not blocked are usually cut somewhere along their length. Reaching a cut in a byway means that the wraith must take her bearings and try to discern which way to go. She must roll her Argos again, and treat travel time as though she is not utilizing a byway at all until she can relocate her original path (10 hours minus the wraith's Perception + Investigation score). This is a little tricky, because the travel time for being off a Byway is applied to the number of hours that the wraith is lost.

Example: JooJoo comes to a break as he is traveling on the byway. He rolls his Perception + Argos for Orienteering to determine where he is and where the byway can be found again. He gets three successes, meaning he is working on standard traveling time. Next he subtracts his Perception + Investigation (a total of five dice) from 10, meaning he will have to search for five hours before finding the byway again. Though he would have normally been able to pass as many as five homesteads, hideaways or other locations within the Tempest during that time, he has been off the byway, meaning he has really only traveled 1/10th of his normal distance (or the equivalent of a half hour's travel). In other words, it takes him five hours to cover the same amount of territory it would have taken 30 minutes to cover while on a byway.


Places In The Tempest

*We must be still and still moving
Into another intensity
For a further union, a deeper communion
Through the dark cold and empty desolation,
The wave cry, the wind cry, the vast waters...
— T.S. Eliot, "East Coker"*

Part sea, part desolation, part storm, the Tempest claims the largest part of the Underworld. Like space, which holds the sun, moon, planets and stars within it, the Tempest holds realms upon realms within its chaotic folds. Though it is usually imagined as a vast, murky ocean, the Tempest is as much a storm as it is a sea. In places, the Tempest becomes land-like and doesn't even resemble water. Even in those areas, however, the fury of the storm is felt in gritty, stinging winds and the charnel stench of Moliated or smelted souls. The whipping, stinging, black rain which turns to acid at times, wounding and scarring wraiths unlucky enough to be caught within it.



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Wraiths may travel through the Tempest by walking, driving, sailing, floating or flying if they have the necessary Arcanos abilities, Artifacts or relic vehicles. The best ways to cross are along the byways (roads, bridges and rail lines) that criss-cross through most of the Tempest and lead to the Shadowlands or via the channels (waterways) through the seas. The best known vehicles for crossing through the Tempest are the Ferrymen's reed boats. These sturdy craft seem to have an uncanny knack for surviving the roughest waters, the heaviest downpours, the greatest winds and the most virulent attacks by Spectres. Stygia has ships of Stygian metal plying the seas around it and great railroads which cross the lands or cut through the darkness to reach their destinations. Some wraiths possess relic vehicles and boats which they use for travel. These can range from ancient chariots drawn by Spectral horses to modern motorcycles and RVs. Wraiths who lack such luxuries or the Argos ability can only float aimlessly (or with whatever current pulls them along). They may spend a Pathos point to change direction. However, Argos endows the wraith with the ability to choose a path that is the quickest and easiest solution to reach his destination. Usually this is accomplished by utilizing a byway, and it allows him to swim in the Tempest's fluid. Wraiths without Argos cannot swim, nor can they usually locate byways. Their choices as to direction are likely to have a dismal ending. Of course, floating is dangerous too. It attracts Spectres to the helpless wraith.

The Known Underworld

A Word on Nomenclature

Although it has become vogue to refer to the Tempest as the Sea of Shadows or the Sunless Sea, the three are not actually synonymous. Technically, the Tempest is the area that lies between the Shadowlands and the rest of the Underworld and surrounds all of the inner realms, the place which used to be simply known as the Darkness. Though devoid of light, it was not filled with storms and wild chaotic beings and places until it became saturated with them all by the Third Great Maelstrom. The Sea of Shadows is a horrible area immediately surrounding the Labyrinth. It is literally an ocean of Spectres which teems, roils and occasionally bursts forth to accompany smaller or greater Maelstroms. The Sunless Sea was once a placid ocean which lay at the terminus of the River of Death and formed a barrier between the Isle of Sorrows and the Far Shores. The Second Great Maelstrom transformed the Sunless Sea into a place of chaotic currents and weather. It became a dwelling place for strange beasts. Despite the fact that they were originally separate, the three have become linked and the Tempest has become so strong that calling it by the other names, while technically inaccurate, is still correct.


The Sunless Sea

Originally, the Sunless sea was a quiet ocean fed by the waters of the River of Death. Those restless souls who sought the Far Shores were able to traverse it easily. Now it is a wild sea, strafed by odd currents and random weather and inhabited by strange creatures. It lies between Stygia and the Far Shores. Rumors abound of Renegade enclaves and secret Heretic temples within the hidden reaches of the Sunless Sea. The dark waters may hide many secrets, for in this starless ocean the only light to be found is that which is brought by travelers or fixed in place by those few who inhabit its island havens. The dark waters of the Sunless Sea reflect whatever light shines upon them, shattering it into thousands of light splinters which crown the waves. Overhead, pure velvet darkness is all that can be seen. Ships or islands with lights can be seen from miles away, as the light shines clearly like a beacon in absolute lightlessness. Soul pirates, said to work for the various realms of the Far Shores, have reportedly perfected a darklight which provides illumination up to 50 miles without the drawback of announcing their presence. Near Stygia, the Sunless Sea laps upon and intermingles with the Sea of Souls. The Sunless Sea has two tides every "day," a feature which allows Stygia to keep track of time through a complex system of water clocks.

The Sea of Souls – Stygia

When Charon first discovered the Isle of Sorrows, the Sea of Souls and the Sunless Sea were, to some extent, one and the same. After the near destruction of Stygia during the First Great Maelstrom, Charon ordered a great sea-wall built around the Isle of Sorrows as protection from future storms. The wall was made from the plasm of wraiths who were melted down and twisted into shape. It now incorporates Stygian steel and iron in its makeup. The Sea of Souls presses upon and encompasses that sea-wall. It is a bulwark against the Maelstrom not simply by virtue of forming a physical barrier, but because it consists of all the souls who are in thrall to Stygia and who aren't employed in other work. These souls erect a barrier of *belief* against the emptiness of Oblivion.

Literally a sea of souls, those who are not part of the wall are chained in place among countless others, flowing and ebbing with the tides of the Sunless Sea. The souls' Corpuses are of a watery consistency, allowing them to slide and mingle and tumble over one another. Cries and moans echo across the Sea of Souls, sounding a little like gulls on the shore. The lights which delineate the perimeter of Stygia shine upon the Sea of Souls, illuminating the wretched forms and twisted faces of the thralls who rise and sink and slither over one another in their unending, agonized existence. The ships that protect Stygia from invasion cruise upon the Sea of Souls, cutting and crushing those on top as they pass.



Occasional raids by Renegades result in some of the outermost wretched souls being cut free and stolen. Since they are usually no more than drones, most will only go to serve as slaves (or trade goods) for the Renegades, since freeing them would simply send them on to Oblivion. As Stygia has outgrown its original boundaries, the wall and sea have been pushed outward and expanded as well.

Some wraiths claim that the Sea of Souls is the place from which newborns receive their souls and that it corresponds to the Hebrew Well of Souls. This is unlikely, as the souls who make up the sea are chained in place and have very little personality beyond a drone-like state of being. Such souls would provide little spark for a new life. Of course, the world being what it is, more and more children are born who show no shred of conscience or creativity; many seem soul-dead from birth and live only to kill and corrupt. It is possible that these children have indeed received one of these deadened souls.

The most well-known portion of the Sea of Souls is Weeping Bay. This half-moon shaped bay partakes equally of the Sea of Souls and the Sunless Sea and serves as the docking area for the port of Stygia. During the Fifth Great Maelstrom, Stygia was threatened by a monstrous Malfean who arose from the Sunless Sea. Charon sailed into the Weeping Bay, where he battled the beast. Both were lost to a great whirlpool which Charon summoned. Weeping Bay is aptly named, for the souls within it weep and sob constantly. Though they may have done so before the battle, many claim that the souls bound into the Bay weep for the loss of Charon.

The Sea of Shadows

The Sea of Shadows encircles the great Labyrinth which forms the heart of Oblivion at the center of the Underworld. It consists of thousands upon thousands of nearly mindless Spectres. These labyrinthine Shades prevent entry into the Void by anyone not ready for dissolution. Conversely, souls that have nothing left to live for find themselves being guided through the Sea of Shadows as if pulled along a predetermined pathway into the heart of the Labyrinth. There they are swallowed by Oblivion or changed into Spectres. Even in a cold, gloomy place like the Underworld, the Sea of Shadows stands out as the most freezing and depressing area in the Tempest. Here, darkness is a solid, oppressive force which beats down upon the wraith, stealing any feelings of comfort or hope from her and twisting them into anguish and despair. Flickers of baleful, greenish Spectre-fire are the only lights which function in the Sea of Shadows. All other lights, no matter how magical or pure their origin, fail and die before the power of Oblivion. No heat or warmth of any kind exists here, and wraiths who believed themselves frozen in the chill of the Underworld before entering the Sea of Shadows soon discover what true, absolute cold is.

At the center of the Sea of Shadows lies the Labyrinth, the great, spiraling maw which opens into Oblivion. This physical manifestation of nothingness is sometimes called the Void. The Sea of Shadows flows around and into the Labyrinth, but also originates within, flowing upward and outward. The two polar tides flowing in and out create a giant whirlpool that sucks anything within, but not of, the sea into Oblivion.

The Open Sea

*I reached a place where every light is muted,
Which bellows like the sea beneath a tempest,
When it is battered by opposing winds.
The hellish hurricane, which never rests,
Drives on the spirits with its violence:
Wheeling and pounding, it harasses them.*
— Dante, *Inferno*

Away from any of the realms and far out into the Tempest lie the areas known as the open sea. Like the world's oceans, the murky depths of the open sea descend for miles and miles, perhaps even to distances that would correspond to interstellar travel. No one has ever returned from a journey into the depths to report on their findings. The open sea is, at one and the same time, the most stable and the most chaotic portion of the Tempest. Sometimes, the open sea is reminiscent of Skinland oceans: gently swelling waves, no land in sight in any direction and a pale, hazy-gray vault of what might pass for sky above. Channels through the area follow the path of least resistance among the waves, bending to the current. At times the gray overcast recedes to reveal a deep blackness overhead, shot through with thousands of pinprick lights, like spangled stars. These are actually nihilis seen from the Underworld side, opening into the relative light of the Shadowlands. A wraith could almost imagine herself on a wintry sea voyage when the open sea is calm.

Naturally, it doesn't stay calm for long. Usually, the open sea roils and shudders in choppy waves or deep, dangerous troughs from the hundreds of small Maelstroms sucked up from the Labyrinth at the sea's center. The sky is a leaden, gray-black, peopled by the misty forms of Spectres who fly overhead like scudding clouds. The wind blasts with the icy, deadening force of the Void. At these times, it is possible to look up and see streams of black ichor pouring through rents in the sky. This is the true appearance of the nihilis that are siphoning off the energy from the Shadowlands to feed the Oblivion below.

Wraiths swimming in the open sea may be damaged by the buffeting seas and freezing winds if they are caught in crosscurrents. Wraiths who are sailing may have their crafts destroyed. These rare occurrences happen perhaps once every ten to fifteen times that a wraith passes through the open



sea. Whenever such an event is called for, wraiths who are using their own Argos Arcanos must roll their Argos ratings (versus a difficulty of 8). If a group of wraiths is being led through by one wraith who has Argos, that wraith must roll to determine the fate of the whole group. A single success indicates that the wraiths have successfully negotiated the rough waters and winds. They have escaped the dangerous area.

Failure means that the wraith and all who are dependent on the wraith to get them through the Tempest take three levels of damage from the buffeting (soak rolls are allowed). If the wraiths are in a ship, the craft is damaged instead. Small ships can automatically soak one level of damage per turn (getting no other soak roll) and are destroyed when they have taken five levels of damage; larger ships (such as those made of Stygian steel) soak three levels per turn and are destroyed when they take ten levels of damage. Until the craft is destroyed, the wraiths inside it take no damage. Once they are forced into swimming, however, the wraiths who are using Argos must make another roll at the same difficulty. A new roll is allowed every turn until one is successful. Once a successful roll has been made, the wraiths (and any craft they are in) escape from the turbulent area.

If the roll is botched, any craft the wraiths are in is immediately destroyed as the sea and wind become whipped into hurricane force. Should the wraiths be swimming, they are subjected to six levels of damage per turn (which may be soaked as usual). If any individual wraith, except the one whose Argos is being used to travel, loses all her Corpus from this, she is dragged off to a Harrowing. If the wraith using Argos to get everyone through loses all of his Corpus, the entire group is taken to be Harrowed. Once there, their fates are determined based on their reactions to a rare, group Harrowing.

Soul-Storms

Of greater danger are the small Maelstroms known as *soul-storms* that sweep through the open seas. Some look like water spouts, others like small hurricanes, still others like violent thunderstorms. When they pass over a wraith, the restless soul is changed in some manner. The physical storms are capable of flaying the Corpus from a wraith, weakening her and leaving her more susceptible to future harm. The mental storms corrupt the wraith's mind, twisting her memories and causing great Angst. The corruption storms can Moliat the wraith, changing her into a horrific shape. Items and objects may also be changed by the storms: a boat becomes a twisted, swanlike sculpture (which then sinks) or a stand of trees on an island becomes a fence of gigantic teeth. There is no guarantee that a Moliated wraith is still capable of locomotion. She might, for instance, be warped into a sea anchor which is then dropped into the lightless depths.





When a soul-storm passes over a wraith, the Storyteller must determine its nature (physical, mental or corruptive):

Physical storms target one of the wraith's physical Attributes (Strength, Dexterity or Stamina). An Attribute roll (difficulty 8, requiring two successes) must be made. Success indicates that the wraith has triumphed over the storm. The wraith suffers no loss and regains two points of Willpower (assuming they were previously spent). Failure results in one point of the targeted Attribute being lost (if the Attribute only had a rating of one, a point may be sacrificed from another physical Attribute instead). A botch results in the loss of a point and another test against a different physical Attribute.

Mental storms target a mental Attribute in the same way, requiring the same number of successes against the same difficulty. Success indicates no loss of Attributes and the wraith regains two points of Pathos (assuming they were previously spent). Failure means the wraith loses a point from the targeted Attribute. Should the Attribute only have one point, a point from a different mental Attribute may be substituted and sacrificed. A botch results in the loss of a point and removes half of the wraith's remaining Pathos. If the wraith has only one point of Pathos, she loses that point and gains two points of temporary Angst.


Corruption storms target the social Attributes, and require the same number of successes against the same difficulty in order to stave them off. If she is successful, a wraith loses nothing and gains back two points of Corpus (assuming they were previously lost). Failure indicates the immediate loss of 1-10 points of Corpus (the damage may be soaked). If she loses all of her Corpus, the wraith is dragged off to the Labyrinth by Spectres within the storm and subjected to a Harrowing. A botch results in the loss of one point from any social Attribute and the wraith has been successfully Moliated. The Storyteller should determine a form which reflects the inner nature of the wraith and bestow that upon the character. For example, if the character is greedy, she might be changed into the form of a pig or have her mouth stretched out into a huge opening — the better to feed her greediness. If she is caring and protective of others, she might be changed into the likeness of an angel. The change is not necessarily ugly, but should cause the character some difficulties in her dealings with others or problems with accommodating her new form.

The River of Death

Alas! that Charon fell to his own pride, proclaiming himself emperor. We could not tolerate him as overlord when he clearly no longer had control of his own Shadow. Those who were his most beloved friends and helpers, he banished in his rage. We were no longer welcome in Stygia, but now must make our way alone through the Darkness. This we did by setting aside enclaves in which to shelter ourselves along the River of Death; hidden places where we could return for shelter from the Maelstroms.

— from the Journal of Actemaeon, Ferryman





Once the chief pathway that souls traveled down from the Skinlands to the Underworld, the River of Death winds throughout much of the Tempest. Its origin is lost in time, but various theories state that it is made of the Lady of Fate's tears, of woven raindrops, from the thousands of tears shed for the departed and from the tears of the dead themselves which they shed upon first seeing the place to which they had been consigned. Charon explored the River of Death in a reed boat that the Lady of Fate wove for him from the reeds that grew along its marshy banks. At its delta, he discovered the Sunless Sea and a rocky island called the Isle of Sorrows upon which he built Stygia.

Because it touches on almost every area of the Tempest, the River of Death is a major byway or channel. It is the only byway that is never cut and destroyed by the tumults of the Tempest. Despite dangers along its marshy length, the River of Death is the most dependable route for reaching all of the known realms. The Ferryman are the only wraiths who may still travel the River of Death with impunity. The Hierarchy's enemies have claimed secret coves along its length for their own, and communities of Renegades, Heretics and independent wraiths have formed along its winding course. Sometimes these groups attack those who venture too close, either to silence them, pirate their relics or take them to sell or use as thralls. Spectres also use the River of Death as an easy channel to the inhabited realms. In response, the Hierarchy has begun patrolling the river in an effort to keep these elements from controlling this vitally important byway. Rumors hold that certain parts of the River of Death have been hidden from the eyes of the Hierarchy's agents by the Ferryman; for what purpose, no one but the Ferryman know.

Channels and Byways

Technically, channels and byways are the same thing — roads, trails, rivers, rails or unchanging currents that move through the Tempest and allow wraiths to cross through its stormy distances along preset and less dangerous pathways. The only difference is that some wraiths refer to the watery byways as channels. In actuality, there is only a minor difference between the two. Due to the changeable nature of fluid, the channels often twist and turn, sometimes doubling back upon themselves or flowing with a locally strong current for awhile before returning to their intended direction. The most well-known channel is the River of Death. Byways, in the strict sense of the word, are those routes which pass over land or bridge gaps in the darkness with their solidity. They are usually straighter and more direct. The two are not mutually exclusive. Sometimes a byway will become a channel for part of its length or a channel will be broken by a byway. Occasionally, a great bridge will span waters beneath it rather than utilizing the currents available; the River of Death cuts through land and is marshy along most of its length.

Byways, whether liquid or solid, have a different look and feel from the rest of the Tempest. They may have a different color than the overall background or be less blocked by weeds and deadfalls. Some look like actual roadways or rail lines stretching into darkness or a riotous, chaotic background; others may simply be gently lapping water that flows in a specific direction among a sea of choppy waves and foam. Byways and channels seem to exude a certain feel as well; a peacefulness in the midst of the raging Tempest. Almost all byways lead to Stygia, as Charon instituted a policy of building them through the outer darkness. Near Stygia, great iron rails carry trains and deep channels are used by the city's cruisers. Farther away, byways may devolve into little more than faint trails. Channels may only be discernible through use of a Tempest Compass. Most wraiths utilize the various byways when using Argos to travel through the Tempest. It's safer and easier.



Vehicles and Travel

Vehicles such as relic cars and trucks are confined to the more solid byways, while ships and rafts must have watery terrain for passage. Byways to various places usually have both a solid and a watery route. These may lie side by side or they may diverge and take radically different directions; ultimately, each arrives at the same destination. There is some room for interpretation in whether a byway is solid or not. Mud may either be solid or watery, depending on the consistency. Of course, a relic vehicle might sink into several feet of mud, touch solid ground and keep going! A rainbow bridge or a cloud could be quite solid. A water spout might provide a convenient elevator for a ship, which then travels along the water spout's path that is formed by a steady downpour of rain. Some of Stygia's byways are roads that cross over watery channels, forming drawbridges. The Storyteller and players should feel free to be creative with this. Remember that cars might travel on the underside of bridges or climb walls in areas where gravity gets strange.

Vehicles that fly, such as airplanes or hot air balloons, may still do so in the Underworld provided that the wraith who controls them has Phantom Wings (Argos 2) and the proper skills to operate them (piloting, etc.). Flying vehicles may pass through clouds and rainbow bridges that are otherwise solid to those traveling in ground vehicles. They may not pass through roadways, grasslands, mud or water, however, as these solids and liquids are too firm. All relic vehicles cost Pathos to operate.

The Labyrinth

The Labyrinth is an opening into nothingness, the mouth of Oblivion, the twisted, spiraling vortex at the center of the Tempest. The maze of tunnels and twisting corridors, caverns, chambers and endless stairways wind through



Transported to a Harrowing

What actually happens when a wraith is transported to the nearest opening of the Labyrinth to undergo a Harrowing? If the wraith is in the Shadowlands, she is beset by Spectres who have clustered around the nearest nihil. They pull her down through it into the Tempest and then to the Labyrinth. This can be envisaged much like the dark, moaning shadows which swarm the evil souls and pull them to their doom in the movie *Ghost*. If the wraith is not in the Shadowlands, one of two things will happen. If she is in a realm, she feels an inexorable pull into the Tempest, where she is beset by Spectres as a whirlpool or spectral stairway opens underneath (or above) her, and she is sucked into this portion of the Labyrinth. Should she be traveling in the Tempest, the opening into the Labyrinth simply opens under, over, or beside her and draws her in, accompanied by the Spectres which reside in that portion of the Labyrinth. There is really no travel involved, nor is the wraith "transported" by the Spectres so much as she is sucked into or enveloped by a sort of worm-hole effect.

The Labyrinth, while it lies at the heart of the Tempest, underlies (or some say, overlays) the whole of the Underworld. This is why Charon was able to use the Labyrinth to traverse the Underworld when all other byways were closed. Likewise, Spectres may utilize the twisting passages and lightless tunnels to move quickly from one section of the Underworld to another, allowing them to make attacks from almost any direction with little warning. Openings into the Labyrinth can be found anywhere merely by using Argos to pull aside the thin veneer of apparently solid ground or ocean waves to uncover the Oblivion below. However, doing so is considered an act of insanity.

the Tempest, emerging in dozens of inhabited realms, and ultimately lead to the heart of dark Oblivion. These were burrowed from the Utter Darkness beneath the Shadowlands by the Malfeans — huge, dark, beast-like Spectres who have consumed so many other Spectres and wraiths that they have swollen to gargantuan proportions. What most wraiths call the Labyrinth is only the most visible part of this tunnel system. The Venous Stair (from which Stygia mines its raw material for making Stygian steel) is one of the openings into the Labyrinth. Sentries are posted at all such openings. They are charged with ringing great gongs to alert other wraiths of impending Spectre attacks or to signs of an oncoming Maelstrom.

Whole other realms, more dark and horrible than Stygia or any of the other known realms (even the Hells), exist within the tunnels and caverns of the Labyrinth. Inhabited by dreaded Spectres and huge Malfeans, they sometimes serve as staging grounds for Spectre invasions of Stygia and the Far Shores. It is within the Labyrinth's twisted embrace that Harrowings take place. The material of the Labyrinth responds to Spectral ministrations by evoking vivid, nightmarish scenes into which an unfortunate wraith is thrust with the hope that she will descend into Oblivion. The Labyrinth at the center of the Tempest is surrounded by the Sea of Shadows, an ocean of Spectres.

The Labyrinth has never been accurately described. Charon is said to have ventured into it long ago via the Venous Stair and returned with the great Artificer Nhudri, but Charon is not reported to have experienced the actual Labyrinth at the Tempest's center and Nhudri has never commented on the matter. Other rumors say that Charon used to travel to the Shadowlands through the Labyrinth when all other byways were closed, which would seem to imply that all portions of it are interconnected. Certainly, Spectres have no trouble traveling anywhere in the Underworld via the Labyrinthine tunnels and stairs. Many believe the central Labyrinth is pink marble broken by veins of pure black like the Venous Stair, which gives it the look of flesh polluted with noxious poison. No wraiths have ever descended into the maw of the great Labyrinth that surrounds Oblivion and returned to tell of it, so it is unlikely that anyone other than the Spectres it spawns will ever know the truth.

Nihils

Nihils are openings of nothingness, cracks through which the Tempest invades the Shadowlands. From below, they can look like shining stars in the vault of an inky sky. From above they are black holes into nothingness. Some are mere pinpricks, while others may be as large as railroad tunnels. Nihils are not the convenient portals into the Tempest that many people think they are. They may fulfill that role

at times, but that is not their primary purpose. Nihils are festering wounds in the fabric of the Shadowlands. They suck at the energy found there, siphoning it off into the Void. Further, they provide easy ingress to the Shadowlands for Spectres and other horrible creatures. Whole armies of Spectres have thus gained access to Necropoli in the past. Worse than that, each nihil is like a hole in a sea-wall allowing the terrible and destructive Maelstroms to burst through, ravaging and destroying vast areas of the Shadowlands. Only a fool forgets to keep a close eye on any nihil near his haunt or Fetters.

The Far Shores

It is said that all byways lead to Stygia, but more than a few also lead to the Far Shores, those lands of heaven and hell. When the Shining Ones first sailed in search of the Far Shores, there were no byways or channels leading to them. The Shining Ones chose a direction and made the byway as they traveled. Once they returned and set up temples on the shores of Stygia, many paths were made to each "afterlife." It was said that there were many ways to Transcendence.

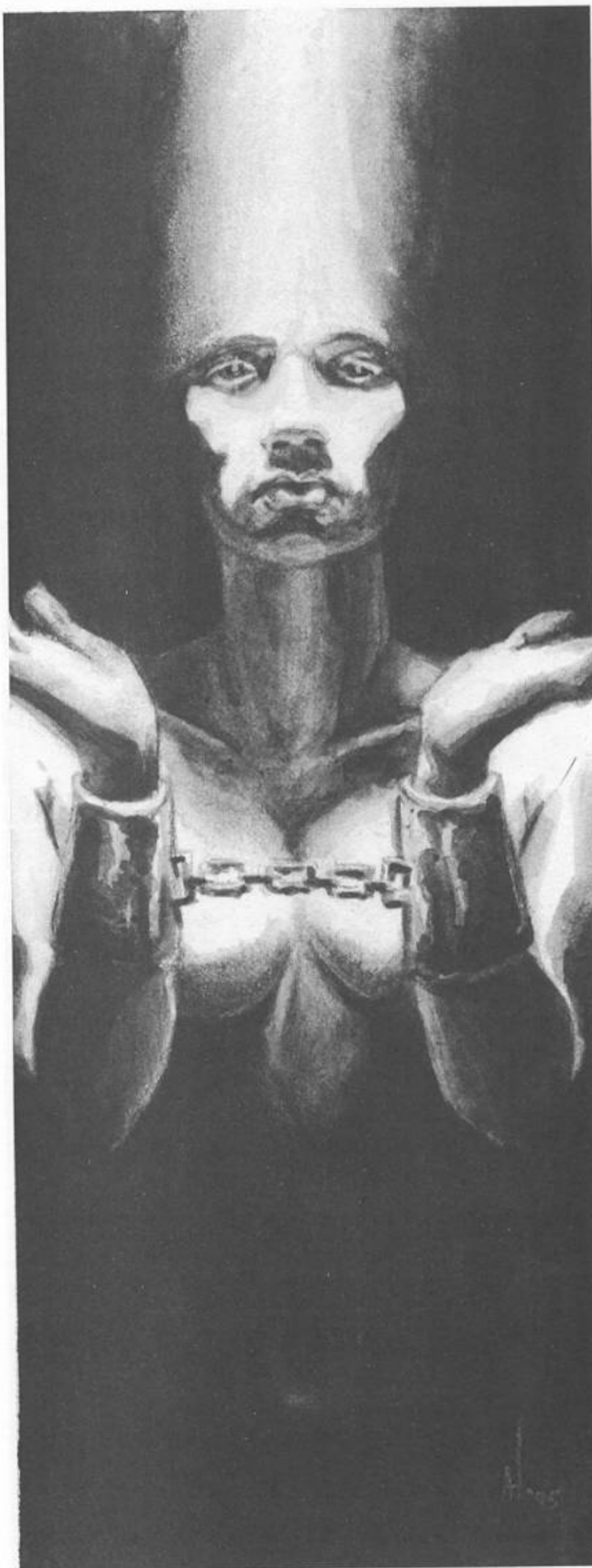
Whether any of the Far Shores lead to Transcendence or not is now hotly contested between the Hierarchy and the Heretics, but one thing remains the same: many byways still lead to these realms. The byways cross through and over the parts of the Tempest which encircle each of these realms, and each is very different.

In one paradise, the Tempest is a gently falling rain of milk and honey that drops into the sea of honey-milk below. Surrounding one hell is a great wall of flame, fed by the fiery, burning oil that forms the sea around it and the liquid flames which plummet from the sky. Another realm is held within a sea of blood and rotting flesh. Choking, charnel winds blow the freezing bile that falls as rain into every habitation. Each realm is more terrible or more fantastically marvelous than the next. The one trait they share is the growing sea of wraiths who now spread outward from their shores, choking in piles of ash, drowning in seas of wine, all waiting for their turn to be processed by their chosen heaven or hell.

Wraiths who wander too close to any of the Far Shores should be wary of the realms' proselytizers. While many genuinely seek only to convert wraiths to their beliefs, others are little more than slavers bent on capturing and chaining as many souls as possible to the greater glory of their chosen deity or as a bulwark against the Maelstroms.

Necropolis Ports

One of the few creations of the Underworld that still work as they were intended to do, Necropolis ports provide openings into the Shadowlands. They are situated along byways and channels and appear as oval mirrors hanging in





midair above the path. All Necropolis ports are heavily guarded by Hierarchy troops, Renegade cadres or Heretic bands (depending on where they lead and which group is dominant in that area). This prevents Spectres and other foul denizens of the Tempest from pouring forth into the Shadowlands. When utilizing a Necropolis port, movement from the Tempest into the Necropolis which the port serves is far easier (granting one automatic success on a wraith's Argos roll to go there). Unlike the nihilis, the ports can be closed and sealed at need, preventing wraiths, Spectres and the Maelstrom from using them.

The Dark Kingdom of Ivory

Most wraiths who dwell near Stygia know very little of the Dark Kingdoms. They are separated from Stygia and the Far Shores by vast expanses of ocean. Since the falling out between Stygia and the Dark Kingdoms, few wraiths have traveled there. Reports of the areas, from ambassadors who once traveled there for Stygia, may be fanciful and inaccurate.

The Dark Kingdom of Ivory is affiliated with Africa and is ruled by the Ivory Queen. Legends say that wraiths nearing the Dark Kingdom of Ivory encounter twisted savannas and grotesque jungles like corrupt and evil twins of those found in Africa. Tales tell of dark rivers overhung with snaking vines that wind throughout the land. Some say that strange monuments built from bones dot the landscape and throbbing drums reverberate through the still air. Upriver, huts line the shore and vacant-eyed, rotting corpses move soundlessly about everyday tasks. Strange hybrids of man and animal stalk through the jungles and grasslands, preying upon any wraiths they find. Other areas may differ. There are reports of a great and powerful city hidden in the heart of the kingdom, a city made of ivory and stained with the blood of countless millions. In this day and age, when AIDS, tribal warfare and famine have decimated whole nations in Africa, the Kingdom of Ivory is said to be undergoing the same sort of overcrowding and breakdown as Stygia.

It is said that the Maelstroms appear as great clouds of locusts and stinging insects in the Dark Kingdom of Ivory. They strip land and people alike, destroying all in their path.

The Dark Kingdom of Jade

It is said that the Dark Kingdom of Jade serves Asia just as Ivory serves Africa. The Jade Emperor rules his kingdom with an iron hand, meting out rewards and punishments based upon the wraith's own beliefs and the generosity of their gifts to him. The kingdom is said to have many different areas within it: some serve as paradises, some are hells, and most are merely huge repositories for the ever-increasing number of souls who have yet to be processed through



the Dark Kingdom's bureaucracy. Tales abound of lovely gardens in which peacocks stroll and nightingales sing; where wraiths spend blissful existences dressed in costly fabrics and spend their time painting, gardening and debating philosophy, theology and politics. Other tales speak of wraiths impaled upon barbed hooks and chained above the emperor's court so that their cries of anguish might lull him into peaceful repose. Rumor says that wraiths who find themselves treading through rice fields or in jungles which do not seem African have probably stumbled into the Dark Kingdom of Jade. When traveling by sea, arrival at a port where Jade barges and junks are docked heralds the same thing.

It is rumored that the Maelstroms which assault the Dark Kingdom of Jade come as great earthquakes and tsunami (tidal waves). Some appear as huge monsoons; their mighty winds tearing trees and houses to shreds and their driving rains drowning wraiths who are not held to the emperor's palace with tethers of jade.


The Dark Kingdom of Obsidian

Once the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian served as the destination for the souls of the native Mayans and Aztecs. Heretics who traveled to the new world discovered the Dark Kingdom of Obsidian and invaded it. After a long struggle, with many atrocities on both sides creating a way into the Labyrinth, the Heretics succeeded in defeating the Dark Kingdom wraiths and hurled them into the heart of the Void. The once mighty kingdom, a place of strange, stepped pyramids and mighty monuments, was abandoned. Many claim that deep, putrid green, jungle growth has crawled into and over the structures, making them into matted mounds and valleys. No one walks the land. The sky is always overcast, making it a leaden gray. They say that the only sounds to be heard there are distant screams and sighs and the only signs that it is not a worldly or mirror realm of the Shadowlands are the rivers of blood which sluggishly ooze their way through the mat of overgrown green.

The Other Dark Kingdoms

Some claim that there are other dark kingdoms or differentiation within the ones already known to exist. Even though India and China would be considered by most wraiths to fall within the Dark Kingdom of Jade, the two cultures are quite different and distinct from one another. Native American tribes of North America are greatly distinct in belief and cultures from the Incas and Aztecs. It would be grossly Eurocentric to believe that these rich and varied cultures had no representation of their own in the Underworld; it is far more likely that European-based and non-Native American wraiths have simply failed to find or encounter them yet.





The Gateway to the Umbra

The Underworld is called the Lower or Dark Umbra by some. It is believed that no one may cross from the Middle or Deep Umbra into the Dark Umbra unless they are dead or filled with a great deal of death energy (such as Euthantos mages and certain Nephandi). It is further believed that the reverse is also true; that the dead may not cross into the other parts of the Umbra either.

Legend persists, however, that there is a gateway (or gateways) to the Middle Umbra somewhere in the Underworld. Some claim that it is a thin membrane located in the Shadowlands that only becomes visible and tangible during certain times, like Halloween. Others claim that if such a gateway exists, it lies beyond the Far Shores and may only be reached by those who have Transcended. These wraiths state that the gateway will only open for those souls who are ready to reincarnate and rejoin the cosmic wheel. Some skeptics say that the fabled Gateway to the Umbra is actually the Void and that it opens into nothingness. There are rumors that the Malfeans control several gateways to the Umbra and utilize them to send their horrific minions into the Deep Umbra and then into the world to gain converts and drag screaming souls back to the Underworld for their consumption. Some Nephandi, who are usually perceived to be demonic entities, are said to serve Malfeans. It is possible that their overlords are actually these great Spectres. Some say that all theories are equally true, but it's usually the wraiths who say that the whole of the Underworld is but a shadow inside their own subconscious minds.

Shifting Zones

*If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
The sky, it seems, would pour down stinking pitch,
But that the sea, mounting to the welkin's cheek,
Dashes the fire out.*

— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

There are several areas of chaos within the Tempest itself that are dangerous in and of themselves, even without the threat of Spectres or Maelstroms. Known as Shifting Zones, they can be found scattered across the Sunless Sea, causing even greater difficulties than usual for wraiths traveling through the Tempest. The following are by no means all of the variations to be found within the Tempest; they are simply the ones which Ferryman and Harbingers have cataloged. It is worth noting that these areas are not stable places that can be avoided by going around them. Every place within the Tempest is like a floating island upon an ocean, tossed here and there by the whim of the tides or storms, moved about at random or held in stasis with no rhyme or

reason. They may be found anywhere. When they cross a byway, they supersede it; in effect, cutting it out of their territory and sending it elsewhere. Therefore, a wraith might move past a spot while on a byway, pause briefly as she momentarily loses her way, then discovers that she is now trapped within a Shifting Zone, with the byway nowhere in sight. It is also worth stating that none of the liquids or vapors within a zone can be bottled for later use unless an Artifact is constructed especially for that purpose. This is an expensive and time-consuming operation.

The Lake of Cold Fire


*Come to me
Do and be done with me
(Cold cold cold)
Don't I exist for you
Don't I still live for you
(Cold cold cold)*

— Annie Lennox, "Cold"

This fiery, freezing zone looks deceptively normal until it springs up and surrounds traveling wraiths. A wraith is safe from the agony of the lake if he is with a Ferryman in his boat. Though similar to Barrow-flame, the cold fire of the lake does not burn a wraith as normal fire would, but touches on her Passions instead. As it materializes, the zone appears as a misty, blue lake. Blue and orange fire flickers over the top like wavelets. The flames rush to cover whatever touches the lake. Fiery fingers reach upward, flickering with a chilling, blue flame to grasp and hold wraiths who attempt to fly overhead. If wraiths are within a vehicle, the freezing waters coat it with ice that flickers with blue flame and mist. Once the vehicle is covered, the wraiths are next. Those not in a vehicle are covered immediately. A bluish fog settles all around them, trapping them within the lake until it is done with them. Passing through the fog simply turns the person around and heads them back into the center of the lake.

The flame is soul-searing, forcing an immediate reaction from any wraith it touches. It sets one of her Passions afire, forcing her to confront it. Usually, this is the highest-rated Passion the wraith possesses; occasionally a low-rated Passion, which has been recently on the wraith's mind, may be the target instead. The wraith's Passion is brought to the forefront of her mind and she is forced to defend it against the onslaught of the flame.

This process should take the form of a brief, dream-like encounter with the person, place or object that is the focus of the Passion. It may be a sort of *deja-vu* in which the character remembers something from her past, gets to correct an old wrong or to say what she should have said, but didn't. If she does so (Storyteller's call as to whether she successfully confronts the Passion, this should be a pure roleplaying



event), she is immediately freed of the lake and takes no damage from its freezing fires. The Passion remains because the wraith realizes once the sequence is over that it was all a dream. She has not really resolved anything, but may have more insight into how to do so if she ever wishes to try.

If she fails to take advantage of the dream, she must make a roll using the number of dice she has in the Passion (difficulty 9) to retain the Passion at its current level, just as if she were undergoing a Harrowing. Success allows her to keep the Passion, but the searing cold flames of the lake cause one level of aggravated damage before she is released. Wraiths ignore Tempest-born dangers to their peril. Failure causes the wraith to reduce the Passion by one just as if she had been successfully attacked by a Spectre. She also receives two levels of aggravated damage, then she is released. The damage in both cases represents the partial freezing of her emotions, making her a colder, less-emotional being overall. A botch results in the loss of all but one point in the Passion and three levels of aggravated damage. Furthermore, the wraith is not freed from the lake and a second Passion becomes the target of a new attack. If the wraith had only one point in the Passion and botched the roll, the Passion is gone and that tie to her mortal life has been burned away.

Storytellers should beware of copycats when running this encounter. If one player sees another succeed by interacting in a certain fashion, she is likely to try the same thing herself. Either the encounter should be run for each player privately, or the Storyteller must be certain that the dream sequence is different enough for each player that it is impossible to simply ape what another player has done. Require the player to play within the strict interpretation of her character's Nature and don't accept slick and easy reproductions of someone else's genuine emotions.

Obviously, encountering the Lake of Cold Fire is a great opportunity for roleplaying. It is also one of the most easily abused encounters available. This should be kept in reserve for very special games and then used sparingly. The best use for it is to introduce it gradually, letting the characters see it in the distance and hear a cry of anguish from within it. Should they investigate, it is gone. Let one of them talk to another wraith who has heard terrifying stories (some true, some not) about the blue flame. Then, several sessions later, have them narrowly avoid being trapped in it. Eventually, when they do become trapped within it, the lake will mean a lot more to them — and they may be prepared to meet its challenges. If the Storyteller drags out the lake encounter every time they try to cross the Tempest in an attempt to frustrate the players, it will lose its effectiveness and the Storyteller may lose her players.

The Land of Bedlam

The only emperor is the emperor of ice cream.

— Wallace Stevens, "The Emperor of Ice Cream"

Some wraiths are driven insane by conditions in the Underworld. They retain their Passions, but add the power to fix their insanities into physical forms. Hounded by the Hierarchy, driven out by Heretics and even scorned by the Renegades, these profoundly tortured souls tend to gather together for protection. The place where they have chosen to do so is called the Land of Bedlam. Whatever can be imagined is possible in Bedlam. It may look and seem like a perfectly ordinary place in the Skinlands because everyone seems to be alive (which may be awfully confusing for wraiths who stumble into the area). Abutting that area might be a ghostly theatre where wraiths perform nonsensical dramas utilizing marionettes made from other wraiths. Within the theatre, but ignored by the participants and audience of the play, there might exist a slaughterhouse where despairing wraiths are led forward to a chopping block, then are dismembered in every grisly manner imaginable. A street bazaar might sell chains of Stygian steel that scream with laughter and fasten around the wraith who bought them.

Wraiths who pass through Bedlam may be caught up in almost any situation or subjected to the most horrible nightmares and tortures outside of a Harrowing. All power lies in belief, however, and Bedlam's inhabitants, for all of their power, have no way to make their insanities permanent unless the wraiths involved believe that it is so. The effect is only a sort of group Phantasm, and any wraith subjected to the craziness of Bedlam may rescue herself simply through her own will expressed as disbelief. To some extent, the whole of the Underworld is only a space within the mind, so wraiths who are "killed" or "tortured" while in Bedlam will disincorporate briefly and find themselves on the perimeter of this weird land, preparatory to entering it. Spectres never bother the land of Bedlam — most inhabitants of the area eventually seek surcease in Oblivion.

The Miasma

The Miasma is quite unlike any other part of the Tempest. For one thing, it is a gas, not a liquid or solid, and its noxious vapors settle over wraiths as they travel along Byways. The Miasma's most obvious feature is the cloud of choking gas it produces. This foul vapor layers itself around wraiths and chokes off their memories. Some claim that the Miasma is created from the tortured sighs of Spectres; others say the cloud is composed of tiny particles of Oblivion itself. Certainly, the latter theory would seem more likely because the vapor erodes portions of the wraith, making him more drone-like and easier prey.



The second feature of the Miasma is the absolute silence it enfold around the wraith. The background sounds that are ever-present in Stygia, from the forging of chains to the whimpers of Moliated wraith-torches, lapping waters, screaming winds, shrieking voices...all are silenced. Nor is the wraith able to make a sound. Groups traveling together are cut off, one from another, wrapped in their own quiet mists as they lose the memories which make them wraiths.


Because the Miasma is a gas, wraiths who possess Argos cannot swim in it. Unless they possess Argos 2 (Phantom Wings), they will be just as helpless and floundering as wraiths who have no skill in this Arcanos. Argos 3 and 4 (Flicker and Jump) do not work within the confines of the Miasma. Argos 5 (Oubliette) can be used to pull oneself out of the Miasma, but one aggravated wound level is inflicted in doing so.

Those who are caught in the Miasma must make a Fetters roll (difficulty 7) on their lowest-rated Fetter (except for a shared Haunt). If they succeed, wraiths are confused as to where their Fetters are for the next few hours (10 minus the wraith's Intelligence), but suffer no further consequences. Those who fail have all memory of the Fetter temporarily erased from their minds for one day. The Fetter is gone as though it never existed during that time period. If this is a wraith's last Fetter, the wraith may not travel to the Shadowlands during the 24 hour period in which her Fetter

is lost to her. The Miasma then lifts from around the wraiths and they are freed to continue their journey. A botch means the wraith loses the Fetter and is rendered imbecilic for the next hour. While in this state, the wraith is completely helpless and cannot care for herself. If she is alone, she will float aimlessly through the Tempest until she snaps out of it, is rescued or is captured or slain. Companions with the wraith must pull her along, initiating all actions for her and defending her. She cannot remember who she is or take any actions to defend herself, nor may she enter the Shadowlands, because her loss of memory makes her the equivalent of a Fetterless wraith. She is like a drone and may slowly act out her death over and over until her mind returns to normal. Shared Haunts may not be the target of a Miasmatic attack because they are intrinsically too tightly anchored in place if held by more than one person. Once it has made its initial attack, the Miasma drifts away.

The Ocean of Acid

This zone is very straightforward and very deadly. As the wraith swims, rides or walks through the Tempest, he suddenly finds himself moving into an ocean of vivid green. This deep green liquid is acid rather than the normal soul-ichor that usually makes up the Sea of Shadows. Around its



edges, the sea looks crinkled and overhead the air is tinted a pale greenish-yellow. The acid causes normal damage at the rate of two Corpus per turn. If the wraith is inside a relic vehicle of some sort, the vehicle is destroyed in three turns. Any relics or Artifacts the wraiths are carrying are subject to destruction unless the wraith rolls the relic or Artifact's rating (difficulty 7). Wraiths may use Willpower to save their items if they so desire.

Despite the terrible, burning agony, wraiths who are caught in the acid must keep moving or lose all of their Corpus in the torturous liquid. It takes 6 turns minus the wraith's Wits rating to escape from the acid. Those who stop rather than continuing on add another turn to their time in the acid. If they do not begin moving again within three turns, the Storyteller should give them a Wits + Alertness roll (difficulty 6) to realize their only chance is to get out of the acid. Companions may pull other characters out with a successful Strength + Athletics roll.

Wraiths who lose all of their Corpus in the acid are immediately subjected to a Harrowing. Ferryman boats are immune to the effects of the Ocean of Acid, but Ferrymen themselves are not. Once a wraith has experienced the Ocean of Acid, he can always recognize its particular look in the future and attempt to avoid it. Wraiths who are flying through the Tempest rather than swimming or in a vehicle are never trapped by this zone. When next they check their relics, however, they appear dulled and pitted as if with acidic vapors.

The Pool of Bittersweet Remembrance

Little things used to mean so much to Shelly. I always thought they were kind of trivial. Believe me, nothing is trivial.

— Eric Draven, *The Crow*

Proving that not everything which looks different is necessarily evil, the Pool of Bittersweet Remembrance is a silvery-sheened circle that appears atop the oily, black ichor of the Sunless Sea. The air above the circle is washed with shifting colors similar to the Aurora Borealis. A sweet fragrance like lilacs or fresh-mown grass wafts from the zone. Wraiths may avoid the area if they so choose. Should the wraith approach, he will find that it is possible to step out onto the silvery circle. It is quite solid. Several may step onto it together if they like. Once one or more of the Restless Dead is atop it, the circle slowly begins to spin.


Anyone on the circle will undergo a sublime experience for a wraith: He will remember more of his past. This should be handled much like the dream-sequence in the Sea of Cold Fire, but instead of invoking a known scene from the wraith's past, the Storyteller should introduce some thing, place or person that the wraith knows nothing about or only vaguely recalls. This should highlight some particularly joy-

ful or painful moment in the wraith's life (a special commendation from his boss, the death of his baby daughter, his first solo flight, his wife's heart operation). The scene must fit the concept of the wraith, his personality and the known facts of his life. Obviously, it would be ludicrous to introduce a scene in which a lifer in prison is given the key to the city and an outstanding citizenship award. This encounter requires that the Storyteller be very familiar with the characters, and should be handled with delicacy. Sometimes it's the little things that mean the most — and cause the most anguish when they're lost.

If the player roleplays the encounter well, the Storyteller may award a new Fetter having to do with the remembered scene to the character. This can be a one or two point Fetter, depending on the excellence of the roleplaying and the apparent value that would be given to the Fetter as determined by the story of the scene. One point Fetters might be a certificate of appreciation, keys to the executive bathroom or a baseball signed by your favorite player. Two point Fetters would include your son's birth certificate, your wife's tombstone or your grandfather's favorite story-telling-time pipe. Failure to interact with the Pool results in no losses other than missing a chance for some great roleplaying. Once the interactions are finished, the pool dissipates.

The Quagmire

Looking much like an English heath, the Quagmire lures wraiths into its interior, then entraps them in quicksand. It is a gradual entrapment. As the wraith moves through the area, the ground becomes soggy. Her feet begin sinking into the mud, making sucking noises as she pulls them free. Ahead, just beyond the current muddy patch, is drier ground, sandy and solid — until she steps on it. Then it reveals itself to be quicksand. At least one leg is inevitably caught, and the wraith must make a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 7) to avoid stumbling in with the other leg as she tries to regain her balance. If the wraith is running at the time (from Spectres or Legionnaires, for example), she is automatically caught by both legs and immediately sinks in up to her waist. Once it has any portion of the wraith, the Quagmire is tenacious. It refuses to give up its prize and continues to try for more. If only one leg is caught, the Quagmire is more of a nuisance than a true threat. Eventually, the wraith will acquire enough successes to free herself. Having both legs caught is more serious. Unless the wraith can pull herself free (or has friends to help her do so), she will be sucked down into the quicksand. She will not be destroyed, but will become dormant, as if she were sleeping, until she is rescued, found by Spectres or until the Quagmire moves on and leaves her in its wake.



There are never any handholds conveniently nearby in the Quagmire. No trees grow there, no fallen branches litter the ground. A wraith must roll five successes on Strength + Athletics (difficulty 9) to successfully break one limb away from the Quagmire. This can be an Extended Action. If the wraith stops in the middle to attend to anything else, however, all prior successes are erased. Example: Deadbeat stumbles into the Quagmire as he flees from a Hierarchy patrol. Both legs are caught. He rolls against his Strength + Athletics and gets two nines, two successes! The next turn, he notices that two of the Hierarchy patrol will be able to reach him. Rather than try to break free again, he draws his Artifact sword and holds them at bay. Because he has stopped trying to escape from the Quagmire, it returns to pulling him down. He loses all the successes he had gained before. If he wants to escape now, he will have to have five successes to do so.

Up to two friends may help a wraith escape from the Quagmire. Each helper must make a Dexterity + Brawl roll (difficulty 7) to get into position to help without becoming mired herself. Helpers each add one die of their Strength to the wraith who is struggling to free herself (giving her one or two more dice to attempt the feat). If the wraith cannot help herself, the helpers may combine their Strength scores and attempt a Strength feat. They need five successes (difficulty 8) to drag the mired wraith out of the quicksand by sheer muscle power.

The Sargasso Sea

This zone is named for a famous area of the ocean in the Skinlands near the Azores, where sargasso seaweed is found in abundance. The real Sargasso Sea is a breeding ground for eels. The Underworld Sargasso Sea also has sea wrack in abundance, but it is made up of the hair and skin (the dross thrown off) of wraiths who have been smelted down to make Stygian goods. It is a breeding ground of Sargasso Spectres who rise up through the tangled sea wrack to assault passing wraiths.

Passage through the area is, of necessity, slow. Tangled mounds of rotting seaweed float within the sooty liquid of the sea. At first, they are far apart. After awhile, however, the seaweed becomes more frequent. There are more piles and they are closer together. Even on a byway, they begin to be obstructive. Turning around does nothing to solve the problem; more seaweed drifts in to fill the areas the wraith has already passed through. Soon the wraith finds himself at the center of a vast sea of tangled sea wrack. The Sargasso Spectres, who seem to be immune to the entangling effects of the seaweed, rise up out of it in packs and lunge for their prey, howling in high-pitched, nerve-racking voices (using the Keening Arcanos). The wraith is at -1 to all of his Physical rolls due to the difficulty of movement through the

seaweed, and -1 to all Mental rolls due to the horrible screams of the Spectres who make concentration difficult at best.

Wraiths may escape from the Sargasso Sea by successfully employing Argos 2 (Phantom Wings), or Argos 4 (Jump), or they may physically force their way through in 8 turns minus their Strength score. If they choose to force a way through, wraiths are unable to fight the Spectres at the same time. The Spectres do not pursue beyond the boundary of the Sargasso Sea. Recent rumor has indicated that the Sargasso Sea is not really a zone at all, but is the hair of the chest or head of a Malfean who moves about the Sunless Sea.

The Sea of Broken Glass

*So take me from the wreckage
Save me from the blast
Lift me up and take me back
Don't let me keep on walking...
Walking on broken glass.*

— Annie Lennox, "Walking on Broken Glass"

This zone is misnamed, for there is no glass to be found within its liquid. Rather, it is strewn with the metallic dross cast off from the forging of Stygian metals. Razor sharp pieces of the metal — too small to be useful, but large enough to wound wraiths coming into contact with them — are suspended in the wine-dark liquid, which smells of blood and smoke. Dark smoke hangs over the area, stinging the eyes and throats of those who travel through it. Groans, screams and whispers enshroud the sea; crying out in agony, murmuring pleas or shouting out secrets — personal and political.

It is a strange, magnetic area that attracts and traps Stygian metal pieces to it. Wraiths bringing things into the area that are made of Stygian metal or darksteel must make a Strength roll (difficulty 8) to pull the item back out of the area. The Sea of Broken Glass appears full-blown on top of wraiths traveling through the Tempest. It rises up from out of the depths and encloses them in its splintery grasp. Oblivion metal shards slash and wound the wraiths while unseen victims and penitents serenade travelers with their haunting cries. Moving through the sea causes wraiths to take one aggravated wound level per turn. It takes two turns to escape from the area if a wraith has Argos; without Argos, escape takes four turns. One turn after the sea rises, however, Shard Spectres (Spectres that have had the razor shards of Stygian metal embedded into their bodies) arise and attack. A successful attack from a Shard Spectre causes Strength +3 aggravated damage. Their strength is usually Average (2 to 3), though some particularly deadly ones have Strengths of 4 or 5. Wraiths who lose all of their Corpus levels to Shard Spectres sink into the sea and become Shard Spectres themselves after a final Harrowing.



Tempest Fugit

This quirky area of the Tempest is not so much a place as an occurrence. Within the area it encompasses, time flies — literally. Humorously dubbed Tempest Fugit, the area speeds up time for wraiths caught within it. This can be either beneficial or detrimental depending on what the wraith was trying to do when encircled. If the wraith was resting, time passes quickly and Corpus is restored in a flash. If she was fighting Spectres who have called for reinforcements, the wraith may be out of luck as wave after wave of the foul creatures arrive in the blink of an eye.

Once the wraith leaves the area, she steps back into the normal flow of time as it was; meaning that whatever takes place within the Tempest Fugit does so almost instantaneously. Everything inside the area seems hazy to those outside it, while everything outside the area appears blurred to those who are within it. From a distance a Tempest Fugit looks like a shiny bubble. The bubble can serve like the eye of a hurricane, providing a calm refuge from a Maelstrom for those wraiths who stay within it. Though the bubble will be buffeted about by the fury of the Maelstrom, it will not pop, and those inside are protected from all effects of the Maelstrom and the Spectres that accompany it, as they are literally in another time.

The All-Inclusive Theory

The all-inclusive theory states that there are countless other realms within the Tempest. Each is unique; some have yet to be discovered. Some lay in domes beneath the waves and can be reached by riding great fish or by any wraith brave enough to sink into the depths in search of them. Others

ride high in the sky, tethered to the lands below by slender bridges or floating free to wherever the winds take them. Some correspond to the dreams and aspirations of Native Americans and Aborigines. According to this theory, all beliefs and hopes are included somewhere within the Underworld and can be found by those who seek them.

Most wraiths tend to believe in the all-inclusive theory. It best fits the facts as they know them. It explains the various realms, the byways and the politics, revealing them all as dark reflections of the world of the living. It allows the Underworld to be understood and accepted and provides wraiths with stable points of reference. No matter how horrible parts of it may be, the similarity to the Skinlands is comforting and familiar.

The There's-Nothing-There-At-All Theory

An alternative to the all-inclusive theory is the one that claims there's really nothing there at all. The Underworld, say this theory's proponents, isn't an actual, physical place. There *are* no places except inside a wraith's own mind. It's all a grand illusion — or delusion. This is why there is a Tempest. It is the chaos of the mind which must be braved in pursuit of self-knowledge. This is why directions are not constant and distances are subjective; things are where the wraith thinks they are and it takes as long to get from one place to another as a wraith believes it will take. Oblivion is not a force the theorists contend, but denial. Once a wraith accepts her own demise and confronts her own fears and shortcomings, she can pass beyond denial and reincarnate or Transcend.

Neither theory may be correct, or both may be. Even the Dead aren't really certain.



J. MIRACOLA



Chapter Two: Riders on the Storm

*His eyes were as a flame of fire,
and on his head were many crowns;
and he had a name written, that no
man knew, but he himself.*
— Revelation: 19, xii, *The Holy Bible*



There are many denizens of the Tempest. Some are plasmic entities that defy description or that resemble legendary monsters and horrors. Some appear to be, for lack of a better name, angels and demons. Most of the beings that live in the Tempest are various kinds of Spectres.

These are the creatures most wraiths are familiar with. Aside from these monstrous foes, there are other beings who dwell in the hidden reaches of the Tempest — Renegades and Heretics who have set up bases far within the Tempest's stormy interior and the Ferrymen, who dwell in their secret abodes that are located somewhere along the River of Death. Any of them might cause problems for characters or offer them help or shelter. Almost all who offer their help expect some payment in return.

The Plasmic Entities

Plasmic entities are strange creatures of the Tempest that are neither wraith nor Spectre. Most are monstrous, but some take on forms that are similar to normal animals, fish, birds and insects. Most have only minimal or animal level Intelligence and are incapable of making elaborate plans; however, the predators among them may be quite adept at hunting, tracking and attacking wraiths who enter their territories.

Others are fearfully cunning and intelligent, with some approaching genius. It often seems as though the more bizarre and horrible the outward form of the plasmic entity, the more intelligent it is. Slain plasmic entities disincorporate. No one knows if they reform elsewhere. Originally, many plasmic entities were confused with Malfeans, but interaction with them has shown them to be something other than Spectres. Many wraiths believe that plasmic entities are created from drones who have been swept away by Maelstroms; others think they are the residue of animal spirits, and some theorists posit that they are the memories and nightmares of wraiths which the Tempest steals and makes manifest. Some of the better-known plasmic entities are listed here.

Phantasies

Phantasies are the entities that resemble creatures of the Skinlands. Some wraiths jokingly refer to them as "road kill." Many (such as horses and dolphins) are harmless and may even provide wraiths with transportation. Wraiths stranded in the Tempest without access to Argos Arcanos are occasionally aided by such beings. All plasmic entities possess Argos and a limited form of telepathy or Empathy which allows them to communicate their feelings and desires to wraiths. Those who provide aid to wraiths usually demand something in return, either a point of Pathos or a minor relic for their services.



Some other Phantasies are dangerous predators who hunt wraiths in the same fashion as their earthly counterparts would. These may resemble tigers, bears, sharks and other large predators. Many extinct species, such as sabre-tooth tigers and mastodons, are found among the Phantasies. All inflict wounds to wraiths. Although they do not cause aggravated wounds, they can reduce a wraith's Corpus to zero, causing him to be swarmed by Spectres and carried off to a Harrowing. Wraiths always lose one point of Pathos to an attacking Phantasie if it manages to reduce the wraith to zero Corpus. This serves as their sustenance. Phantasies have no other special powers.

Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Tracking 4

Arcanos: Argos 3

Willpower: 6

Pathos: 6

Angst: N/A

Corpus: 7

Equipment: None

Deliriums

Deliriums resemble Phantasies in some regard, but have strange quirks or powers. Deliriums can be bears with wings, bulls with snakes for arms or other malformed and monstrous-looking animals. Among their membership are any strange beings which are not legendary or totally alien. Deliriums may be friendly or just as savage as the predatory Phantasies, but tend to be more intelligent than the normal-looking entities. Helpful Deliriums are very similar to the Phantasies in regard to payment for their aid, usually asking for Pathos or a relic. Deliriums often work in groups to maximize their potential gains. Many predatory Deliriums are intelligent enough to bargain with trespassers rather than simply hunting them. They will often accept a point of Pathos or minor relic as a toll. Others enjoy hunting and rending too much and cannot be bargained with no matter what they are offered. Each Delirium has additional Arcanos which it uses to its advantage in addition to Argos. They have the same stats as Phantasies except their Intelligence is 3 and they have Argos 3 and 1-3 points in other Arcanos. Additionally, those who have useful additions such as wings can use them to fly without invoking Argos 2, Phantom Wings.

Legendaries

These entities assume the forms of legendary creatures such as Pegasi, Sasquatch, the Phoenix and dragons. It is possible that the milk-white death steeds with red eyes which Charon discovered and tamed may have been Legendaries.

Any creature depicted in a medieval bestiary can be found among these beings. Legendaries are all highly intelligent; most are on par with the Deliriums, but some are clearly geniuses. Chimerae and hydras are among those with the most predatory instincts. The largest and most fearsome of the Legendaries is the Leviathan. Many Legendaries are quite beautiful and some have been claimed as unique objets d'art, servitors, messengers or even guests by various Deathlords. Malfeans tend to covet Legendaries as well. A few have been known to befriend wraiths who treat them kindly and with respect. As with the Deliriums, some of the more fierce Legendaries may accept some sort of toll for passing through their area rather than insisting upon a chase or battle. Most want Pathos, but some (like the Sphinx, who insists on riddle games) want other things (Knowledge, relics, etc.).

Legendaries all have at least the Attributes, Abilities and Powers of Deliriums; many are more powerful. Each is a unique individual and should be given Traits which make sense for the type of creature it is. Sasquatch, for example, might have Stamina 5, while a Sphinx might have an Intelligence of 5 and a Knowledge of riddles or enigmas. In addition, they should be given Arcanos which reflect their basic natures or which give them an edge in staying free or battling wraiths. For example, the Phoenix can Moliat itself into flame and ash, then rise up from the ashes, resuming its original form. It could also use its Moliat Arcanos against anyone who disturbs it.

Wyrds

These creatures range from the tentacled, otherworldly horrors described by H. P. Lovecraft to the terrifying reptilian entities from the movie *Alien*. Most are unspeakably huge and disgusting; all are totally impossible to understand or categorize. Their thought processes are so unlike those of humans or wraiths that guessing what one will do — or what one is capable of doing — is a lost cause. These are the plasmic entities which are most often mistaken for Malfeans. They are not Malfeans because they were never wraiths or humans. Of course, some people say that many Malfeans were never wraiths or humans either. Furthermore, they do not seek to engulf and eat wraiths, nor do they employ Shades or Nephwracks. Most are huge beyond description; too enormous for normal Traits. All Wyrds are highly intelligent, and usually have up to ten points or more in various Arcanos (including 4 points of Argos).

Wyrds are highly unpredictable. One might save a group of wraith characters from a Hierarchy patrol only to sell them to a band of Heretics. The same Wyrd might then lead the patrol to the Heretics' hideaway, only to spirit the characters away to its own realm where it requires them to entertain it. A good performance might mean riches and freedom or it could merit being eaten. The Wyrd has its own reasons for acting as it does, and these need never make sense to the characters.





Legendaries and Wyrds are unique entities and should be treated as such. They should not appear every time the characters venture into the Tempest, but should be saved for special occasions and stories. Legendaries are best used in stories involving quests for various items. Wyrds are most effective as the villains behind strange disappearances or as surprise encounters in situations where the players believe things couldn't get any worse. In the Tempest, of course, things always do.

Angelics and Demonics

Although they could be classified among the Legendaries (or aliens), Angelics and Demonics are in a class by themselves because of the significance that most wraiths attach to them.

Angelics

As a general rule, Angelics are humanoid in appearance, uncommonly beautiful and have long, flowing, feathery wings. Many appear to be sexless or androgynous. Most are limned in pale blue, rosy or white light, reflecting the colors in their wings. Some also have haloes. A few appear clad in scintillating robes, while others are nude. Some are mute and express themselves only with beautiful gestures and facial expressions. Most Angelics are kind and helpful to wraiths they meet, using their powers to help wraiths through the Tempest, shelter them from harm or to heal them of their injuries.

Demonics

Demonics are usually ugly and bestial. Many are not shaped like humanoids at all. Their wings tend to be skeletal and bat-like. Most have obvious sexual characteristics and wear no clothing. They are usually surrounded by a dull, reddish-black glow. Some are horned, have barbed tails and cloven hooves. Their voices range from grating whispers to deafening roars. Most Demonics seek to harm wraiths, trying to capture them for elaborate tortures or to use as slaves. They usually possess powers which cause damage.

Such is not always the case. Some Angelics are repulsively ugly and are often mistaken for Demonics, but retain their gentle demeanors and caring natures. The reverse is also true, with some Demonics having breathtaking beauty that covers a cruel and evil heart. These Demonics may play a long and elaborate game with wraiths they encounter, leading them to believe they are Angelics until they spring a nasty trap or betray the wraiths at the worst possible time. Most Demonics enjoy playing with their victims.

Yet a third kind are those known as the Archangelics and Archdemonics. They may or may not look like their



lesser kin; some may appear to be normal wraiths. These beings are polarized at the extremity of good and evil, having become so static, that they have lost all sense of spirit and act only on the letter of the law, so to speak.

Archangelics

Regardless of how they look when first encountered, Archangelics change into terrible, fiery-eyed avengers, armed with flaming swords and scrolls of judgment. They seek to punish all wraiths for their unconfessed sins and evils, homing in on the wraith's Shadow and drawing it out for combat through a unique power of Castigate. Any wraith is destroyed whose Shadow is also destroyed in combat with an Archangelic. Her soul is captured by the Archangelic. No one is certain what the Archangelics do with these cleansed souls, but it is surmised that they are used in the forging of their flaming swords. At any rate, it is believed that these souls do not go to feed Oblivion.


Archdemonics

Archdemonics locate wraiths who have very little Angst and attempt to corrupt them with kindness, gifting them with extra Abilities through the use of Shadow dice. They'll also teach them Arcanos which causes the wraith to gain Angst by using them. Archdemonic's actions are more long-term than their Angelic brethren since it usually takes a little time to corrupt someone. Their goal is to cause the wraith to succumb to his Shadow, thereby becoming a Spectre or being drawn into Oblivion.

Djinn

A final type in this category are the Djinn. Some Angelics and Demonics appear as genies or efreeti and seem to possess the powers attributed to those beings. They can provide wraiths with fabulous wealth — in Stygian coin, of course — and other material items like relic palaces and flying carpets. This wealth costs the wraith dearly. For each wish granted or thing demanded, the wraith loses a point of Pathos. The wraith will not notice this at first, being too caught up in her own greed. After the loss of the second point, the wraith may roll Wits + Occult (or Enigmas, if that is higher, difficulty 6). If she succeeds, she notices the loss and connects it with the wish or demand. If asked, the Djinn will tell the wraith that wishes and such must be powered somehow, just like Arcanos. If she fails, she will notice the loss of Pathos, but will attribute it to something else (the Storyteller should concoct some plausible explanation). On a botch, the wraith notices no loss, and in fact, feels stronger than ever —her Shadow is becoming empowered by her behavior. She may even want to ask for more. After each subsequent loss, the wraith should have another chance to no-





tice that something is amiss. The difficulty level remains constant because the more Pathos she loses, the easier it is to notice that it's gone. While it is possible to eventually generate more Pathos, if a wraith loses it all to a Djinn, she will be unable to use her Arcanos — including Argos to maneuver in the Tempest — making it almost impossible for her to go elsewhere to generate new Pathos.

Angelics and Demonics should be generated individually, and should not be so overpowering that characters have no chance against them. Neither should they be so weak that players lose all respect for such powerful beings. They should be at least as powerful as Legendaries, and have both Argos and Castigate in addition to any other Arcanos which they possess. Angelics and Demonics are often used as agents for heaven or hell and might require wraiths to accompany them to their patron Far Shore in return for their help.

Spectres

*Cauldron of hatred, festering horror
The anger of chaotic confusion, their twisted minds
Burning with the madness of eternal suffering.
— The Obsessed, "Climate of Despair"*

By far the most numerous and common foes to be met in the Tempest are Spectres. The word Spectre is a catch-all term for corrupt beings that live in the Tempest and serve Oblivion. In many ways, Spectres are wraiths' most fearsome opponents, for they are what wraiths can become upon the loss of their Passions or Fetters or if they succumb to a Harrowing. Wraiths should never forget that Spectres were once wraiths like themselves. They should not dismiss Spectres as faceless, meaningless foes.

All Spectres have a form of group telepathy and radiate a cold, black phosphorescence that is the physical manifestation of the rays of Oblivion. There are many different kinds, shapes and sizes of Spectres; only a few of which have been categorized.

Shades

*Seal up the mouth of outrage for a while,
'Till we can clear these ambiguities,
And know their spring, their head, their true descent;
And then will I be general of your woes,
And lead you even to death...
— William Shakespeare, Romeo and Juliet*

Shades are souls who have been lost to Oblivion and have chosen to embrace its power. Taken over by their Shadows, they become hungry ghosts with great cunning, but little intelligence. Nearly mindless, Shades almost always have the special power of Pathos Drain because they need the warmth of the emotions to ward off the chill of the Tempest. They

can fly through the Tempest, eavesdrop on the Shadowlands from nihilis, locate entrances to the Labyrinth and sense wraiths by the amount of Pathos the wraith possesses. They are predators with very sharp senses.

Some Shades resemble humans (or wraiths) in form, while others have been twisted into hideous monsters. There are several Shade Powers that they can utilize (detailed on p. 232 of *Wraith: The Oblivion*). Most Shades have only one power, but larger ones may possess as many as three. Though they are almost mindless, Shades still tend to follow the patterns of the Shadows from which they were born. Some continue on in the same way while others seem to fall prey to the Shadow's weaknesses. They can, with some reservations, be divided into the following types:


Abusers: These Shades are often in the forefront of an invasion. They derive the most satisfaction from the infliction of pain. Uninterested in or unwilling to use subtler powers, these Shades most often have the powers of Shark's Teeth or Ectoplasmic Tentacles. Abusers are often twisted into monstrous forms, but many look like stern and unforgiving parents, teachers, clergy or policemen.

Directors: Directors are rarely the first Shades on the scene. They hang back, directing other Shades into place before making their own move. Waiting until a wraith is distracted, they move in and utilize the power known as Bind, attempting to encapsulate and drag the wraith off in order to bedevil her in a particularly nightmarish scene of their choosing. Directors rarely look monstrous. Most seem quiet and unassuming — until they shatter a wraith's Psyche through evoking her Shadow over and over....

Freaks: Shades born from Freak Shadows delight in tormenting wraiths by exposing their darkest secrets. They most often utilize Hound the Harrowed in order to dredge up and feed on a wraith's most painful and humiliating memories. Freaks are often monstrous. Some also possess Ectoplasmic Tentacles which they use, not to attack, but to grasp a wraith and drag him to the Labyrinth.

Leeches: Leeches exist to be fed and they don't care what they feed on or how they get it. They most often have Pathos Drain, though a very few, larger Leech Shades may also have the Chameleon Parasite power. There is no subtlety in most of them, however, and Pathos Drain is their favored attack. Many Leeches look like giant slugs.

Martyrs: Generally humanoid in appearance, Martyrs are usually found at the front lines of battle along with Abusers. They are far more subtle in their assaults, favoring Rend the Lifeweb as their main attack form. Rend the Lifeweb can destroy a wraith's Fetters, thereby bringing the wraith closer to dissolution by weakening his hold on the Skinlands. Coincidentally, it costs the Shade five Angst points to use, weakening the Shade and making it more likely to be destroyed. After all, it wants to be a Martyr.



Monsters: Horribly warped and malformed, Monsters seek to cause wild destruction. They usually have Shark's Teeth as their primary power, but many also possess Spectral Scream so that they can summon others to help in the slaughter. If they summon a Malfean in the process, so much the better. Like Abusers and Martyrs, Monsters like to be in the first wave of attackers. Unlike Abusers, they do not want to cause pain, just wanton destruction. Should Abusers (or preferably Martyrs) get in their way, Monsters perfectly happy to destroy them too.

Parents: This strange Shade rarely makes a direct attack. The Parent Shade usually uses Numbing the Heart. When it uses its power, it attacks the wraith's Passions, hoping to cut the wraith off from her own feelings and open her to the numbing cold of Oblivion, thereby controlling her. Parent Shades often appear as concerned parents or guardians.

Perfectionists: These Shades utilize Hound the Harrowed as their primary attack. They are usually not included in concerted attacks on strongholds. They are more suited to Harrowings. They are the most mutable form of any of the Shades, being able to assume any shape at will. Perfectionists use their abilities to force wraiths into mistakes which can then be punished.

Pushers: Pushers may be the oddest Shades of all. They do not utilize any of the normal Shade Powers. Indeed, they do not prey directly on wraiths at all, but on other Shades. Rather than attacking wraiths, Pushers travel with Shade packs and offer their Angst to fuel other Shades' powers for use against their foes. Naturally, they expect a little something in return...a choice morsel of Pathos, for example. Pushers may either be humanoid or monstrous-looking.

Rationalists: There are no known Rationalist Shades. For some reason, the particular nature of this Shadow does not lend itself to mindlessness. Rationalists usually become Doppelgangers — Spectres who can put the Intelligence of the Shadow to good use.

Doppelgangers


Doppelgangers are wraiths whose Shadows have consumed them, but they retain their personalities, free will and knowledge of Arcanos. They also retain their Fetters, allowing them to enter the Shadowlands. They continue to gather Pathos; they prefer to be honored with the darker emotions, shunning those generated by love and other positive feelings. All Doppelgangers have Argos 5, allowing them to move about the Tempest at will, banish other wraiths to the Tempest or hold them within it once they are there. They may have up to five points worth of additional Arcanos. Usually, they select the extra Arcanos from among the options that assist them in their various maneuverings.

Doppelgangers retain their own forms. Many are capable of assuming other forms as well, including that of other wraiths. Their power to change form is their favorite trick and is what gives them their name. It is rarely apparent that Doppelgangers are not normal wraiths, and even Castigate will not always discover their true nature. Because of their many advantages, not the least of which is their Intelligence, Doppelgangers are the favored agents of Malfeans. They fulfill several roles and may be divided into several types:

Actors: These shape-shifters are the main actors in Harrowings. They take whatever forms are called for and torment the wraiths brought to them. They most enjoy assuming roles in which they appear to be the tormented loved ones of the wraith being Harrowed, for this evokes the most anguish. However, they also savor roles which allow them to assist the wraith's Shadow in directly threatening or torturing the wraith. All Actors have Castigate 2 which allows them to discover the wraiths' darkest secrets and utilize them to personalize the Harrowing, making it as frightening or humiliating as possible. Doppelganger Actors feed off of the emotions that are generated, refueling their Pathos. In addition to their Castigate talents, Actors also excel at the fifth level of Moliate (Bodyshape). In compensation, they have only enough Argos to allow them to move through the Tempest from one Labyrinth entrance to another.

Assassins: Assassins are Doppelgangers who enter the Shadowlands, particularly Necropoli, in groups and attempt to secretly waylay and destroy wraiths who pass through their area of operation. These vicious Spectres feed off of the pain, fear and anger they generate with their attacks. A well-hidden group who attacks only lone wraiths may function for quite a while without being noticed in larger Necropoli. Because they do not have to function in wraith society, Assassins will often be Nephwracks (Doppelgangers who have become eroded by the force of Oblivion so that their appearance has devolved). Doubles (see below) sometimes act in tandem with Assassins, taking the places of slain wraiths.

Banshees: These horrific Doppelgangers are so named because their Keening Arcanos allows them to manipulate and harm other wraiths. Banshees may have up to Keening 5. This allows them to covertly use Dirge to subtly manipulate the emotions of nearby wraiths. Banshees hope to drive wraiths closer to Oblivion by urging them to feed only on negative emotions. A strange twist on this power makes it seem as though the Keening is actually coming from up to fifteen feet away from the Doppelganger who is using it. Banshees never use the Ballad power, and rarely use Muse except to inspire dark, horrific works of art which twist and tear at the mind, creating despair. They assault wraiths with Crescendo if they cannot manipulate them by other means. Their favorite power, by far, is Requiem, which allows them to infuse their targets with negative emotion. Banshees feed



off the despair they engender. Banshees sometimes accompany Assassins, using their Requiem power to paralyze a wraith with emotion long enough for her to be overcome by her attackers.

Doubles: These chameleon-like Spectres excel in the Moliate Arcanos. Though many among them have only lower levels of the power, some have attained Moliate 5 (Bodyshape). They use their skill to take the place of other wraiths, either temporarily or permanently. When Doubles temporarily take on another wraith's appearance, they move about in wraith society or among the wraith's circle, causing trouble. They may break up friendships, flagrantly disobey laws and customs to draw the attention of the Hierarchy or even attack other wraiths. Having done so, they seek to escape and change, leaving the unfortunate wraith to face the consequences of the Spectre's actions. Doubles may permanently assume the place of wraiths who have been slain, using this form to cause as much havoc as possible. Doubles feed off the fear, anger and confusion they cause while performing heinous deeds, as well as the confusion, frustration and anger of their wraith double when he discovers that he's been made a scapegoat.

Feeders: Feeders are parasites, plain and simple. These nearly transparent Spectres secretly attach themselves to wraiths (as per the Shade Power Chameleon Parasite). Once in place, the ravenous Feeder uses its Usury Arcanos to siphon off its host's Pathos and Corpus. Using a combination of Transfer, Early Withdrawal and Exchange Rate, the Feeder can steal Pathos directly from its host, either retaining it as Pathos or converting it into Angst. With Early Withdrawal and Exchange Rate, the Feeder draws off some of its host's Corpus, then converts it to Pathos. Done sparingly, a Feeder may remain as a secret parasite on a wraith for a long time, gradually weakening and perhaps even destroying the host. Occasionally, Feeders will go berserk, stealing so much Corpus that the wraith is plunged into the Tempest and undergoes a Harrowing. Feeders leave a host who has lost all of her Corpus.

Goads: Goads do not attack wraiths, nor do they use any Arcanos against them. Instead, in their guise as normal wraiths, Goads befriend wraiths and offer them advice. They argue against a wraith's dearly held beliefs and values, subtly eroding the wraith's confidence. They suggest actions designed to strengthen the wraith's Shadow self while pretending to help their "friend." With their Doppelganger allies, they secretly set up ambushes or situations that force the wraith to embrace her darker emotions and call upon her Shadow for assistance. When the wraith gives in to their goading, they snatch her and gleefully carry her off to Oblivion, feasting on her terror and despair.

Illusionaries: Illusionaries are masters of Phantasm. Some Illusionaries are Nephwracks. Their first line of attack is to use Dreams of Sleep against a target wraith. Once the wraith is asleep, the Illusionary uses a variation of Lucidity to send the wraith a dream of the Spectre's choice. This is usually a dark nightmare which features some horrific creature who chases, attacks and destroys the wraith. Once the wraith has received the same dream two or three times, the Illusionary uses Phantasmagoria to create an illusion from the dreams of the monstrous thing. They always invest the illusion with three to five points of Corpus so that it seems very real and is harder to destroy. Illusionaries feed off of the emotions engendered by the dreams and the illusionary attack. If the wraith is destroyed by the illusion, that's icing on the cake.

Oddities: Oddities are the most diverse sort of Spectres, and often seem to behave more like Shades than Doppelgangers. These are the Spectres who inhabit strange areas within the Tempest and utilize Arcanos in slightly different ways than those known by normal wraiths. Among the Oddities are the Sargasso Spectres who use Keening to befuddle their opponents, and the Shard Spectres who utilize Moliate to embed shards of Stygian steel into their bodies to better wound other wraiths. Oddities are some of the most dangerous Spectres because they use such unexpected variations of Arcanos powers and because their Intelligence prompts them to plan more elaborate ambushes and utilize better tactics when in combat.

Riders: Not all Spectres are concerned with harming wraiths. Some work against mortals. Riders use their Puppetry Arcanos to take over mortals and control them. Usually, they seek either to cause numerous, violent deaths in a short amount of time (by forcing their host to be a sniper, for example) or they organize cults of mortals dedicated to hatred, fear, torture and death. To this end, they often use their host as a "messiah" or satanic covenant master. After enough indoctrination, the cult either goes on a rampage or commits mass suicide. Most of the souls garnered go straight to Oblivion. Occasionally, a Rider strikes it rich and manages to take over a prominent political figure. Repressive and deadly regimes, resulting in the murder of thousands of innocents, are sure to follow.

Spies: This is a catch-all category for any Doppelgangers sent to the Shadowlands or various realms as spies. They may be of almost any type so long as they can blend in with the local wraiths and listen for secrets. Spies also note the defenses of the Necropolis or realm so that later attacks may be as efficient and damaging as possible. Some Doppelganger spies rise to positions of power within the Hierarchy, Renegades or Heretics and utilize their positions to learn more secrets and to condemn or torment wraiths under their control.



Wrackers: Wrackers use their Lifeweb Arcanos to destroy wraiths' Fetters and to claim mortals' souls for Oblivion. Working secretly, a Wracker targets a wraith and spends a good deal of time discovering that wraith's Fetters and her relationship to them. The Wracker never approaches the wraith and breaks off an attempt to determine the wraith's Fetters whenever the wraith seems suspicious. The Wracker works over a period of time and does not jeopardize its goal by being too hasty. Once it has determined a wraith's Fetters and their locations, the Wracker systematically visits each Fetter and attempts to destroy it, thereby cutting the wraith's ties to the world of the living. The anguish and anger generated by these actions sustains and feeds the Wracker.

Wrackers use the power of Soul Pact to make deals with mortals for their souls. In exchange for the Spectre's help, the mortal agrees to give her soul to Oblivion and becomes a Fetter for the Wracker so long as she is living. Of course, when shock troops are needed for invasions of Necropoli or realms, these Spectres may kill their bound mortal, sending her soul to Oblivion where it can be made into another Spectre.

Nephwracks


Nephwracks are Doppelgangers who have devolved due to the entropic effects of Oblivion on them. This changes them, rendering them monstrous and making them unable to change their appearance to appear as normal wraiths. Perhaps because they are also monstrous, Malfean prefer Nephwracks over any of their other servants and they are given special tasks that only they are allowed to perform.

Malfeans

Malfeans seem to be of two basic types: those who are great beasts and were never human (called Grotesques) and those who were once ordinary wraiths (known as Plotters). Both grow to an enormous size and wield mighty powers.

Grotesques

In the bleak nothingness before time, destructive, hungry, reptilian beasts — grim manifestations of destruction — rose from the Utter Darkness which lay beneath the Shadowlands. They began to carve great tunnels, forming them into a chaotic Labyrinth that opened into the heart of Oblivion. They were called Malfeans because of their malevolent natures. These elder beasts of darkness made their homes within the twists and turns of the Great Labyrinth's many tunnels and chambers, and batted on whatever they could find to feed their great hungers.



Over time, they grew even larger, resulting in an even greater hunger. The Grotesques attack anything that enters their territory and occasionally go searching for prey. They are sometimes attended by Shades, who seem drawn to all Malfeans like moths to a candle flame. Lesser Malfeans also serve them in return for a portion of the greater Malfean's spoils.

Some Grotesques may be highly intelligent, but the majority of them are slaves to the bestial sides of their nature, ravening and destroying in the search for their next meal. The great reptilian horror known as Gorool, the Malfean who threatened Stygia during the Fifth Great Maelstrom, was a Grotesque. He destroyed much of Stygia's fleet and consumed the wraiths sent against him until Charon drew him away. Both went down in a whirlpool summoned by Charon. It is not known if either — or both — survived.

Grotesques are usually only dangerous to those who enter and traverse parts of the Labyrinthine tunnels leading to Oblivion. It is theorized that Grotesques sleep a great deal of the time, almost as if they were in hibernation. Occasionally, one awakens and attacks wraiths, ships, trains or anything else it can find to sate its hunger. Naturally, the more it eats, the more it wants.

Plotters

Many ancient Spectres who have consumed other wraiths and Spectres have grown to be enormous. Bloated and powerful, they have become utterly inhuman. These, too, are known as Malfeans. Some say they are indistinguishable from the Grotesques. They also attract Shade servitors, but prefer the more intelligent Dopplegangers and Nephwracks. Plotters seem vastly more intelligent than Grotesques, but perhaps they merely have different goals — or different ways of attaining the same goal. Plotters hunger too; but for them, mere consumption is not enough. They desire power over others as well.

When Shades or Dopplegangers are sent out to spy or cause difficulties in the Shadowlands or Skinlands, it is usually at the behest of a Plotter. Some rumors say that Plotters are the force behind Maelstroms. It is said that they hoard energy and Spectre servitors for years, then send them out in a terrible holocaust to attack the realms, Shadowlands and Skinlands. Aside from power, no one knows what drives Plotters to act like they do. Though powerful, they are for the most part lethargic, seldom rousing themselves when they can send their servants instead.

All Malfeans are incredibly huge and powerful. They are so large that entire colonies of Spectres are said to reside within some of them. Their powers should be such that mere characters would need an army of allies to even dream of going directly against a lesser Malfean. The Sto-

ryteller is free to build her own Malfeans. Physical and Mental Traits should be somewhere in the range of those for vampiric Methuselaha. They should have access to all Arcanos (except those that deal exclusively with the Skinlands), all pertinent Shadow Thorns and Shade Powers and be able to siphon any of their servitors for the Pathos or Angst they need to utilize any of the powers. Their Willpower should be 10 and each should possess Iron Will. Aside from their armies of Spectres, Malfeans might have dealings with Nephandi, vampires or others whom they could call upon for aid. If using a Malfean for something other than a terrible scare for the characters, each should be given a unique personality and motivations.

Malfeans may serve as the great villains behind an elaborate plot which runs throughout a campaign. Certainly, newly created wraiths would have no chance against such an opponent. Furthermore, the Malfean should be no more than a shadowy, background figure throughout most of the Chronicle, emerging only near the end as the mastermind behind all the characters' woes.


Other Denizens of the Tempest

When we saw what had become of Charon's mighty city, we wept. That which should have been the shelter for all souls, the place of judgment where each soul would be weighed in the scales and taken to its just reward, now stood as a prison for those whose only crime lay in wishing to pass onward and be quit of its corruption. That kingdoms have their critics, this we know, and also that those critics sometimes overthrow the king. Yet there were many who meant no harm or threat, who only sought to live outside the petty rulership of kings. And we who had been banished ourselves, aided some of these.

— from the Journal of Actemaeon, Ferryman

There are two kinds of wraiths that may be found within the Tempest, those who travel and those who are settled. They are distinguished either by lifestyle or beliefs. The following categorizations are those of the Ferrymen.

Gypsies: Like their living namesakes, gypsies travel the byways through the Tempest, stopping here and there along the roadside whenever they feel like it. They sell their talents to local wraiths and other travelers. Gypsies are masters of Argos, Fatalism and Inhabit. Just like their real world counterparts, gypsies sell their abilities as fortune tellers. They will sometimes use their skills with Inhabit to create relics for others if paid enough, but mostly they use the power to create relic wagons for themselves. Somehow, the gypsies have discovered a way of making their relic wagons into mobile Haunts. They are better protected from the Maelstroms when in them. They can



move them back and forth between the Shadowlands and the Tempest and they receive all of the benefits wraiths do when in their Haunts. Most wraiths leave gypsies alone because they fear their abilities.

The gypsies utilize a level five Argos coupled with Lifeweb 3 (Splice Strand) to make their mobile Haunts. This Argos power is known only to the gypsies, who refuse to share it. They claim that they have enough competition on the roads as it is.

Hidden Ones: Huddled in hidden byways, pockets, islands and coves are other denizens of the Tempest; most are the dispossessed. All along its length, the River of Death hosts small communities of those who were welcome nowhere else. Many are Renegades, who seek only to escape Stygia's notice, but some are Heretics, a few of whom were too heretical for their own sects. These wraiths found no shelter in Stygia, any of the Far Shores or any of the various Necropoli. Some lack Fetters, so they cannot venture to the Shadowlands. Cut off from the rest of wraith society, they have formed small communities of their own. Most of these communities are quite peaceful. The wraiths within them try not to attract the attention of any Stygian patrols, Spectres or wandering Heretic bands. Some thrive on catering to the needs of passing Renegades, but most emerge from their communities only to search for the Pathos they need to keep existing as wraiths. They escape Stygia's enslavement through a combination of living quietly, dispersing whenever Stygian patrols come too near and the secrecy of the Ferrymen.

Lost Souls: These wraiths are very rare, for they are individuals who have somehow escaped the notice of the Reapers. They wander throughout the Tempest. Their sight may be distorted, for some have never had the caul removed from their faces. Some remove the caul themselves. Ferrymen search for Lost Souls. If they find one who has not had the caul removed, they do so and claim the person as their charge. Such Lost Souls are taught by the Ferryman who finds them and they often become new Ferrymen themselves. Those who have the strength and intelligence to tear their own caul off are invited to join the Ferrymen. If they accept, they are taken in by the Ferrymen and taught. If they refuse, they are given one free passage anywhere along the River of Death.

Monastics: These settled wraiths form quiet, non-threatening communities. However, theirs are founded upon spiritual beliefs, making them somewhat like smaller versions of the Far Shores. As in monasteries, the wraiths live together and attend certain ceremonies as a group. Despite the name, there are as many female Monastics as male, and not all of the groups are Christian in outlook. There are groups of Norse and followers of Islam, Wiccans and Albigentians among the Monastics. They offer no

threat to Stygia, save that of their differing beliefs. Many Monastic communities give shelter to escaped slaves and those being hunted by the Hierarchy, particularly if their "crime" is heresy.

Pirates: Pirates group together under a charismatic captain and raid up and down the byways for Artifacts and relics. They'll take the occasional coin as well. Usually, Pirates are encountered while in their relic ships or vehicles, but each group has a secret base where they return to divide their spoils in safety. Pirates do a brisk trade with both Renegades and Hierarchy, selling their loot to the highest bidder. While Pirates take a wraith's possessions, they rarely harm the wraith (if she has the good sense not to fight). Pirates almost never capture the wraith to sell her. They prefer to keep their good name rather than be confused with Slavers. They are particularly upset with the Soul-Pirates, for they feel that these scum should call themselves Soul-Slavers, a more accurate reflection of what they do.

Renegade Packs: These small groups usually inhabit enclaves which serve as outposts or staging areas for larger Renegade groups. From the enclave, Renegade spies can infiltrate an area, or Renegade cadres can make sneak attacks and coordinate guerrilla warfare. Many enclaves are secret training grounds where new members are taught combat skills and Arcanos and indoctrinated with the Renegades' beliefs. Some enclaves are home to smaller Renegade groups that retain autonomy from the larger groups. They do many of the same sorts of things as the other groups, but on a smaller scale. Some smaller groups are loose cannons motivated only by revenge. These become suicide squads bent on assassinating those whom they feel have wronged them. Unfortunately, wraiths who stumble upon them may be "accidentally" killed to maintain the group's secrecy.

Slavers: Slavers are practically citizens of Stygia. They search for Lemures, small groups of wraiths or independents, whom they overcome or kidnap for sale to Stygia or occasionally to agents from a Far Shore realm. Slavers tend to be more mobile, moving through the various byways in search of potential victims. When they have a base, it is usually just a holding pen where slaves can be chained and kept until their next slave auction. Slavers keep whatever personal wealth their victims have. This practice annoys Pirates; they feel it confuses everyone and makes it more difficult for them to explain the differences between themselves and Slavers. Not that the Slavers care.

Soul-Pirates: These wraiths are Slavers too, but they work exclusively for the Far Shores. Whether it is because they are paid more or because they truly believe in whatever afterlife they are supporting, Soul-Pirates capture other wraiths and sell them as "converts" to various Far



Shores realms. Usually, they keep whatever personal items the captured wraiths have. Most Soul-Pirates find it particularly funny that the Pirates, who are unabashed thieves, think so poorly of them.

Stygian Patrols: Most of Stygia's soldiers patrol the nearby area in cruisers, but some (usually those on punishment detail) are organized into foot patrols. Morale is very poor among the Patrols. Many become the target of Renegade or Heretic attacks in addition to having to fight off any Spectres they root out along the way. Small communities usually remain very quiet when a Stygian Patrol is in the area. They know that if they keep out of sight, the soldiers will pass by, march to their border fortress and march back without disturbing them. Only those wraiths foolish enough to come face-to-face with a Stygian Patrol have any worries. Those who have no brands might be taken back to Stygia to become thralls.

Ferryman: The Ferryman are enigmas to most wraiths. Independent, yet respected, banished, yet trusted to keep the byways open, the Ferryman sometimes seem to be the only wraiths who are really in charge of their own destinies. They are some of the strongest, most powerful

wraiths; they must be to battle Spectres and forge their way alone through the Tempest. Many question whether they are actually their own masters. At one time, they were Charon's chosen ones, and Charon always listened to the Lady of Fate. Though Charon is gone and the Ferryman were banished by him, many believe that they are still agents of Fate, following her counsel and performing their duties for some end that no one else can guess.

Though their name takes the masculine form, Ferryman are as likely to be female as male. In their cloaks and cowls, it is difficult at best to determine which sex a Ferryman is, and many choose not to speak. Ferryman keep their own counsel and live together in hidden coves, which they call Waystations, located in several places along the River of Death. Travelers are not taken to Waystations; those remain secret places known only to Ferryman. Wraiths lost in the Tempest or under attack by Spectres can count on any Ferryman in the area coming to their aid.

Because of this and because they keep the byways open, Ferryman are respected by almost everyone in the Underworld. Even Hierarchy legions do not block their way.



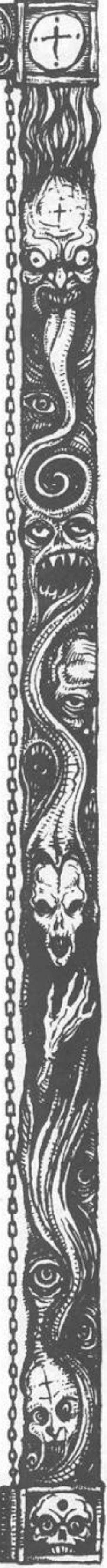
Though they have a reputation for honesty and honor, many fear or hate the Ferrymen, for they can take a soul onward to its just destination (whether that be Oblivion or Transcendence), thereby keeping it from becoming one of the Restless Dead. Those who will pay their price may travel with them and thus be free of many of the dangers of the Tempest. The Ferrymen travel where they want, taking a circuitous route to their destination, and a journey with one may well take years or centuries to complete.

The Ferrymen's reed boats seem to be almost magical in their ability to withstand punishment. They can stand up under assaults by Spectres, the winds and tumult of the Tempest and it is rumored, even the soul-stripping, inexorable Maelstroms. Further, it seems as though the Ferrymen can use their crafts anywhere, changing road or railroad into liquid so that their boats may pass. Immediately behind the craft, the solid nature of the byway is restored once again. No one but the Ferrymen know how they do this (if they even know).

In some cases, either those wraiths traveling with them have their perceptions changed, or the boats are more magical than many believe. Many wraiths swear that they have seen a Ferryman's boat change into another form such as a truck or a train. Either the wraith is seeing things or else the boats really are capable of transforming into whatever size and shape of vehicle is needed.

A few have postulated that the River of Death is the only real byway through the Tempest and that all byways are but branches of the great river, no matter how solid they seem. Others say that the Ferrymen cannot leave the River of Death, so they carry the river with them wherever they go, spinning it in front of themselves so they may travel wherever they wish. Whatever magic or lost Arcanos they use, it is known only to the enigmatic Ferrymen.

Some wraiths speculate that the Ferrymen have all Transcended, yet remain in the Underworld to act as teachers for those who want to learn from them. These wraiths claim that the River of Death did not exist before Charon explored it and that the form it now takes is due to the Ferrymen's influence. It is said that the river branches and winds so much because the Ferrymen decided that it should do so in order to serve as the physical representation of the false paths, twists, turns and choices a wraith makes in coming to terms with herself. Each bend in the river becomes symbolic of a possible turning point or an obstacle which must be overcome on the way to Transcendence. If this is so, and if the Ferrymen are indeed acting as Mentors, it is not so surprising that their journeys last so long. They are designed to bring a wraith to the point where she will accept Transcendence. The Ferrymen have not commented on the matter.





Another more popular rumor is that the Ferrymen are responsible for stealing Charon's mask. Some say they plan to choose one from among them to take his place and that the political maneuverings among them would put the Deathlords to shame. One who claims to be a friend to the cowled boatmen says that they took the mask because they believed no one was fit to wear it. She states that though they were banished by him, they hold it in trust, awaiting Charon's return. Yet a third rumor holds that the Ferrymen took the mask so no one person could ever again control Stygia. With no strong leader, so they say, the Deathlords must struggle against one another for control, meaning there will never again be a case in which all power is vested in one tyrannical leader.

Maelstroms

*Things fall apart; the centre cannot hold;
Mere anarchy is loosed upon the world,
The blood-dimmed tide is loosed, and everywhere
The ceremony of innocence is drowned.*
— W.B. Yeats, "The Second Coming"

General Knowledge

Maelstroms are the great tidal waves and hurricane storms — vortices of pure Oblivion — which sweep out of the Void at the heart of the Tempest and across the realms and Shadowlands, bringing destruction and madness in their wake. When a Maelstrom hits, realms may be swept away, wraiths torn apart as they make for their Haunts and terrible, disastrous storms may roar over the Skinlands, causing great and unnatural catastrophes. It is said that the sinking of Atlantis and perhaps even the Great Flood were but ripples of the Maelstrom. Vast and terrifying, the great storms are a massive, impenetrable, whirling combination of black mists, winds and waves. Soot and skin seem to crawl within the greasy winds that bring with them the foulest stench imaginable, nauseating those who breathe or touch the winds. Those who are not sheltered or bound in place by Stygian chains are washed away by the tides of Oblivion.

Maelstroms are as much invasion as they are storm. Screaming Spectres ride within the charnel winds, destroying all they encounter. Only if the invaders are fought and bested can the storm be calmed. Maelstroms usually portend a particularly bad storm or natural disaster in the Skinlands.



Wraiths use Maelstroms to mark eras in the Underworld. The First Great Maelstrom occurred when Rome fell, decimating Stygia, prompting Charon to build the great sea wall around the city to protect it from future Maelstroms and ending in the division between Charon and his Ferryman. The Second Great Maelstrom foretold the Black Plague and resulted in the banishing of the Shining Ones and their temples. The Third Great Maelstrom, in the early 1500's, greatly changed the Underworld, dividing it into the Shadowlands above and the Tempest and realms below. At this time, the Shroud came into being, cutting the world of the spirit off from the living world. The Fourth Great Maelstrom did little harm to Stygia. It scoured its towers to a mirror brightness, but many Spectres took up hidden positions in the Necropoli. The bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki occurred as the Fifth Great Maelstrom vomited from the depths of the Labyrinth and spread destruction throughout the Underworld. It was at this time that Gorool the Malfean and Charon fought their great battle and went down together into a whirlpool in the Sunless Sea. With Charon's loss, the Deathlords took control of Stygia and now rule with iron hands. The storms continue to arise, though none with so great a destructive force as to be termed a Great Maelstrom — yet.

The Nature of the Storm

I, who survived the Five Great Maelstroms, wonder that the Deathlords seem unable to grasp the significance of the great storms even as they move to battle them. Can they not hear the agonized cries of the thousands who are torn asunder by the winds? Do they not see the broken, mewling spirits that bow under a weight so terrible that they cannot bear it anymore? They fear the destruction; they fear the change which the storms bring, never seeing the pain of the world which has wrought the fearsome tide and which seeks surcease within its dread embrace.

— from the Journal of Actemaeon, Ferryman

Like the rest of the Underworld, Maelstroms are both physical objects and spiritual phenomena. They are both the howling, tempestuous storm and a personification of destruction and change. The smaller Maelstroms (known as Soul-Storms) careen through the Tempest, testing and changing those they waylay. Larger ones skirl and moan around the realms, tearing away those not firmly rooted and sucking them into the Void. The Greater Maelstroms

are few and far between, but each either heralds or is in response to some terrible catastrophe in the Skinlands. It is almost as if the Maelstroms, responding to the logic which declares "if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out," respond to that which is utterly intolerable by trying to sweep the world clean of it. That was their original purpose — either to warn of impending, earth-shattering events, or to clear away the nauseating and repulsive detritus. Maelstroms were once much less threatening and massive, spilling over into the Skinlands as omens or remarkable weather patterns which heralded great change. They were intended to help break down old patterns, leaving a clean slate that could be written on again. At some point after the Malfeans carved out the Labyrinth, the Maelstroms changed. No more were they cleansing storms, but horrid, black holocausts in which Spectres rode, bringing destruction, but no cleansing — indeed, they left behind a horrid residue that coated and tainted all it touched.


No one controls Maelstroms. They arise from the Labyrinth and twist their way across the Tempest when and where they will. Spectres, however, take advantage of them, immersing themselves in the horrid effluvia and flying with the storm to prey upon those whom it attacks. The only real safety from the Maelstrom is within one's Haunt; the only way to battle it is to use the Castigate Arcanos, either using the basic power of Bulwark to create a shield against the storm, or by using Castigate 3 (Casting Out), which forbids Spectres from remaining in the area.

Many Ferryman claim that Maelstroms are denizens of the Tempest as much as any creature that lives within it. They say that Maelstroms are sentient and that their corruption by the Malfeans has driven them into a madness so great that they can only lash out at anything in their path. Others hold that Maelstroms are within the mind of the wraith, just like the Tempest and the rest of the Underworld, and that they are "brain-storms." They occur in response to the wraith's own desire for punishment or retribution — or her subconscious longing for Oblivion. As always, those with the clearest sight say that all theories are equally valid. Accepting that Maelstroms are all in the wraith's head does not automatically keep it from affecting her physically and emotionally or prevent the Spectres from attacking her. With a Maelstrom, it's best not to take chances.





MIRACOLA



Chapter Three: By Darkness Overtaken

*Don't make a difference what you got
It doesn't matter what you lose
Don't make a difference if you like it or not
Baby, I'm gonna change your attitude
'Cause all around me there is mystery and wonder
Now can't you see it in my eyes
I'll crack the sky, make you feel the thunder
You'll never see through my disguise.
I'm a real smooth dancer, I'm a fantasy man
Master of illusion, with my sleight of hand
All the stages are empty when I steal the scenes...
— Deep Purple, "King of Dreams"*




arrowings

A Harrowing is a nightmare ride through the Tempest, a passion play or psychodrama directed by the wraith's Shadow and co-starring a cast of Spectres and starring the wraith. Harrowings are designed to torture the wraith, empower her Shadow and force her into making mistakes. Harrowings can rip away her Passions, Fetters, or her very essence...then send her screaming to Oblivion. To some extent, the Harrowing is like a game, a challenge to the wraith to choose the right course of action that will result in her escape from the nightmare. Naturally, the Shadow either tries to stack the cards so that the wraith chooses incorrectly or makes all choices seem so foul that

the wraith cannot decide among them and consequently avoids the problem. In either case, the Shadow "wins" and takes as its prize some part of the wraith's Passions or Fetters, weakening them and bringing the wraith closer to the nothingness of Oblivion — or drags the wraith down into the Void. If the wraith triumphs, she breaks free of the Harrowing and retains her Fetters and Passions. Though she is unscathed, she is usually not unchanged. Those undergoing Harrowings, whether they are successful or not, are always psychically altered by them.

The alteration can be anything from a profound fear of ever undergoing a Harrowing again to an epiphany concerning either a Passion or Fetter. Some wraiths never really emerge from the Harrowing. They believe that they are still within the nightmare and their Shadow is just toying with them before beginning another assault.



The Metaphysics of Harrowings

Harrowings are a physical representation of the wraith's unconscious. When a wraith experiences something which threatens to estrange her even further from the world of the living (such as losing Fetters, Passions or all of her Corpus or Willpower), her mind fights back against the loss. At the same time, another portion of her, her Shadow self, attempts to help the break occur.

There is both a strong life wish and an equally strong death wish within each person. Wraiths are no different. They need the ties to the living (Passions and Fetters) to remain wraiths. Otherwise, they simply slip into Oblivion. Some souls may Transcend, having made their peace with themselves and the world before their deaths. These never become wraiths. Those souls who become wraiths are *unable* to Transcend until they have reached that point of acceptance in which they have resolved all their Fetters and given up their Passions in favor of peaceful repose. Until then, they are the Restless Dead, given meaning through their Passions and tied to the living through their Fetters. They need their Corpus as a shell to house their mind and soul and their Willpower to withstand the pull toward dissolution.

To some extent then, the wraith is not the "good" portion of the character, but the part that represents order, controlled emotion and reason. The Shadow is not necessarily the "evil" side of the wraith, merely the side which represents chaos, uncontrolled passions and the demand for immediate gratification. The Shadow pulls the wraith toward entropy. The only way a wraith can keep the Shadow from eventually dragging her down into Oblivion is by retaining ties to the world, being robbed of her free will and made into a chained Drone, or Transcending.

Being made into a mindless Drone is not usually a wraith's first choice as a way to escape Oblivion. It is effective, however, so long as the wraith remains chained. Many wraiths seek to extend their unlives (however terrible they may be) by acquiring ever more Passions and Fetters. They are like the guest who won't leave when the party is over, trying desperately to recapture the gaiety and good feelings by playing one more song, demanding one more dance, and having one more drink — over and over. These wraiths may exist for a long time, with some eventually becoming Gaunts. This is probably the single most effective way of holding the Void at bay, and the safest, unless there really is a blissful Afterlife or another chance on the karmic wheel awaiting the wraith. In that case, despite all her attempts to retain her sense of self, the wraith is really just thrashing in place, postponing what could have been joyous and uplifting. Of course, most wraiths and most inhabitants of the World of Darkness don't really believe in such things.

The Wish for Transcendence

To die, to sleep; —

*To sleep, perchance, to dream; — ay, there's the rub;
For in that sleep of death what dreams may come...*

Must give us pause...

*For who would bear the whips and scorns of time,
The oppressor's wrong...*

But that the dread of something after death, —

The undiscovered country, from whose bourn

No traveller returns, — puzzles the will,

And makes us rather bear those ills we have,

Than fly to others that we know not of?

— William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*

Transcendence calls for great courage, trust and belief that there is a better place or a better life available if the wraith can reconcile her Shadow with her self and surrender both in an acceptance of her own death.

This is where things become really confused. Though the Shadow seeks to overthrow the wraith's higher consciousness and assume control in order to send her to Oblivion, it also serves as a goad which should drive the wraith to come to terms with her inner demons and throw off the need for clinging to her former mortality. At one time, this was the purpose of Harrowings. They were challenges designed to teach the wraith how to contend with her darker aspects and win out over them. No one knows who determined this function. Some say it was a deity; others claim that the Lady of Fate is responsible. Many believe it is simply the way the cosmic wheel works out its cosmic balance.

Wraiths should always be conscious of the fact that if they lose all their Fetters before resolving them, and are consequently forced into a confrontation with their Shadows before they are ready, the wraiths will invariably lose. Harrowings serve both to force those confrontations and (in some cases) to give the wraith practice in meeting the challenges posed by her Shadow. Even the term Harrowing originally had a different meaning than it now possesses.

A harrow is a heavy plow which is dragged over ploughed land to break up clods, cover seed and remove weeds. It is a tool designed to literally strip away obstacles and any unneeded or unwanted objects so that the fertile ground is cleaned and ready for a new planting. "The Harrowing of Hell" was a medieval term for the defeat of the powers of evil and the release of their victims through Christ's descent into Hell. The uses of the terms refer to a cleansing process and a release from an intolerable bondage. This was the original purpose of Harrowings, to cleanse the wraith, removing obstacles to her Transcendence and freeing her from the constraints of her old life.



Obviously, Transcendence takes a while to reach, and a wraith could hardly spend every waking hour in pursuit of it. Some were actively afraid of it, being unwilling to accept the dissolving of their own self-awareness, that particular personality or consciousness which defines who we are. Others feared a terrible Afterlife of eternal agony awaited them. Because of this, wraiths often refused to face their Shadow, hiding themselves from themselves and pretending they could continue on unchanged. Harrowings served as a catharsis, forcing such wraiths to face themselves, their Shadow and the possibility of their dissolution or Transcendence whenever they were in danger of losing their Passions, Fetters, Corpus and Willpower. By making the wraith confront and deal with her darkest fears and desires, Harrowings cleansed the wraith, opening her to the new possibilities inherent in Transcendence: the purification of the soul and its passage to a higher realm.

The Nightmare of Oblivion

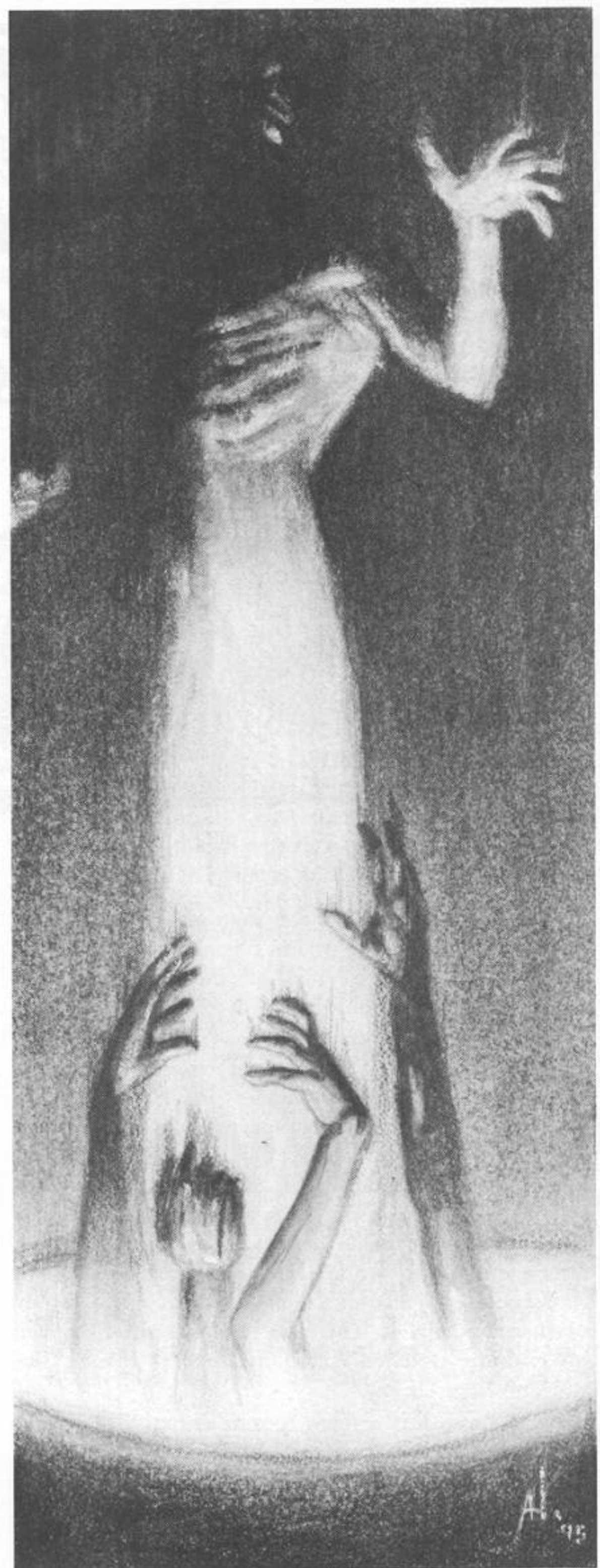
Harrowings are still confrontations between the different sides of the self, but they are no longer necessarily a cleansing process. Somewhere along the line, possibly when Spectres began multiplying and assaulting wraiths, Harrowings changed. They became darker, more sinister and more deadly. No longer are they lessons in achieving acceptance and Transcendence, but pitched battles with the wraith's soul as the ultimate trophy. Now Harrowings are things of horror and loss, though the wraith may still receive some insight into herself if she manages to vanquish her Shadow, if only for the little while she is in actual danger.

More and more often, wraiths who undergo Harrowings break under the torture and consign themselves to Oblivion's service. Sometimes the wraith does so out of simple fear of complete annihilation, believing it is better to be consumed by her Shadow yet retain some tiny spark of her personality as a Doppelganger than to be utterly dead and gone forever. Such weak-willed wraiths are usually cheated anyway, becoming near-mindless Shades. Even the Shadow is cheated, for like a shadow in the real world, which only exists in relationship to light, and which cannot exist in absolute darkness, the Shadow cannot continue to exist independently within the newly made Shade; it is subsumed in the cold, dark malevolence of Oblivion.

Ultimately, whether the light or the dark is triumphant, it's all in the wraith's mind, which, of course, is where all true horror is played out.

Harrowing Systems and Targets

There are two different kinds of Harrowings. They are distinguished by the target and possible outcome of the nightmare ride:





Destruction Harrowings

These Harrowings occur only in extreme circumstances and directly threaten the wraith. She becomes the Quarry rather than a Passion or a Fetter. Circumstances which bring about a Destruction Harrowing are as follows:

- The wraith loses all her Willpower (i.e. is on the verge of falling from one point of Willpower to zero points). She is plunged into the Tempest and undergoes a Harrowing. She herself is the Quarry of the Harrowing, as by losing all her Willpower she is on the verge of Oblivion. No rolls on Passions or Fetters are made. Instead, at the end of the Harrowing, the wraith makes a straight opposed roll pitting her permanent Willpower versus the Shadow's permanent Angst. Success releases her back to a Fetter and allows her to retain her last point of Willpower. Failure means that she is utterly consumed by Oblivion. This is the system as originally given in *Wraith: the Oblivion*. For an alternative to this, see "Target Harrowings," below.

- The wraith is reduced to zero Corpus. She is confronted with her own imminent demise. The system is the same as above, with the wraith rolling her permanent Will-

power versus the Shadow's permanent Angst. Success snaps her back to a Fetter (if she has any) or to a random part of the Tempest where she immediately recovers as many Corpus levels as she has Stamina. Failure still carries the same price.

If all or most of the damage was normal (i.e. not aggravated), the above holds true. If a wraith loses all her Corpus to aggravated damage, there is no Harrowing; the wraith is dead forever. Aggravated damage is caused by a power of Moliate, when the wraith is Embodied, or by Stygian or darksteel weapons.

- The wraith is on the verge of losing her last point in her last remaining Passion. Her emotions have become so numbed that she is a step away from feeling nothing and thus becoming nothing. The system is the same, with Willpower rolled against Angst. Should she win, the wraith is transported to one of her Fetters (assuming she still has any) or to a random area of the Tempest (if she has no Fetters) and retains that last point of Passion. Failure strips her of her last emotion, opening her to the cold void of Oblivion and destroying her.



Target Harrowings

The second type of Harrowing is one in which one of a wraith's Passions or Fetters is targeted by her Shadow in an attempt to destroy it. This may weaken the wraith's ties to the world of the living or make her a colder, less emotional person — and *that* brings her closer to Oblivion. The target of a Harrowing is called the Quarry, just as if the Trait were being hunted. Target Harrowings may be activated by the following events:

- The wraith loses (or uses up) all her Willpower. As she is on the verge of losing that final point, which would bring her to zero Willpower, she immediately falls into the Tempest, where she undergoes a Harrowing which targets either a Passion or a Fetter (Shadow's choice). Usually this is a low-level Trait or one she has neglected recently. Note that this is different from the system given in **Wraith: The Oblivion**. It is a variation which the Storyteller may choose to use in order to make the Willpower Harrowing less deadly. If the wraith succeeds, she is snapped back to one of her Fetters, does not lose any points off her targeted Passion or Fetter, and keeps her one point of Willpower. Failure means the wraith must roll the rating of the Quarry Trait (difficulty 8). She loses a number of points from the rating equal to her number of failures or botches. If this brings the Trait to zero or less, the Passion or Fetter is gone. She then escapes the Harrowing, snapping back to a Fetter (assuming she still has any) and retaining her last point of Willpower. A botch results in the wraith's losing the targeted Trait outright. Additionally, she must now roll her permanent Willpower versus the Shadow's Angst. If the Shadow wins, the wraith is dead forever (or maybe not, see "Variations on a Theme," below).

- The wraith is on the verge of losing her last point in an individual Passion. So long as she has one point in the Passion, she is fine, but when that last point is threatened, she undergoes a Harrowing. This can occur either because the wraith has neglected the Passion or through a Spectre's numbing ability (see "Losing a Passion," page 196 of **Wraith: The Oblivion** for more details regarding this process). Wraiths can also lose Passions due to failing a Harrowing, but only a truly cruel Storyteller would invoke a second Harrowing as a result of failing the first one — particularly over the same Passion, which may now be gone anyway. The Harrowing should focus on a theme which involves the Passion, and that Passion should always be the Quarry of the Harrowing. Successes, failures and botches carry pretty much the same penalties as a Willpower Harrowing, with success allowing the wraith to return to a Fetter without losing her targeted Passion, failure usually resulting in some loss to the Passion and the wraith's return to a Fetter, and a botch ending in loss of the Passion and a roll on her permanent Willpower versus the Shadow's permanent Angst. Failure of that roll ends in death.

- The wraith is on the verge of losing her last point in a Fetter. This Harrowing proceeds just as the one for the Passion does, but the Fetter is the Quarry and becomes part of the scenery or a player in the psychodrama. Successes, failures and botches are handled in the same way as for Passions, except that if the wraith loses her last Fetter in this way (through a failure), she cannot be snapped back to it, but instead is dumped into a random part of the Tempest. She is also unable to travel to the Shadowlands anymore. Botches result in loss of the Fetter and require a roll on Willpower versus Angst to avoid death.

Variations on a Theme



Some troupes will feel that the above rules are too limiting. It is important to remember that it is not just a series of random rolls, but is rather a roll made *after* the character undergoes the Harrowing itself and has a chance to react to it. All Harrowings have some sort of dilemma or test for the wraith at their heart. Good roleplaying and intelligent choices while within the Harrowing mean that the wraith has probably solved the dilemma presented to her or passed the test and has automatically succeeded. She snaps back to a Fetter and loses nothing.

The character does not need to roll *anything* unless she fails to solve the dilemma. Even then, good roleplaying can significantly reduce the difficulty number which the wraith must roll to escape the Harrowing. Though difficulty numbers begin at 8, the Storyteller may award a one or two point bonus for good roleplaying, reducing the difficulty to 7 or even 6. It is these rolls which are used to determine the successes, failures or botches described above.

Furthermore, if she has Eidolon, the wraith may roll on her Eidolon (difficulty 9) to change aspects of the nightmare to help her defend herself or escape from the Harrowing. Each success allows her to change one aspect to make it more favorable to herself, thus increasing her chances of successfully solving the dilemma (though the change must make sense in the context of the nightmare). If the wraith still has any points of Willpower, she may use them as she would for any other roll to gain one automatic success. It should be noted that when a wraith is being Harrowed because she is on the verge of losing her last point of Willpower, she may not *use* that last point to gain a success. That would mean she voluntarily gave it up, resulting in her dissolution.

All of these mean that it isn't terribly easy to fail or botch most of the time. Of course, some players will take advantage of that, believing that their one automatic success from Willpower will save them. Those players will not really respond in character to the Harrowing as they should. The Storyteller should feel free to "surprise" those players by requiring two or even three successes against a difficulty of 9





or 10 in order to succeed. Willpower can only provide one success, and the player may have a little more respect for the dangers of the Harrowing next time around (assuming the character survives this Harrowing). The Storyteller must be absolutely honest when assigning this penalty. It should never be imposed just because the player is clever enough to outwit the planned scenario or to find a way around it. Players can become very attached to their characters and will resent it if the Storyteller seems to be acting in an arbitrary manner or punishing them for being more clever than he is.

Still, some troupes will be unhappy with the system, feeling that it should be more severe or less deadly. Those troupes that like to feel as though they play right on the edge, or that in the World of Darkness (particularly the Underworld of Darkness), life (and death) sucks, may prefer to indulge in the Fool's Gambit rules variation, in which target numbers or numbers of successes needed to overcome obstacles may be raised to reflect the severity of the challenge. This is not recommended as a usual mode of play as it becomes far too deadly too quickly and tends to overemphasize dice rolling rather than good roleplaying.

Other troupes are very protective of their characters and derive most of their enjoyment from watching the characters develop and grow (or tragically diminish, as the case may be). They will probably feel that the penalties for botching the roll are too severe during Targeted Harrowings. After all, it seems a little pointless to lose the Passion or Fetter outright if you're just going to die anyway. While they should stick to the regular system for Destruction Harrowings (with the understanding that the game loses its bite entirely if there is no chance of character demise), they will probably be happier using the Extended Harrowing rules variation for Targeted harrowings. The Storyteller should decide whether to use the Targeted or Destruction rules when loss of all Willpower is involved. This might be decided because of the circumstances involved in the loss. More traumatic circumstances would weigh the Harrowing more toward Destruction, while a gradual loss over time would probably call for the Targeted variation. Still, there is the possibility of a bad roll or two causing the character to be destroyed. Those troupes who prefer to have another chance may use the Extended harrowing variation.

Extended Harrowing (a.k.a. "Deja Vu all over again!")

In this rules variation, when a wraith botches her roll during a Targeted Harrowing, she loses the Quarry of the Harrowing but is not consumed by Oblivion. Instead, the trauma of the loss throws her into a second Harrowing which targets another Passion of Fetter. In effect, this gives the wraith a second chance to reprieve herself. The Harrowing proceeds just as if it were the primary one, with the same results for success and failure as a normal Harrowing would cause. If the wraith must roll again and if she botches again, the Story-

teller could then (with a clear conscience) declare that the wraith has been destroyed or might allow yet a third Harrowing. Technically, this could continue until the wraith has no more Fetters and Passions to be targeted, but realistically, after the third Harrowing, the wraith might not be able to psychically stand any more. Granted, the wraith should be able to overcome a botch by spending a Willpower point (and thus gaining a success), there will be times when she cannot spend Willpower (such as when she only has one point left and doesn't want to spend it lest she set herself up for a Destruction Harrowing). Any wraith that must undergo three successive Harrowings gains a Psychosis Flaw (assuming she makes it out intact). In addition to any other psychosis the wraith may acquire, she will never be entirely certain that she has escaped the Harrowing. She may believe that subsequent events are merely her Shadow trying to trick her into complacency. Whenever she is placed under stress again, she assumes it is the Harrowing resuming (and she might be right).

In any case, if the player botches three chances, either the Storyteller is making the dilemmas and tests too difficult, or the player is simply not responding to the Harrowings and is consequently having to make rolls to determine whether she succeeds. The Storyteller might want to stop the game, take the player aside and discuss what the problem is. If the player just isn't feeling anything, the character should probably be allowed to go to its destruction, and the player and Storyteller should decide whether the player wants to continue in the game with a new character.

On the other hand, there are some players who are simply not puzzle-solvers or tactical thinkers. When placed in a situation where they must make the "right" decisions, they just can't figure out what to do; they freeze up. Often the Storyteller simply needs to give them a few minutes to come up with something rather than pressuring them to respond immediately or fail. Occasionally, players confronted with tests or dilemmas don't understand their options. They may be new to the game and unsure of what they can try, or they may simply need to have their options spelled out for them. Not everyone has the same sort of intelligence, and it seems unfair to penalize players who enjoy roleplaying just because they aren't good at thinking on their feet.

Group Harrowings

There are rare occasions when an entire group of wraiths undergoes a Harrowing together. This may come about through all of them losing a Fetter held in common or from losing all their Corpus at the same time, either from some sort of firefight or through being hurt while in the open sea when all are linked to one wraith using Argos to lead them through. Whatever the cause, they all undergo a Harrowing together rather than as individuals. In general, the mechanics are the same and all are tested in some fashion (the tests may be individual or group in

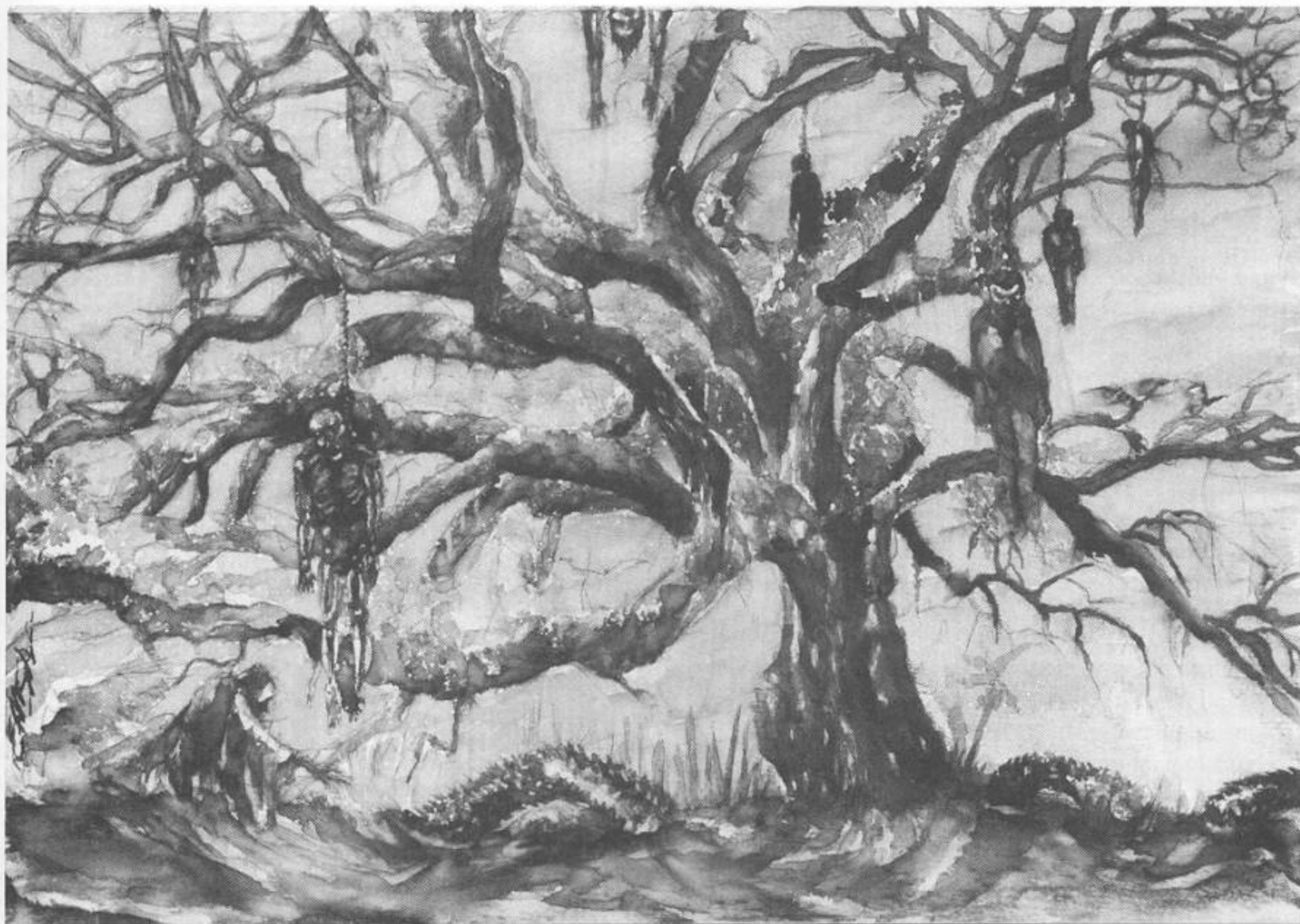
nature). At the conclusion of the Harrowing, either they all succeed and retain their Fetter or all must roll to determine the outcome. It is possible for individuals within the group to not pass their test though the rest of the group succeeds. At this point, the group must decide whether they're really all in this together or whether they want to handle things individually.


If they're all together, the failure of even one while in the Harrowing means the whole group is placed in jeopardy. The good news is that the person with the highest rating of the particular Fetter being targeted gets to make the roll for the whole group. Should he fail, everyone loses the Fetter. Should he botch, the roll defaults to the person with the highest Willpower rating in the group. If that roll succeeds, the Fetter is lost, but the wraiths all escape dissolution. Failure results in the destruction of the entire group.

The other way to handle this is take the select individuals from within the group who fail their test and make only those people make the rolls. Whatever happens affects only those particular wraiths. If they lose the Fetter, it is lost only to them; the others in the group retain it as a Fetter. Should any of them botch and fail their Willpower rolls, only those are lost. Note that Extended Harrowings can apply in group situations as well.

Working Without a System

Systems for determining success and failure should never get in the way of good roleplaying. They are, after all, arbitrary delineations whose only purpose is to resolve a conflict ("Hey, no fair! I shot you!" "Uh-uh, you missed." "Did not!" "Did too!") or to provide a way for the Storyteller to determine what happens when the outcome is in question. The latter use is mostly to keep players from feeling that the Storyteller is just forcing the plot to go the way he planned or that he might be playing favorites. If a troupe trusts one another and their Storyteller enough, however, playing without rolling any dice at all can be quite a heady experience. Many Storytellers often "cheat" the dice anyway, letting players succeed when their roll sounds "good enough." No Storyteller can memorize every chart, detail, relative difficulty level for similar tasks and description of what the number of successes mean anyway, nor would the players be happy with a Storyteller who demanded rolls to walk across the room, then spent an hour looking up the precise rolls needed to do so successfully. It's only a short hop to the next step of not using dice and letting description and roleplaying determine the results of the scene.





The players must also be willing to grant the Storyteller the same courtesy and trust his rulings. If, for instance, the player claims that her character jumps over a lava-filled fissure and lands on a foe on the far side, scratching and punching him, the Storyteller should compare the character's stated actions with those his non-player character plans to take. If the foe had planned to dodge the character, roll to the side and fire a gun at her as she leapt across the chasm, the Storyteller might describe an action in which each participant is partially successful. Knowing that the character is quite agile, he decides it is very likely she can successfully leap the chasm. The foe's special characteristic under his Dexterity is "quick," however, so he decides the foe rolls away from the spot where the character would have landed. The character declared two actions, just as the foe did. Because she moved first (having a higher Wits + Alertness), she has landed and is on her way to attack her foe by the time his shot goes off, so he misses her.

This still takes into account the character's Attributes and Abilities, but doesn't call for dice rolls to resolve the action. So long as the Storyteller and the players are comfortable with the rulings and willing to occasionally sacrifice personal achievement of goals to the needs of the story, it works quite well.

The roleplaying aspect comes into play from the descriptions that the player gives of her character's actions and any dialogue she indulges in. Really creative plans, great descriptions, witty repartee, dramatic conversation and convincing arguments should all affect the action. The Storyteller takes them into account when tallying up opposed goals or actions, sometimes reducing the effectiveness of the character's foes as a result. Of course, the reverse should be true. Though the players are not overseeing the running of the game, they should allow their characters to respond honestly (i.e. not always to their advantage) to good roleplaying by the Storyteller.

This particular style of play is well-suited to troupes whose members include non-puzzle-solvers, giving them extra chances to turn the situation to their advantage through extended roleplaying. It is also helpful for those players whose dice seem cursed. It seems as though some players can never make critical rolls; this gives them a fighting chance rather than leaving them at the mercy of their dice.

There is one final reason to consider working without a system: it lends itself beautifully to establishing both mood and theme. It comes close to live action roleplaying, but is not exactly the same. When players and the Storyteller aren't looking at character sheets and rattling dice, they are more likely to look at and talk to each other and respond to the mood that the Storyteller is trying to create. This allows the Storyteller to concentrate on the theme and roleplaying rather than charts and rules. Such intense roleplaying heightens the enjoyment for everyone involved.

Storytelling the Harrowing



Harrowings should be the most frightening and emotionally wrenching parts of a Wraith story. They feature the wraith at her most vulnerable and have the possibility of ripping away parts of the character's memories and feelings. In some cases, the Harrowing may result in the complete destruction of the character. While it is important to know how to conduct a frightening Harrowing, that is not the first step a Storyteller must take to make the scene truly horrific. In order to make the Harrowing the kind of experience it should be, the Storyteller must be very familiar with the character undergoing the Harrowing and with the character's player. The truth of the matter is, the Harrowing is only as frightening as the player perceives it to be, not the character. For the player to be affected, the Harrowing must actually begin with character construction, take form during the character's prelude and build on everything that happens in the game. It all comes down to emotions. Constructing and telling a good Harrowing is actually a three-step process: the inception, the development and the actual confrontation.

The Inception

Meaning is not something you stumble across like the answer to a riddle or the prize in a treasure hunt. Meaning is something you build into your life — out of your past, out of your affections and loyalties, out of your own talent and understanding, out of the values for which you are willing to sacrifice something.

— John W. Gardner, a speech

Roleplaying the Prelude

Most good roleplayers become very attached to their characters. They begin with an idea for a character they want to play, then customize the idea and set up the background during construction. The player begins to get a real feel for the character's personality from the prelude, and full-blown characters emerge during interactions with the Storyteller and other players' characters. These first few opportunities for roleplaying are critical in the development of the character, providing the player with the chance to get inside the character's head and react to things as the character would.

Bright light engulfs you as you hear several people yell, "Surprise!" An enormous cake rests in the center of the dining room table, candles ablaze and dripping wax. Your smiling and expectant friends are gathered around the table that



is piled high with brightly covered packages. Discordantly, they begin to sing "Happy Birthday to you...." There hardly seems to be space for you in the tiny room. Someone is wearing too much perfume! Overhead, a few deflating balloons bob and weave. This is far preferable to saying: You open the door and a bunch of your friends are waiting. It's a surprise birthday party for you.

On the other hand, there are times (usually when the characters are about to experience an ambush or other trouble) when a very quick sketch of the situation is needed to simulate the short length of time the characters have to react. The description should focus almost entirely on the threat, as the characters have almost no time to notice the rest of the scene. This description may sound something like this:

Opening the creaking door, you hear a deafening roar as something orange, black and furred leaps for your throat, its deadly claws outstretched.

Naturally, the above description is preferred over: You open the door. A huge tiger leaps for you, roaring loudly.

The main rule for running a Harrowing is to make it both vivid and emotional. The character should know that she is in danger of losing her very essence, and the player should feel that the threat to her character is quite real.

Choices

There is one final piece to the Harrowing which must be an integral part of its design and execution, and that is the characters' choices. Each Harrowing is a challenge that the wraith may win or lose. Each is also a confrontation, a struggle in which the wraith faces her own dark reflection and battles herself. It has been said that we are our own worst enemies. Nothing could be more true in the war between the Shadow and the self.


A wraith's choices during the Harrowing are the key to her success or failure. The Storyteller must make the choices within the nightmare ride as vivid as possible so that the player, as well as the character, *feels* the consequences of her decisions. Each portion of the Harrowing should be constructed with turning points, lesser choices that the character must make as she moves toward the conclusion. Each turning point should present an opportunity for the wraith to better her overall position within the Harrowing — by harming or allowing harm to come to someone else or at the expense of her principles. In some cases, such as when a Passion or Fetter is the quarry of the Harrowing, selfish choices should actually provide the wraith with an almost guaranteed success at avoiding a botch on her roll. The catch is, had she not taken the easy way out, she might have succeeded on her own and not have had to roll at all — and she still might fail the roll, especially if it becomes more difficult because she has allowed herself to be corrupted.

There is a great temptation for the Storyteller to grab the glory during Harrowings, turning them into a tour de force of roleplaying for himself at the expense of the players. While the scene and actors must be vivid and compelling, the main focus of the Harrowing *must* remain on the character and her choices. When constructing Harrowings, the Storyteller should look for natural places in the action to insert turning points where the wraith's choices will have a significant effect on the way things evolve. There should be plenty of rope left lying about for the wraith to hang herself, but there should also be opportunities for the wraith to lasso the bad guys with the rope instead.

While it is perfectly fine to construct elaborate games within games that the wraith must maneuver through and figure out in order to succeed, not all decisions should have to rely on being a good puzzle-solver or tactical genius. Though it might be interesting to require the wraith to open a combination lock that causes aggravated damage to her best friend every time she fails to get the combination right, there should be other ways to defeat the scenario than getting the combination right. Using her teeth to bite through the wiring so that shocks can't be delivered might be a solution some people would think of, but many would never think of clever ways around the trap. Storytellers must be willing to give the players some leeway; for example, allowing the character to succeed when the player can't think of any other way out and simply declares she's not going to work on the lock at all and she'll just stay with her friend. Though this doesn't "solve" the dilemma, it does indicate the wraith's unwillingness to hurt someone else just to escape her nightmare. This sort of decision is very different, of course, from one in which the player simply gets frustrated and pouts, refusing to try anything because it isn't easy enough. That's just laziness. If the player is genuinely trying to deal with the scenario, she ought to have a chance to beat it, regardless of her tactical acumen or abilities with riddles and other puzzles.

Once more, it is vital that the Storyteller understands the *player* as well as the character. If the player makes choices based on what he, as a player, knows (i.e. it isn't really real), the Storyteller should feel perfectly justified in changing the rules on him. Make each out-of-character decision cause damage to the wraith. Strip her of a point of Pathos if she's calculating how to sidestep the choice rather than make a real decision. The player should be told that she must make her choices *in character*, as the character would make them, rather than according to what makes the most tactical sense or gives her the greatest advantage. Though there is some element of "winning" over the Shadow, it is far more important that she *confront* the Shadow and gain a better understanding of it. She can't do that if she's hiding behind preconceived notions of what she is "supposed" to do. This doesn't mean that if the player can think of something clever she should be punished for it. It just means that the Story-





teller should beware of his players' occasional lapse into self-protective mechanisms that they think they need, but which serve to turn roleplaying into numbers-crunching or tactical exercises.

There should also be no guarantee that what looks like the right thing to do is, in fact, correct. Shadows and Spectres are practiced liars and the Labyrinth is responsive to their ministrations, producing whatever illusions they call for. Some Harrowings may be as tangled and twisted as the Labyrinth itself, with plots within plots serving to lead the wraith astray and confuse her as to her choices. No one said Harrowings were easy.

Peopling the Harrowing

Mazes and traps may be somewhat interesting for awhile, but the wraith needs to interact with other beings if the Harrowing is to be a real confrontation. Aside from the Shadow and wraith, the other players in the drama are usually Spectres, Doppelgangers who take the roles of the wraith's friends, loved ones, foes and personal enemies, as well as various others such as authority figures and crowds. Actors are usually the type of Spectre to be found in Harrowings, and they excel at drawing out a wraith's most deeply hidden secrets and fears. They may appear in helpful or harmful roles, acting to obstruct the wraith or facilitate her passage through the Harrowing, but ultimately, they are there to confuse, delay, surprise and torture the wraith.

There's just one problem with all of this. Good roleplayers may *act* as if their characters truly believe that their choices within the Harrowing may adversely affect them, their loved ones or friends, but the players are wise to what's really going on. They know those are just Spectres messing with their character's heads, and this is bound to affect their play. So once again, change the rules. When the scenario calls for the wraith to have to rescue a victim, the following variations can be used to increase the tension level.

Variation One: Spectres are tough. There's no reason why one of them couldn't go to the Skinlands, skinride one of the wraith's loved ones, force her into a fatal accident or committing suicide, then claim the newborn wraith and hold her in reserve for the wraith's next Harrowing. How will the wraith react when she realizes it really is her lover whom the Spectres are about to set on fire? What if they drop Dad into the Void if the wraith messes up? Suddenly the stakes are a lot higher.

Variation Two: Nothing prevents Spectres from capturing members of the wraith's Circle and using them in a similar fashion. These can be either well-liked, Storyteller-controlled characters or player characters. If they were fairly captured, and had some chance to win against those who captured them, the player has no real room to complain. After all, the character could be dead. With a friend trying

to save him, he might escape the situation. Things become a little more tense when one player is working to save another and the second player makes it plain that it really is her character's life on the line.

Variation Three: It is also effective to go through a capture scenario with the player who is to play the victim, then let the captured character's player react to the other wraith's Harrowing in character. Announce to the first player, especially if the second one botched things, that his character was not really captured at all and that he was actually acting (in this particular circumstance) as a first mate to the Storyteller, helping her run a Spectre as realistically as possible. This isn't recommended as a recurring technique, but it can be used at least once to scare both of the players.

These switches shouldn't happen all the time, but they should happen often enough to make it impossible for the player to ignore the idea that the victim they have to save might be a Spectre in disguise.

Changing Places

One way to vary Harrowings is to put the wraith in charge. Make her responsible for Harrowing someone else, preferably someone she knows. She should be told that the only way she will be released (or her father will be taken off the roasting spit or whatever) is to come up with a nightmare ride for someone else to undergo, to plan it and help in its execution. She might also be shown that unless she complies, the Harrowing the Spectres will indulge in will kill the victim outright and drag him down into Oblivion. Will she corrupt herself in order to save her father and the other wraith from terrible fates? Will she figure out some way (other than absolute refusal) to do it without corrupting herself? If she refuses, is that actually the *wrong* response, since she is in effect saying her purity comes before others' suffering? There are dozens of ways this can be played out, but each will depend on what the player's ideals are.

A variation on this one is to place the wraith (or group of wraiths) in charge of creating a Harrowing for someone they absolutely despise. The more the characters hate the victim, the better. Will they torture their foe while deluding themselves that they do it out of some sense of justice? Will they seriously try to design a Harrowing that will focus on their foe's wrongdoing (assuming the characters are the good guys) and teach him how to overcome his evil tendencies? Or will they refuse, believing that it would make them no better than they think the victim is? What if the object of their nightmare ride is a slime who really deserves Oblivion? Do they have a duty to rid the (Under)world of him? And what happens to them as a result of all this? Presumably, this is a Harrowing for them, and they are certainly presented with dilemmas....




Redemption Harrowings

This is not really something which happens to the characters, though they may be involved in it. It is actually a sort of reverse Harrowing for a Spectre in an attempt to redeem him. It requires a situation in which the characters and Spectre (it must be a Doppelganger, as Shades are nearly mindless and Nephwracks are too far gone) can talk to and interact with one another without there being a battle. It is fairly tricky to arrange it, but can be worth the trouble if the characters can actually save the Spectre from its Angst and Oblivion taint. In general, the players will have to convince the Spectre to try to fight against the Shadow which consumed him long ago. Then they will have to help him do so and protect him from others of his kind who will try to slay him for his betrayal. If they can succeed in evoking a positive Passion in the Spectre, he will be on the road to redemption. Remember, though, that the process will be as

painful and full of mental tortures to the Spectre as a normal Harrowing is to a wraith. The Spectre may strike out at the characters, wounding them or draining them of Pathos. They will have to be very patient.

Obviously, this is not going to be an everyday occurrence. Spectres usually don't want to be redeemed. It does provide an opportunity for a well-loved player character or Storyteller-controlled character who has been lost to Oblivion to return to the game. It should not be easy. There should be difficulties all along the way that the characters have to help the Spectre overcome, and the process of redemption may take years or decades — or even centuries. Meanwhile, how will their friends react when they learn the characters are consorting with Spectres? Where will they hide him and themselves from the Legionnaires who just won't understand? When higher-ups send a Pardoner after the group to be Castigated and demand that they undergo it or be hunted down and made into thralls, will the characters give up?





Chapter Four: Adrift on the Sea of Shadows

*It was late at night on the open road,
Speeding like a man on the run,
A lifetime spent preparing for the journey;
He is closer now and the search is on,
Reading from a map in the mind,
Yes, there's the ragged hill,
And there's the boat on the river.*
—Chris De Burgh, "Don't Pay the Ferryman"



Introduction

"Adrift on the Sea of Shadows" is a story designed to introduce the characters to the dangers and wonders of the Tempest. It can be used for any group of characters; whether they are part of the Hierarchy, Renegades, Heretics or are independent. Ideally, the wraiths involved are a circle with a common Haunt, but so long as they are all in the same place at the start of the story, they could be complete strangers. They may even be from different factions, with some holding loyalty to Stygia and some opposing it. Whatever their loyalties are, all will be in equal danger.

The story works best if the wraiths have access to some sort of relic vehicle such as a car or truck, but it is not absolutely necessary. If they must swim or walk through the Tempest, however, they will be in more danger of being caught by those pursuing them. The story is written as if they do have a relic vehicle. If they don't, simply modify any descriptions to reflect that and note that it takes them twice as long (standard time) to get anywhere. It does require that a minimum of one character has at least one dot in the Argos Arcanos or that the Storyteller run a Storyteller-controlled character that has Argos.

In each scene, several options have been covered in an attempt to anticipate what the characters might do. Keep in mind that players are sure to come up with a few surprises. Feel free to depart from the storyline as much as necessary to keep from herding the characters along a predetermined path. If they stray, they can always be brought back later.



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The Sea of Shadows

Theme

There are two themes in "Adrift on the Sea of Shadows". The first one is confrontation. The characters must flee from those who would unjustly capture them and bring them to Stygia for punishment for a crime they did not commit. They must confront the dangers of the Tempest, their own Shadows and the idea of their own dissolution. At some point during the story, they must also come to terms with what they really believe and make decisions as to what faction they will support (if any).

The second theme is loyalty. The group will not be able to make it through the story without cooperating with one another. Overcoming the obstacles in the Tempest and facing their Shadows will only be possible through teamwork and loyalty to one another. Furthermore, the group will meet several wraiths during the story and will have the chance to form bonds with them or sell them out. What will they choose to do and how will this strengthen or weaken their Shadows?

Mood

The Tempest can be a terrifying place, particularly to those who can't get out of it when they need to — especially if a Maelstrom is on the way — and most definitely when you're being chased by those with no mercy in their hearts. The mood should include equal parts of confusion, fear, frustration and a sense of actions and decisions that must be made in a hurry while under pressure. Uncertainty is the key word. The characters should never be absolutely sure that they are doing the right things, going in the right direction or accomplishing their goals. They should not be certain that they have even survived the Harrowing which they will inevitably go through. They should remain uncertain that the Harrowing is actually over, or whether it ever will be.

In the opening scenes, the characters should have no time to really think through what they're doing; they need to just react. At several points throughout the story, they will be forced to move quickly as their pursuers catch up to them; other times, the action will seem to drag, slowing them down and preventing them from getting anywhere at all, causing them some serious frustration. Besides being a constant threat to them physically, the Tempest poses a threat to the wraiths' sanity, memories and Passions. Essentially, any new encounter in the Sea of Shadows has the potential to destroy the wraith — or redeem her — and this should never be forgotten.

Plot Synopsis


In brief, the characters will be fleeing into the Tempest to avoid being captured by the Legionnaires who are after them for a robbery they didn't commit and know nothing about. They may choose to try to avoid capture indefinitely or they may try to recover the item and return it. The story begins with all characters gathered in one place. It is a miserable day; the wind is driving sheets of rain against the windows and moaning horribly. Someone who is known to at least one of the characters gives the wraith a black crystal, then suddenly leaves. Legionnaires with barghests appear on the scene, obviously looking for the wraith with the crystal. The characters flee into the Tempest to avoid capture and land in a strange Shifting Zone that removes their memories of their Fetters and locations of their Haunts. Essentially, they're stuck in the Tempest until they can regain their memories. Meanwhile, the Legionnaires jump in after them, still in close pursuit.

The characters will have to make their way through several areas within the Tempest while trying to escape. They thought the weather in the Shadowlands was bad — the rain, crashing waves, howling wind and charnel smells of the Tempest make it seem bland in comparison. They discover that it is impossible to throw the crystal away. It has bonded to them. Attempts to be rid of it result in its return to one or another of the characters. In fact, the crystal can only be eliminated by freely offering it to someone who takes it of their own free will. It is up to the Storyteller to make certain no one whom the characters meet will take it or be coerced to do so. More groups of Legionnaires begin closing in on the characters, apparently drawn by the crystal. In addition, the crystal seems to pulsate and grow warm when they head in a certain direction. They may try to travel in the direction that the crystal points out to them.

Eventually, they run into a contact; a wraith who knows one or more of them. The contact tells them their descriptions are being circulated all over Stygia and nearby Necropoli. She tells them (if she is asked what they are being chased for) that everyone knows they stole some trifling item from the Smiling Lord, overseer of the victims of violence. She can suggest that they head for the Inferno, a club that is far out in the Tempest. It is considered neutral ground. All factions help defend it and, while there, no wraiths bother other wraiths over faction fighting or grudges.

On their way to the Inferno, they are attacked by a group of Spectres who are apparently intent on obtaining the crystal for themselves. The Spectres cause enough damage to send the characters into a Harrowing in which they must fight to retain possession of the crystal (as if it were a Fetter). At this point, they should know enough to realize that the Smiling Lord really wants the crystal back. It should be





made obvious to them that losing the crystal to a Harrowing is tantamount to a sentence of thralldom (at best) and utter unmaking (at worst). If they survive the Harrowing, they are transported back to the spot from which they were taken and they retain the Artifact.

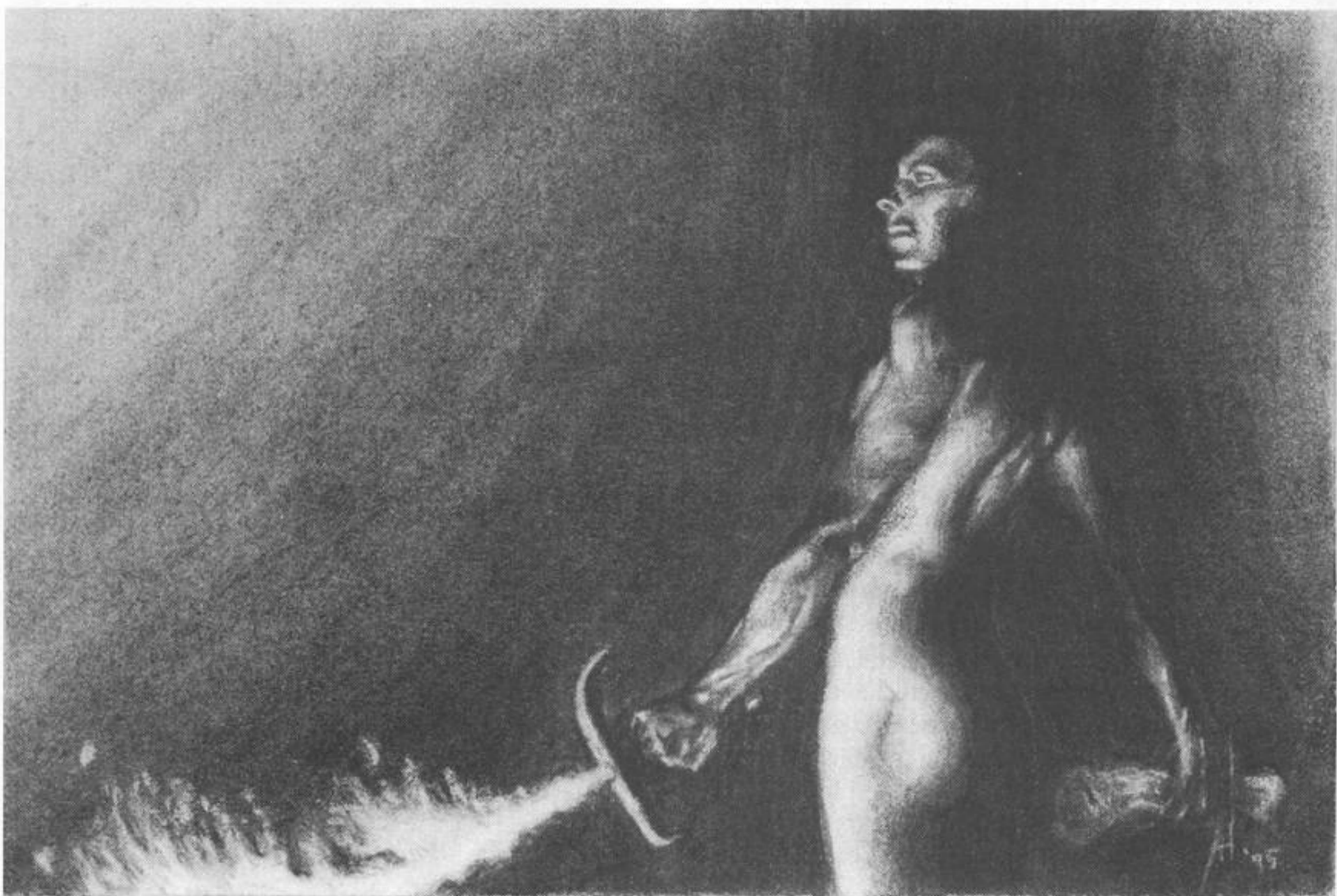
At the Inferno, they can find Soup, the wraith who first gave them the crystal. He tells them that the crystal is a homing beacon that was attached to the Deathlord's mask and Soup stole it for someone else. It attached itself to him when he took the mask, but he managed to give it away to the characters, thinking they could just explain things to the Legionnaires while he escaped into the Tempest. Soup tells them that the person who has the mask is the leader of a group of Heretics who have a Far Shores realm they call the Summercountry. If the characters want to clear their names and stop being chased by the Legionnaires, they need to go there and get the mask back.

A Hierarchy wraith who overhears their conversation tells them the significance of the missing mask: It helps the Smiling Lord keep his troops and thralls tied to his beliefs, thus providing part of the defense of Stygia from Maelstroms and Spectre attacks. He makes it clear that without the mask, one-seventh of Stygia's defenses are missing, a potentially deadly chink in their armor which might allow a Maelstrom into the heart of the realm and utterly destroy it. If the char-

acters think this would be a wonderful idea, the wraith further explains that if Stygia falls, it is most probable that the rest of the realms and Necropolis will fall as well and Oblivion will consume everything. The weather becomes even worse while they are at the Inferno. Legionnaires begin closing in, despite the fact that it is neutral territory, and the characters are asked to leave.

Once again, they flee into the rising storm, headed for the Summercountry. If they think to check the crystal, it indicates that they should be heading that way, since it is tied into the mask. It is a homing beacon, not only to pinpoint the location of anyone who has the crystal, but also to direct anyone with the crystal to the mask. The storm outside is rising in intensity. Along the road, they are confronted by a Ferryman who tells them they must recover the mask and return it to the Deathlord if they want to prevent a Maelstrom. They do have other alternatives. They can convince the Heretic leader who took the mask to assume the office of the Smiling Lord, one of the wraiths can try to take that office or they can keep the mask and hope the Maelstrom isn't destructive enough to wipe out everything. The choice is theirs.

Should they decide to recover the mask, they must travel to the Summercountry and either convince the Heretics to return the mask or they must steal it back. The Heretics, in





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the spirit of their “afterlife,” might allow the wraiths to win it in a contest — if they ask for it rather than trying to steal it. Assuming they get the mask somehow, they find that all the byways are closed due to the oncoming Maelstrom. The only way they might make it back to Stygia in time is to utilize the stairways and tunnels of the Labyrinth and try to get there via the Venous Stair. Returning the mask briefly gains them the gratitude of the Smiling Lord. They could use this to build a niche for themselves within the Hierarchy, if they choose to do so. Renegades or Heretics might find that they must return the mask in order to preserve themselves and their groups, but they might be horrified that they have had to do so, feeling personally soiled as a result of helping the hated Hierarchy regain lost power — especially a power that compels other wraiths to do their bidding. It isn’t an easy choice, but then, it never is.

Beginning Versus Ongoing Chronicles


While it is possible to use this story to begin a Wraith Chronicle, it is recommended that the Storyteller make certain that the players are familiar with the concepts in it before doing so. If they have no idea who the Hierarchy, Heretics, Renegades, Deathlords and Spectres are or what arti-

facts, relics, the Shadowlands, the Tempest, Oblivion, Fetters and Passions are, they will not really understand the story or be able to play through it effectively. It is best if the Storyteller takes each player through her Prelude, then introduce all the characters to life as wraiths. After they have absorbed the basic information and settled into place the Storyteller can then introduce the characters from the story who are supposed to know the player’s characters. This story should begin only after these preliminaries are covered.

If this is being used as part of an ongoing Chronicle, the Storyteller should work characters into the story who are supposed to know the player’s characters. There might even be rumors circulating about of the problems between the Smiling Lord and the Laughing Lady. The players might even visit the Inferno at some point. After these elements have been premiered in earlier stories, they will fall into place much more naturally when this one is begun.

Advanced Storytelling

If the troupe consists of those who enjoy more complex stories, the basic structure of the adventure may be enhanced by adding elements in that occur in the world of the living. Maelstroms affect the Skinlands as much as they affect the



Underworld and usually occur in response to or as a harbinger of terrible events transpiring in the real world. If the Storyteller wants to up the pressure on the wraiths, she may have one or more of the wraith's Fetters (preferably people the wraiths care for) threatened by a terrorist takeover of a plane they are traveling on or a building ala *Die Hard*. The terrorists make impossible demands and insist that the demands be met immediately. They begin killing passengers (not the wraith's Fetters) to prove their commitment to their cause. They are also holding onto a homemade nuclear weapon that is capable of wiping out about an eighth of the United States (or all of Britain, most of France, a small African country, etc.) so those negotiating with them are very leery of trying any sort of assault which might cause them to fire it.


Hotheads among the military are demanding that they be allowed to go in and deal with the situation, crisis managers are working overtime and various SWAT teams are moving into position. The characters should become aware of the danger to their loved ones. Some might not be hostages; they may be among the police who are involved or be negotiating with the terrorists. Scenes can be worked in as the wraiths move back and forth from the Tempest to the Skinlands trying to affect the situation and save the hostages. The situation should continue to deteriorate steadily until it is obvious that the terrorists will set off the bomb. The passageway becomes blocked and the wraiths cannot travel to the Skinlands anymore. If they are going to save those they love, they will have to do it from the Underworld.

The point of all of this is two-fold. First, it gives the wraiths a more personal reason to succeed in their mission since their Fetters are directly threatened. Secondly, since Maelstroms occur alongside frightful events in the real world, the potential for wiping out a great number of people in a nuclear explosion provides a reason why there is a big Maelstrom in the making: There is the possibility that the terrorist actions might lead to retaliation, escalating into World War III. A savvy Storyteller can move the action back and forth, building tension among the negotiations as the storm builds in intensity, then cutting off the wraiths' ability to directly affect the action just as things are about to blow.

Story Background (what has gone before)

There is a great deal of rivalry among the Deathlords. Each wants to gain enough power to assert his or her superiority and claim the rulership of Stygia. To that end, each claims the souls who die under his auspices, keeping them as thralls, soldiers or various officials. The mask that each Deathlord wears is part of the reason they are able to exercise such control over their minions. The masks are symbols of office and are powerful "control" artifacts, capable of giving the wraith who wears it the power to exert his or her will





over those wraiths under the Deathlord's command. In effect, the mask allows the Deathlord to compel belief from her underlings, making the Deathlord stronger and giving her a firm foundation from which to fight against enemies or the ravages of Maelstroms. Each mask has other powers as well, most of which are kept strictly secret.

Lately, the Laughing Lady (who oversees the victims of madness) and the Smiling Lord (who does the same for the victims of violence) have disagreed as to the disposal of newly arrived wraiths. The Smiling Lord has ordered his troops to seize wraiths who died violently, even if they were madmen themselves or victims of madmen. So long as the means of death was violence, he claims, they belong to him. Naturally, the Laughing Lady, seeing his ploy to become more powerful and to rob her of her "rightful" spoils, hits upon a plan to avenge herself against the Smiling Lord and to weaken him to the point where he can no longer be a threat to her. She sends her agents to join an idyllic cult of Heretics who maintain a Far Shores realm called the Summercountry. Their leader, Revel, was considered one of hers, but escaped her and went on to form a Heretic group based around the idea of a faerie kingdom/utopia.

Once they grouped together, her minions managed to convince Revel that he could steal the Smiling Lord's mask, thereby weakening the Hierarchy and making it easier for him to find recruits for the Summercountry. Following their plan and aided by an expert thief whom he hired to oversee the operation, Revel stole the mask and took it back to the Summercountry, where he has hung it behind his throne like a trophy.

Unknown to Revel, however, the mask has a black crystal attached to it that functions as a homing beacon. The crystal is usually worn as a piece of jewelry by the wearer of the mask. When the mask was stolen, the beacon attached itself to the actual thief, pinpointing his location so that the Deathlord's legions could be sent after him. The beacon cannot be thrown away or sold, but must be given away and accepted before it can leave the individual(s) to whom it has bonded. The beacon helps the transfer by feeding its new recipient a point of exquisitely pleasurable Pathos. A secondary function of the beacon is to locate the mask; it pulsates and grows brighter when pointed in the mask's direction. The third (and little known) power of the beacon is to allow whoever is bonded to it to exert control over the mask, meaning that person has an edge in a contest of wills over who gets the mask. Naturally, even with the crystal, a character is still no match for the Deathlord who has worn the mask for centuries (though the characters might not realize this and might pay the ultimate price for becoming power-hungry and greedy should one of them try to assume the Deathlord's place).

The thief who stole the mask is the wraith who gives the characters the crystal at the beginning of the story. He was well-paid for his help, but didn't count on being hounded by the legions. As long as the characters keep him out of it, he's willing to tell them what he knows — assuming they can catch up with him. The Deathlord noticed that his mask was missing as soon as he awakened and has instructed his legions to do whatever they have to do to get it back.

In the Skinlands, tensions build as nations move to the brink of war or civil war, famine runs rampant throughout much of the world and terrorists plan their strategies. Any of these could erupt into a world-threatening crisis, leading to annihilation. Oblivion licks its lips in anticipation and Spectres move throughout the worlds of the living and dead, trying to bring on a world-destroying holocaust. When the Spectres realize that one of the Deathlords has lost his mask, thereby losing his greatest tool for shaping his underlings' belief (a major factor in Stygia's defenses against Maelstroms and the power of Oblivion), they know that a Maelstrom might topple Stygia and cause a chain reaction that could destroy everything. They will do what they can to prevent the mask from being returned. The only thing in the characters' favor is that not too many Spectres can be spared from preparing for the Maelstrom to actively oppose them.

Players in the Drama

Soup

Specialist thief, Renegade

Nature: Deviant

Demeanor: Rebel

Circle: The Fencing Masters

Physical: Strength 3, Dexterity 4, Stamina 3

Mental: Perception 2, Intelligence 2, Wits 3

Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 3, Appearance 3

Talents: Alertness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 2, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Burglary 4, Disguise 2, Stealth 4

Knowledges: Investigation 3, Law 2

Backgrounds: Contacts 3, Haunt 1, Memoriam 2

Passions: Get the Syndicate man (Anger) 2, Watch over mother (Love) 3, Steal the Hope Diamond (Pride) 2

Arcanos: Argos 2, Moliate 5

Fetters: Old tools of the trade, 1; Mother, 4; Hope Diamond, 1; Girlfriend, 3; Disguise kit, 1

Willpower: 8

Pathos: 9

Shadow: Perfectionist

Angst: 5



Soup

Thorns: Shadow Traits (Dodge)

Shadow Passions: Screw up authority (Hate) 2, Get rid of the whining old woman (mother) (Disgust) 2

Image: Soup is small and finely boned, with a ferret-like face and quick grace. His brown, lank hair is held back in a ponytail, and his eyes are a watery-blue. Soup was a thief who specialized in stealing items most people thought were so well-protected that no one could steal them. He double-crossed a member of the Syndicate and was killed for it. Now he specializes in obtaining rare artifacts and relics — for the right price.

Katrina

Pediatrician, Independent

Nature: Caregiver

Demeanor: Caregiver

Circle: The Doctor's Lounge

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 4, Wits 3

Social: Charisma 3, Manipulation 1, Appearance 2

Talents: Alertness 2, Athletics 2, Awareness 3, Brawl 1, Empathy 3, Subterfuge 2

Skills: Drive 2, Etiquette 2, Meditation 1

Knowledges: Linguistics 2, Medicine 4, Science 3

Backgrounds: Allies 2, Contacts 3, Haunt 2, Memoriam 3



Katrina

Passions: Protect children (Guilt) 4, Watch over husband (Love) 3, Punish drunk drivers (Anger) 3

Arcanos: Fatalism 3, Usury 3

Fetters: Husband, 3; Child's tombstone, 2; Old office, 3; Car keys, 2

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 10

Shadow: Martyr

Angst: 5

Thorns: Death's Vigil (sad, haunting music accompanies her everywhere)

Shadow Passions: Kill drunks (Hate) 3

Image: Katrina is a slender woman in her mid-30s. Her eyes are gray and her hair is light brown and falls to her shoulders. Her face is care-worn and concerned. She wears a doctor's white coat and stethoscope. Katrina was a young pediatrician. One night, after working hard all day, she insisted on driving her child to a birthday party. She and her child were killed by a drunk driver coming from the opposite direction. Katrina blames herself for her slow reaction time due to her fatigue. She is most anguished that her child is not with her in the Underworld, though she hopes he passed on to a blissful Afterlife. People tend to bring their problems to Katrina and she tries to help those whom she knows.



Revel, the Lord of Misrule

Revel, the Lord of Misrule

Revel was a poet, a student of Celtic literature and a dreamer. He believed that faeries lived in the woods near his home and he tried to prove in his senior thesis that they existed. He was laughed out of the school. In a fit of despair, he killed himself. He spent the first part of his wraithly existence toiling for the Hierarchy and came to hate them. When he finally escaped, he came into contact with some Heretics. Though they failed to convert him to their way of thinking, they did inspire him to seek out a wondrous Afterlife of his own. Revel set off to find the Summercountry, and after many years of searching, found his own Far Shore. He has many converts who enjoy his pseudo-faerie realm with him. His one regret is that his sister is not with him to share it.

Nature: Child

Demeanor: Bon Vivant

Circle: Celtic Conspirators

Physical: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Mental: Perception 3, Intelligence 3, Wits 3

Social: Charisma 4, Manipulation 4, Appearance 4

Talents: Alertness 1, Awareness 2, Brawl 3, Dodge 3, Empathy 2, Expression 3, Intimidation 2, Subterfuge 4

Skills: Etiquette 2, Leadership 3, Melee 4, Performance 3, Stealth 2

Knowledges: Enigmas 2, Faerie Lore 3, Linguistics 2, Politics 2

Backgrounds: Artifact 2, Haunt 3, Status 4

Passions: Prove your theories (Pride) 3, Experience everything you were denied in life (Greed) 3, Convince your sister to join you in death (Love) 2, Preserve woodlands near old home (Joy) 2

Arcanos: Argos 1, Castigate 3, Keening 2, Pandemonium 3

Fetters: Sister, 4; Woods, 2

Willpower: 9

Pathos: 8

Shadow: Parent

Angst: 6

Thorns: Doppelganger

Shadow Passions: Kill sister (Hate/Love) 3

Equipment: Relic swan ship, Stygian steel rapier (Artifact), the Smiling Lord's mask


Image: Revel has blond hair and green eyes. He has an expressive face which can move from heartrending sadness to mischievous glee with ease. He dresses as he believes an elfin king might dress and indulges in many fey moods.

Burgess, Hierarchy Centurion

Burgess' stats are not given here. The characters have no reason to fight him or interact with him other than speaking to him. He meets them at the Inferno and tells them what the significance of the Deathlord's mask is. The Storyteller is free to detail Burgess and do whatever she sees fit with him.

Act One: The Set-Up

The Storyteller should be prepared for a number of surprise moves by her players. She should be very familiar with the story so that she can adjust things to make them run smoothly, no matter what the characters do. It is not essential that they play through every area or follow only the "right" paths. Their decisions should be respected and they should be allowed to go in any direction they choose. Of course, there may be consequences for going in certain directions. If they have contacts or allies whom they wish to speak with, it is fine to have those people offer them shelter or tell them what they know (unless the contacts are high up among the Hierarchy, they will know no more than the rumor that one of the Deathlord's masks has been stolen). Eventually, the Legionnaires will root them out of any hiding place and the characters will have to move about and ask questions to find out more about the situation. All of this provides the Storyteller with plenty of chances to get them back on track.



The Storyteller should also remember that if the characters have a relic vehicle, it needs to be powered by Pathos. Someone must pay a point of Pathos every six hours to keep the vehicle fueled and running.

Scene One: Unexpected Visitors

The characters are gathered in their Haunt or in a place somewhere in the Shadowlands (preferably in a Necropolis). It is a dreadful day, rainy and dark, reflecting the gloomy weather in the Skinlands. Moaning gusts of wind howl throughout the Necropolis. The group is disturbed by Soup, who knocks and enters, looking a little disheveled. He approaches one of the characters he knows, hands her a black, oblong crystal and asks the character to keep it for him for awhile. If the character insists, Soup will promise a future favor in return. Should the character not accept the crystal or ask what it is, he will tell the group that it is a power crystal. He instructs the character to hold onto the crystal for a moment and think about it. As she does so, the crystal gifts her with a point of Pathos (or an extremely pleasurable, emotional moment filled with light and life, if she is already at full capacity of Pathos). Note that the crystal will only do this when it is first given to someone, though the person will not know that it is a one-shot gift. Whatever it takes to get the character to accept the crystal, he will do, even claiming that he was trying to do her a favor by giving her such a useful Artifact. As soon as he is able to get the character to take the crystal, he leaves.

A few minutes after Soup has gone, the characters hear terrible howls and shouts coming from approximately a block away. Investigating the racket, they see twenty Legionnaires led by a brace of barghests heading right for them. They have one turn in which to act before the Legionnaires arrive. They can choose to meet with the Legionnaires to discover what they want, they can try to disappear elsewhere in the Necropolis or they can make a run for it by jumping into the Tempest.

If they wait, they see the Legionnaires carrying chains with which to bind them. They will not parley with the characters except to demand their surrender and will move to make them prisoners. If they fight, they will eventually be overwhelmed by the legion (sheer weight of numbers). Should they allow themselves to be captured, the characters will be taken into the Tempest as the Legionnaires head for Stygia. After searching them and the place they were in, the Legionnaires will ask them where "it" is. If they ask what the Legionnaires are searching for, the soldiers will sneer and say that they obviously know since they have the crystal. The wraith-in-charge will take the crystal, but it will reappear back in the original holder's hand after one turn. Even if the character freely tries to give the crystal to a soldier, his intention to take it anyway negates the gifting and returns

the crystal to the character. As they are on their way to Stygia, the Storyteller should arrange for an attack on the Legionnaires by Renegades. The characters are unchained and urged to run for it.

If they run, the legion will regroup and come after them. If they go on to Stygia, they will be interviewed (tortured) for information. When it is clear they have none, they will be ordered to find Soup and the missing mask. They are collared with Artifacts which can control them through pain and loss of Corpus and a Legionnaire is given the control device for the collars and sent with them. The Deathlord is uninterested in their personal problems or unlives. They are involved in the theft and he'll use them however he sees fit.

Running to another bolt hole within the Necropolis only buys them a few minutes of time, as more groups of Legionnaires are sent out after them. They can home in on the beacon, thus making it impossible for the characters to hide for long. Sooner or later, they will have to go into the Tempest to escape their pursuers.

If they jump directly into the Tempest, they will have to do so without using Tempest Peek if they want to avoid combat with the Legionnaires. They barely have time to use Tempest Threshold to open a portal into the Tempest and go through. The characters will have only a moment to take in their situation before the Legionnaires pour through behind them.

Scene Two: Into the Tempest

If the characters have a relic car or truck in which they are riding, they land on a long causeway stretching out into a storm-tossed ocean. The wind blows breakers over the top of the causeway, threatening to sweep their vehicle off at any moment. Gray clouds spew down jagged lightning and the choppy, black water is topped with foaming whitecaps. Rain sheets down, drenching everything with oily, foul-smelling drops. The causeway seems to stretch without break before and behind them. There are no landmarks.

Should they have a relic ship or be on foot, they land in the ocean beside the causeway. The waves threaten to smash them against the causeway. The boat rocks wildly, pitching from one side to another. If they are swimming, they are repeatedly dunked into the freezing, black water and soaked by the greasy, foul-smelling rain. If on foot, the characters can climb onto the causeway if they wish. It is obviously a byway. Sailing next to it is considered being "on" the byway.

As soon as the characters have decided where they are trying to go, the sky rips open a few hundred feet behind them and a pack of barghests and about forty Legionnaires tumble through, landing on the causeway. The barghests send up a soul-shivering howl and the soldiers rapidly advance toward the characters. If the characters have a vehicle, they

will be able to outdistance the Legionnaires; if swimming or on foot, and they immediately flee, they will be able to maintain the same distance from them as when they first appeared. In either case, the group will most likely run for it.

It is possible that a character will have the Argos power of Jump, which would normally allow the character to travel to one of his Fetters almost instantaneously (assuming he makes his roll). If the character does this and goes alone, he finds an entire troop of Legionnaires waiting for him when he arrives. They take him into custody. The Storyteller should determine whether he escapes and how he rejoins his companions, though they might feel like he abandoned them and might not want him back. If he takes the group with him, they all make it to the Fetter. A moment later, the soldiers arrive and they are forced to flee into the Tempest again. Again, they land on or near the causeway.


Farther up, there appears to be heavy fog drifting across the causeway. This presents them with an opportunity for escape. It is also their first encounter with a dangerous Shifting Zone known as the Miasma. Using Flicker to try to get beyond it results in landing in the middle of the Miasma, unless the character can roll three successes (difficulty 9), since the character is unable to use line of sight. Again, if they use Jump, they can reach a Fetter and avoid the fog, but Legionnaires will appear at the Fetter only a moment or so behind them. If they make it through using either Flicker or Jump, just skip this section and go on.

Upon penetrating the fog, the characters find that each of them seems to be alone in a grayish-white world. They cannot see more than a foot in front of them and all sense of direction vanishes. Sound is muffled as well. Any wraith calling out to companions feels that her voice is stifled and too soft to be heard. As she flounders, trying to find the others or make her way through the fog, she slowly begins to feel cold and numb. Each character must roll on his or her lowest rated Fetter (difficulty 7). If they succeed, they are confused as to where their Fetters are for a number of hours equal to 10 minus their Intelligence scores. Those who fail have the memory of the Fetter erased from their minds. The Fetter is gone as though it never existed (though memory of it will return later, in about an hour). If someone botches, she loses the Fetter and is rendered imbecilic for an hour.

The Phantom Wings art allows the wraith to fly through this area. She is still subject to its attack. Otherwise, she floats just as helplessly as if she did not have Argos. Flicker and Jump do not work in the Miasma, but Oubliette may be used to pull oneself out of it. Using Oubliette in this way causes one aggravated wound level.

Once all the characters have experienced the Miasma, the fog breaks up around them and slowly drifts back toward their pursuers, enveloping the soldiers. The characters are free to go, but cannot visit any of their Fetters for the same number of hours that they are confused about their location.





At this point, if they attempt to leave the Tempest by heading for a Necropolis or other known location in the Shadowlands, they find that the way is apparently closed. A growing Maelstrom is wreaking havoc with travel through the Tempest, and the Necropolis ports have all been closed to prevent it from entering the Shadowlands. Travel is only possible within the Tempest itself, from realm to realm (unless the Storyteller is using the terrorist Advanced Storytelling scenario, in which case, they may travel back and forth a while longer — though they will be closely pursued wherever they go).

The waves grow larger and whistling screams are heard from the clouds overhead. It should be obvious to the characters that a bad storm is brewing. They can choose to follow the byway or break away from it in an attempt to lose the soldiers.

Scene Three: Decisions

At this point, the characters must decide where they are trying to go or if they simply will stay on the causeway. Up ahead, they can see a crossroads where several roads and channels meet, forming an intricate network of railroad tracks, bridges, roads and waterways. These are various byways. All of them eventually lead back to Stygia, but they also lead to several other realms within the Tempest. If a wraith makes her Orienteering roll, she can determine which byway to take to reach her desired location.

Attempts to enter the Shadowlands fail (see above note on the terrorist scenario), no matter how many successes the wraith gets. She feels herself become insubstantial and start to rise, then she becomes solid again and plunks back to the ground or into the sea. She may make a roll on her Intelligence + Argos (difficulty 7) to figure out that the storm in the area must be interfering with the byways which lead to the Shadowlands, making them impassable.


Characters may elect to try to reach some place they know within the Tempest, such as a Renegade hideout or Heretic holding where they might be able to hide. They may try to sneak into Stygia to learn what is going on and why they are being hunted. They may decide to simply head out along a byway and try to put as much distance between themselves and Stygia as possible or they may think to try to locate Soup. If they make an Intelligence + Streetwise roll (difficulty 8), they can remember that Soup likes to hang out at a club called the Inferno. The Inferno is considered neutral ground.

By now, it should be obvious to the characters that the Legionnaires (or the barghests) can track them through the crystal and that they cannot rid themselves of it. Now that they have a moment in which to examine it, they may also notice that it pulsates and flickers with light when pointed in a certain direction. They may decide that this means it is

pointing toward something they need to find and go in the direction it points, using it like a homing beacon. If they do, they are on the right track and should be allowed to proceed. At some point along their route, they should meet up with Katrina (see Scene Four), who can give them some of the information they need.

Scene Three A: If they head out along an unknown byway, the Storyteller should feel free to run them into two or three other Shifting Zones chosen from those presented earlier in this book or to make up strange areas of her own to confuse the characters. The Shifting Zones recommended for this part of the adventure are the Sargasso Sea and the Pool of Bittersweet Remembrance. The Sargasso Sea should provide them with an actual enemy to fight (Sargasso Spectres), and the Pool should provide them with memories of their past. If a character who was made imbecilic is placed within the Pool, she will immediately regain her senses. These areas should engulf them, even if the characters are traveling in a relic car. The zone will rise up to wash over the land, if necessary, and temporarily swamp their car. If the Storyteller doesn't like these areas, she may construct some of her own, but none of the areas should be inherently deadly; each should, however, cause some damage to or delay for the characters. After two of them, the characters should flounder into the Quagmire just as they again hear the howls of the barghests and realize that the Legionnaires have caught up with them. This should be an exciting race against time as they struggle to free themselves before the soldiers get to them. At this point, they will either be captured and taken to Stygia, where they'll be collared as thralls and sent out to find the mask, or they'll escape and choose to follow the crystal or keep running. In any case, they will meet up with Katrina (Scene Four) and she can give them information they lack.

Scene Three B: Assuming the characters follow the crystal's directions, they will turn on a byway which leads toward the place they need to go. In a vehicle or walking, they turn onto a bridge which rises up above the thrashing waters for hundreds of feet. It forms a great arch heading out to sea. Once on it, they will realize that it sways precariously in the foul-smelling winds and their vehicle (or they themselves) are thrown from side to side by the buffeting winds. If they are swimming or in a boat, their path leads over a roaring waterfall, which plunges into mists hundreds of feet below. The clouds which have been scudding overhead have disappeared, leaving a black, somehow empty-feeling sky far over them. Within the blackness are tiny pinpricks of light like stars, through which tendrils of smoky-black ooze drift away toward the surface of the sea. As they watch, one after another of the pinpricks winks out. Spectres are gathering around the nihils, blocking the light from them with their black-rayed bodies and waiting for the signal to attack in preparation for the coming Maelstrom.



Should the characters try to follow the path, either onto the bridge or down the waterfall, they find that they can easily do so. The bridge sways and shudders, and at one point, has a break of about ten feet in the center of it, a hole that they will have to jump. This can be done by a successful Dexterity + Drive roll (difficulty 8). If the roll succeeds, they jump the hole; if it fails, their vehicle makes it part way and gets stuck in the hole. They will have to haul it out somehow or abandon it. If the roll is a botch, the vehicle falls through. The characters have one turn to try to use Argos to escape the falling vehicle before it crashes down onto the causeway, doing 10 dice of damage. Any wraiths brought to zero Corpus are immediately taken to the Labyrinth where they undergo a Target Harrowing for possession of the crystal, just as if it were a Fetter. If a wraith using Argos to guide the whole group through the Tempest loses all of his Corpus, the entire group undergoes a Target Harrowing. Should this occur, the crystal gives the wraiths one extra die to try to help them wrest free of the Nightmare Ride.

If Argos was successfully used, the wraiths can leap from the vehicle and grab the bridge, taking no damage. Those walking may use Dexterity + Athletics (difficulty 8) to leap the hole. Failures and botches result in the same problems as they would have had in a vehicle, except getting stuck causes five dice of damage to the wraith's Corpus.

Going down the waterfall presents no problems until they encounter the ledge which juts out halfway down. Again, a Dexterity + Drive roll (difficulty 8) lets them miss the ledge and continue to the pool at the bottom. A failure indicates that they've scraped their vehicle, tearing a hole in it. It begins to sink when they reach bottom and it must be patched somehow. A botch means they crash onto the ledge, taking 10 dice of damage, with the same possible results as above. Those swimming may make a Dexterity + Dodge roll (difficulty 7) to miss the ledge. Failure indicates they've scraped themselves, taking 5 dice of damage; a botch indicates 10 dice of damage, and a possible Harrowing. In any case, if a wraith or wraiths must undergo a Target Harrowing and manage to retain possession of the crystal, all of them regain their Stamina level in Corpus points at the end of it and they are transported back to where they left.

If the Harrowing is successful, the characters lose the crystal, but are sent back to the place they were taken from and regain their Stamina level in Corpus. While this makes it harder for them to recover the mask, it doesn't make it impossible. They'll just have to find alternative methods of locating it and gaining control over it.

If characters seem reluctant to commit themselves, the baying of barghests in the distance might convince them to make a decision.


At some point along their journey after they have overcome the obstacle, they can meet up with Katrina, who can tell them important information.

Scene Three C: Going to Stygia is the easiest route the characters can take. There is a level, straight road that leads right to the city. If they use a modicum of common sense and attempt to enter with several other wraiths or try to disguise themselves (particularly if any of them have Stygian brands), they should be able to make it past the lightly guarded exterior and enter the city.

Stygia is a forbidding edifice, a maze of mirror-bright, metallic buildings and streets surrounded by a seawall and ocean of screaming, chained wraiths. Long lines of collared and chained wraiths move sluggishly toward chambers where they await "processing." Sometimes the lines wait for years or decades. Sighs and moans wrestle for dominance with the clanging of hammers and the hiss of the forges where wraiths are smelted down into useful items and Artifacts. The air hangs heavy with the scent of ashes and the feel of grease. Bits of hair and soot drift in the air and settle on the characters, infecting them with the scent. Patrols of Legionnaires move about the city and unchained wraiths scuttle from place to place in the darker alleyways. Down some of those darker ways, slavers lie in wait for unwary wraiths whom they can capture and sell as thralls. Great trains rumble by, loaded with wraiths bound for distant places. Huge, steel cruisers cut through the harbor, leaving screaming, crushed souls in their wake.

Once inside the city, the characters can sneak around, dodging patrols and trying to find out what is going on. If they have contacts or allies in Stygia with whom they want to meet, they should be able to do so with little difficulty. Any of the Smiling Lord's patrols they overhear are discussing the theft of the Deathlord's mask. A few people can tell the characters that they are suspected of the theft. Posters with their pictures and names are being circulated all over the city and a huge reward is offered for information leading to their capture. Katrina (Scene Four) can tell the characters that they are being sought for the theft. She, like most others, believes they've only stolen some minor artifact that looks like a black crystal. If told of the actual circumstances, she can suggest that they try to find Soup and clear themselves. She mentions that he often hangs out at the Inferno. If the Storyteller prefers to use someone other than Katrina, that person can give the characters the information they need as easily as Katrina could. Of course, Katrina won't try to delay the characters while she turns them in for the reward....

Eventually, the characters will be tracked down by soldiers or turned in by low-lives. If they turn themselves in, they receive no reward, are collared and sent out to recover the mask. Now, however, two different groups of Legionnaires are hunting for them. The first group, those who have been on their trail from the beginning, belongs to the Smiling Lord. The second group is loyal to the Laughing Lady, who has decided that she needs to return the mask. She wants to make it look as though she helped the Smiling Lord rather



than implicating herself. She has her soldiers attempt to capture the characters as well. If successful, they will be in the same situation as they are with the Smiling Lord, except they will have to bring the mask back to the Laughing Lady, who will then want to destroy the characters to keep them from spreading any rumors they might hear about her involvement in the theft.

Assuming that the characters take steps to escape, they can now head for the Inferno to find Soup.

Scene Three D: If the characters head off for the Inferno to find Soup, they are going in the right direction. Somewhere along the way, they should meet up with Katrina, who can tell them why they're being hunted (see Scene Four). If they are already heading for the Inferno, she doesn't suggest that they go there, but tells them she saw Soup there only about an hour ago.

Scene Four: Meeting with Katrina

Katrina is a small, sad-looking wraith with brown, shoulder-length hair and gray eyes. She speaks slowly and thoughtfully. If the wraiths are driving in a vehicle, she cautions them to be very careful and watch out for drunk drivers. Although she's a little loopy, she is a kind soul and loyal to her friends.

Wherever this takes place, Katrina can tell the characters that the Smiling Lord has been robbed of a crystal, some sort of minor Artifact. She explains that they are suspected of the crime and that their likenesses are being distributed throughout Stygia and to all patrols. If they confide in her what actually happened and have not yet thought to seek out Soup, she can direct them to the Inferno, a club where he sometimes hangs out.

There should be no action beyond talking in the scene; Katrina has no desire to harm the characters and they should not want to harm her.

Act II: Recovering the Mask

Scene Five: Spectre Attack

Once they know where they need to go, the characters may make an Orienteering roll to find the correct byway to reach the club. As they move onto the byway, the sky overhead crackles with lightning and dark, heavy clouds move in as though racing one another. Shrill shrieks come from the clouds as a horde of Spectres descend on the group from overhead. These are Shades, and there is one Shade for each character present plus two extras. Their first target is the





crystal. Several cluster around whoever has the crystal and attempt to wrest it from the wraith. If they succeed, they start to fly away, but turn back as the crystal reappears in the wraith's hand. Their next attack is to try to destroy the characters so that they can take the crystal. If they succeed in bringing the characters to zero Corpus, the wraiths are dragged off for a Harrowing with the crystal as the target.

If the Harrowing is successful, the characters lose the crystal, but are sent back to the place they were taken from and regain their Stamina level in Corpus. While this makes it harder for them to recover the mask, it doesn't make it impossible. They'll just have to find alternative methods of locating it and gaining control over it.

Once they have beaten off the Spectres or survived the Harrowing, they may continue on to the Inferno. If necessary, especially if they lose the crystal, the Storyteller should remind the players that their characters are wanted by the Hierarchy. The Smiling Lord is unlikely to rest until he regains his mask, so it would be best if the characters attempted to recover it for him to clear their names. Otherwise, their continued existence is in grave doubt.

The byway which leads to the Inferno is fairly straightforward. After following a roadway for about two hours across the Sunless Sea, it leads to a grassy hillock. On the downward side of the hill is a river and dirt road that enters a forested area and winds through it until it arrives at the club. The forest is dark and gloomy. It seems to be made up of black trees which are shaped like evergreens. The boughs lean down, touching the roadway and dipping into the river. Many plasmic entities, especially the Deliriums, make their home here. Some of the Legendaries also live here, and these often put up roadblocks or river barriers and charge tolls to pass through. They accept relics or Pathos as payment.

Scene Six: Roadblock

As the characters travel toward the club, they run into one of these roadblocks manned by four centaur-type creatures. They want some sort of payment to let the wraiths pass. If any wraiths are looking around to see if the centaurs have any reinforcements hiding nearby, a successful Perception + Alertness roll allows them to spot several others hiding among the trees. It is probably best to just pay the toll. The centaurs will originally ask for four points of Pathos (one for each of them), but they can be talked down to accepting one point of Pathos (with good roleplaying of a hot bargaining session) or a minor relic. If the characters threaten or harm them, however, they and their seven friends attack.

Plasmic entities, Legendaries (11)
Physical: Strength 4, Dexterity 4, Stamina 4
Mental: Perception 4, Intelligence 3, Wits 3
Social: Charisma 2, Manipulation 2, Appearance 2

A Special Note: If the characters come to the club as captives, wearing collars and accompanied by a Legionnaire or two, the reception will be far less friendly. The guards will try to delay them long enough to consult with Sandy, and if they are allowed inside, as soon as Soup sees them, he'll make a run for it. The Storyteller will have to run a chase scene, and the characters will have to force Soup to tell them what he knows. He won't do it unless he's granted amnesty by the Legionnaire(s).

Abilities: Alertness 4, Brawl 3, Intimidation 2, Tracking 4
Arcanos: Argos 3, and either Keening 3, Moliate 3, Outrage 3, or Usury 3
Willpower: 7
Pathos: 6
Angst: N/A
Corpus: 7
Equipment: None

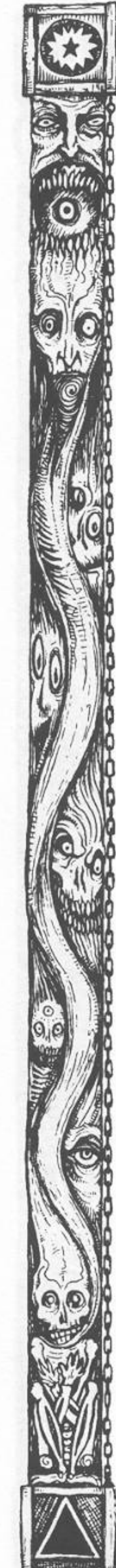

Once the centaurs have achieved their objective (received Pathos or a relic), they break off the confrontation and flee. Each centaur will attempt to get something from the characters. Even if the characters win, they should be fairly depleted by the end of the fight.

However, if the characters are willing to deal with the centaurs and think to ask the creatures for their help, the Legendaries will offer to alert them of any pursuit, so that the characters will have warning that someone is after them.

Scene Seven: The Inferno

Once they make it past the roadblock, they can reach the club within a matter of minutes. It is a small building that looks like a beaten-up, old, roadside honkytonk. Several wraiths bearing weapons stand around outside the club and lots of vehicles are pulled up next to the building. The Inferno is a club where anyone can come and talk, listen to music or make deals without interference — if they can find its location. It doesn't matter if the clientele is Hierarchy, Renegade, Heretic or independent, they are welcome so long as they leave the other factions alone, cause no trouble and agree to patrol the exterior and protect the club from Spectres and other dangerous denizens of the Tempest. The club is run by an independent wraith named Sandy Wong. Some wraiths believe Sandy is actually a spy for the Dark Kingdom of Jade, though no one has ever been able to prove anything.





When the characters arrive, black, heavy rain is pouring down, making the exterior of the club seem more dilapidated than ever. Black mud squishes underfoot as the characters walk to the door. None of the guards bother them. Rock music blares out when the door is opened. The interior of the club is somewhat dark; several wraiths sit hunched over tables and talk. Sandy moves back and forth from the bar to various tables, stopping to talk for a moment, then moving on.

They can spot Soup sitting alone at a table on the far side of the room. If they try to attack him, the characters will be jumped by every other wraith in the room and escorted from the premises. If they approach quietly, Soup will see them and wave them over as though he were their best friend and hasn't put them through hell. If they tell him about all their trouble or accuse him of framing them, he'll seem genuinely surprised and hurt. He'll explain that he thought the Legionnaires would realize the characters had nothing to do with it, but having them explain things would take enough time for him to slip away into the Tempest. He tells them how they can be rid of the crystal — they must freely give it away, and the person they give it to must freely accept it — but tells them that it can be used to locate the mask.

Soup explains why everyone is after them (if they haven't found out why yet). He was hired to steal the Smiling Lord's mask by someone named Revel, who is the leader of a Far Shores realm known as the Summercountry. He refuses to take the crystal back himself, saying that he's out of it at this point. If any of the characters are becoming severely depleted, Soup offers to pump them up with a couple of points of Pathos or to heal up a couple of points of damage to their Corpus as long as they let him go. He suggests that if they want to clear their names, they should go to the Summercountry and retrieve the mask.

Overhearing their discussion, another wraith comes to the characters' table and introduces himself as Burgess. Burgess is a slumming centurion. Burgess tells the characters that they must recover the Deathlord's mask and explains that it allows the Deathlord to guide and control the emotions and beliefs of those under his command (his legions, underlings and thralls) to help fight off Maelstroms. He explains that the Deathlord's loss of the mask means that one seventh of Stygia's normal defenses are gone or inoperative and this will allow the Maelstrom and the Spectres who ride within the Maelstrom entry into the realm. He adds that if Stygia falls, it is quite likely that all of the rest of the realms and Necropoli will also go under, dragging everyone into Oblivion.

At this point, if the characters made arrangements with the centaurs, they hear horns being blown, warning them that someone is on the way. If they made no arrangements,

they suddenly hear fighting coming from outside as Legionnaires break the neutrality and attack the guards to get into the club. Sandy asks the characters to leave. If they don't, the other wraiths make it clear they'll throw them to the Legionnaires. If they agree to go, Sandy sneaks them out the back way. While the guards keep the Legionnaires occupied, they reach their vehicle (if they have one) and leave, using the crystal as a guide for the route they need to take.

If asked, Soup tells them that he got into the Deathlord's palace while the Deathlord was sleeping by disguising himself as a Legionnaire. Once there, he used Moliate to change his face to look like the Smiling Lord, helped himself to the mask, stole some relic clothing that belonged to the Smiling Lord and walked out. No guards stopped him because they never looked closely at him. Being an honest thief, more interested in his ability to do something than in getting the most wealth or power out of it, he traveled to a prearranged meeting place where he met with Revel and turned the mask over to him. Revel paid him the agreed upon price and left. That was when he discovered that the crystal had attached itself to him. Within moments, he was being chased by Legionnaires led by packs of barghests. He fled to the Shadowlands. While there, he remembered an old rumor about homing beacons that some of the Deathlords place on their property, so he located the characters and gave them the crystal. If they have any doubts, he can tell them that no one will ever be able to take a Deathlord's household by surprise in such a way again. Audacity like that only works once (if it works at all).

Scene Eight: Meeting with the Ferryman

Whenever the group turns onto the road toward the Summercountry, they notice a small boat with a lit lantern hooked on its prow. The craft rocks gently as a robed and cowed figure steps out of it and into their path. He holds up a hand for them to stop. All the characters should recognize one of the enigmatic Ferryman. If they stop, he asks if he may speak with them for a moment. If they agree, he tells them the following:

A Maelstrom is on the way. Because the Smiling Lord's mask has been taken, thus weakening his power to compel belief from his minions, the Spectres and whatever Malfeans they serve have decided to make a preemptive strike to try to destroy Stygia and the other realms of the Underworld. It is quite possible that they will succeed unless the mask is returned to its proper owner. It is possible that Stygia might be able to withstand the assault, but in the past, all of their strength has been needed to turn aside the fury of the Maelstrom. It is also possible that Stygia might be destroyed, but other realms might survive. If Stygia falls, survival of other realms is questionable at best. In any case, it is the group's choice whether they will recover the mask and return it,

whether they'll let the one who now has it keep it or if they'll try to claim it for themselves. He tells them he has muddled the byway so that their pursuers will be confused and lose track of them. Whatever they decide is entirely up to them; however, he will not accept the crystal if it is offered to him. Nor will he take the characters to the Summercountry.

He cautions them that they should keep old wives' tales concerning the faerielands in mind when visiting the Summercountry and not allow themselves to become trapped there. He adds that as the Maelstrom builds, many byways will become closed off and tells them to think of a spiral path home. Without explaining these cryptic statements, he then steps back into his boat and poles slowly away.

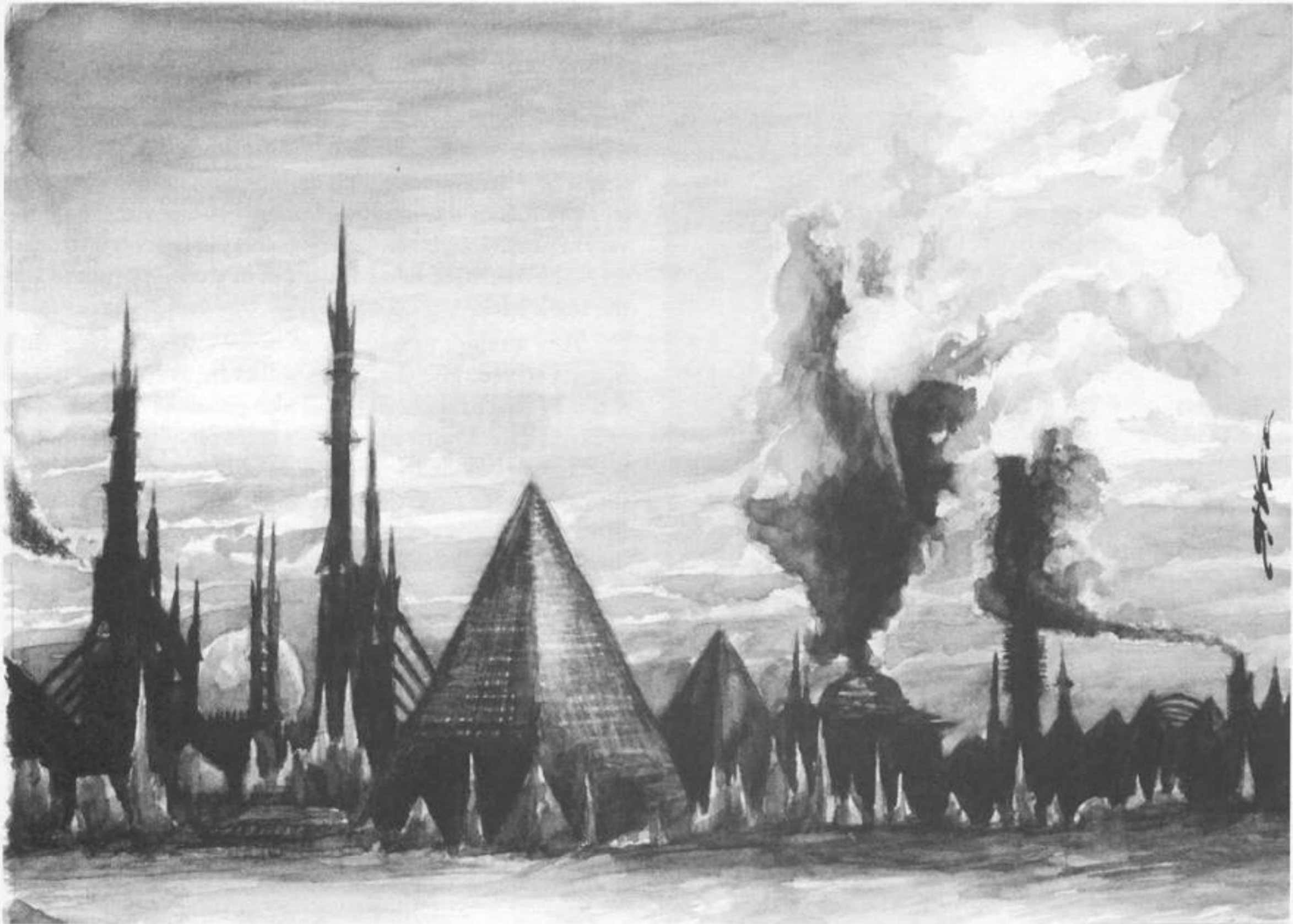
If they choose not to stop and listen to him, he does not force them to do so. He simply gets back in his boat and leaves. They will probably notice, however, that soon after this meeting, the sounds of their pursuers fade and are gone.



Scene Nine: To the Summercountry

With the diminishing sound of the howling barghests on their trail in the distance and the lights of Stygian cruisers cutting through the waters in search of them moving far-

ther and farther away, the characters can follow the crystal's pulsing onto a byway which runs to the Summercountry. The byway appears to be a road of moonlight cast by a full moon (actually cast by a large nihil) that shines down into the water. If they are swimming or in a boat, the channel is simply a warmer, moonlit passage; if they are walking or in a vehicle, though it looks watery, the moonlit road is quite solid. It stretches out toward the horizon. Pounding waves and screaming winds occasionally chop it into bits and clouds passing in front of the moon make the road insubstantial for a moment. Whenever this happens, all the wraiths must make Willpower rolls or begin sinking into the sea. Those who succeed can rescue their unlucky friends.

After about an hour of travel, a green island appears ahead. Trees and grass cover the island and a beautiful waterfall flows down a cliff into a sparkling pool. The scent of green grass and honeysuckle perfumes the air. Sunlight warms the scene. Wraiths in colorful clothing, with flowers in their hair, dance and frolic on the shore. Huge bunches of grapes, armloads of bright apples and brown nuts are being gathered by those not dancing. Celtic music fills the air. All seem to be heading for an opening in the green hillside. It seems like a scene from some medieval fantasy of faerieland.





When the characters reach the Summercountry, they move out of the storm for the first time in the adventure. The wraiths on shore greet them with melodious voices, calling for them to join in the feast. Deer approach and nuzzle the characters' hands and birds land on their shoulders. All around them, beautiful, smiling wraiths entreat them to dance or help pick fruits or go meet with the elfin king, Revel, the Lord of Misrule. Though the storm rages with ever greater intensity all around their island, the beings on the island seem unaware of it. Fine clothes are brought and the characters are urged to put them on.

They will most likely make for the opening into the hillside. A spiral pathway, lit by glass lamps holding thousands of fireflies, winds down into a great feathall, where tables that are groaning with food are set up. Bright banners are hung from the ceiling. Music pours out from several small groups who play within niches that line the path on the way down. Wonderful smells of rich foods and heady perfume emanate from below. Dozens of wraiths sit at the tables, laughing, talking, eating and drinking. At the high table sits a handsome, blond-haired man with pointed ears. He is dressed in the most elaborate costume they have seen yet, with a puffed, white undershirt, a green velvet tunic with long, dagged sleeves, orange trousers, and knee-length, brown boots. He wears a jeweled, gold crown on his head and carries a rapier slung at his belt. Hung behind him on the tapestried wall is a shield with a pair of crossed spears. There is no mask in evidence.

As they enter, they are greeted by Revel, who asks them if they have come to join him. From what they have seen of the apparent paradise, they might be tempted. It truly is their decision what they do, but before they decide one way or another, give each character a chance to notice the weariness and sadness in the inhabitants' eyes. Their appearance is almost, but not quite, covered up by their expressions of cheerfulness and gaiety. The characters should make a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 8) to notice this. If they are successful, they will begin to notice that all the revelry seems a little forced and stilted as though many of them are acting in a drama without knowing what their lines are.

Revel will call for a welcoming drink and goblets of sweet-smelling wine are given to the characters. Revel asks that they all drink to the Summercountry. At this point, the characters should remember the Ferryman's cautions. Just like in all the old tales, if they eat or drink anything while in the Summercountry, they become trapped there and cannot leave. They will spend the rest of their existence in forced revelry, forgetting their Fetters and Passions in the never-ending sunshine and plenty of the Summercountry, where all cares are laid aside. Unless they are rescued, they will remain there forever (or as long as the Summercountry holds out against the Maelstrom). Each character should be given

a roll on Intelligence + Faerie Lore (if she has it) (difficulty 6) or Occult (difficulty 7) or Etiquette, if she has no Faerie Lore or Occult, (difficulty 8) to figure out that she shouldn't eat or drink anything. On the other hand, outright refusal is a terrible insult to the host and could cause the wraiths gathered around them to attack them. It is best if they repeat the toast and acknowledge the sentiment, but don't drink the wine. This, of course, is the perfect time for their Shadows to really act up and cause all sorts of trouble.

After the toast, they are invited to sit at the head table with Revel, who wants to know why they have come to the Summercountry. They are offered every delectable food imaginable, and it is clear that it would taste wonderful. If they just taste the tiniest morsel, they will experience a rapture which they have been denied since their deaths. Of course, this is just another attempt to entrap them. Wraiths who truly miss the experiences of their living days will be sorely tempted, however, and might need to roll Willpower (or even spend a point) to deny themselves.

If the wraith with the crystal tries to use it to pinpoint the location of the mask, the crystal indicates the shield behind Revel's throne. The mask is actually hung on the wall beneath the shield and is hidden by it.

They can talk to Revel about the mask, telling him the truth of why they are there or they can try to lie and hope to be able to distract him and his court later, long enough for them to steal the mask and make a run for it. Whichever plan they want to try, the Storyteller will have to adjust the scenario to take it all into account. Revel does not realize that a Maelstrom is building up, nor does he know what effect the loss of the mask will have. He hates Stygia, but a very persuasive argument which points out that his own realm might be destroyed by a Maelstrom might move him to give the mask back.

Any attempt to take the mask by force will result in a massive melee. The characters will eventually lose; brought down by sheer numbers. Revel also possesses a rapier made of Stygian steel, with which he is quite proficient. The characters could be killed, or they might be overcome and dropped into the lower caverns where they must fight off horrible Spectre-like dwarves and trolls to survive. The passages below are lightless and wind about in confusing mazes. The only real way out is for the wraith to suicide, in effect deliberately lose all of her Corpus so that Spectres appear and take her to the Labyrinth for a Destruction Harrowing. If she survives it, she will find herself back at one of her Fetters and recover as many levels of Corpus as she has Stamina.

Should some of them try to steal the mask while others divert the court's attention, the Storyteller will have to decide how successful a diversion they create and whether any guards are left in the banquet hall. Diversions may range from challenges to impromptu performances of music or plays.

In truth, the wraiths of the Summercountry are abysmally bored and can be induced to watch almost any kind of spectacle in an attempt to entertain themselves. The characters might even challenge Revel for possession of the mask, engaging in duels, dance contests, riddle games or anything else that seems appropriate.

The mask itself is fairly lightweight, but large in the manner of ancient Greek drama masks. When first taken, it appears to be made of Stygian steel and has a death's head of silvery metal emblazoned on it (the "smile" of the Smiling Lord). The mask changes constantly; first assuming the aspect of a grizzled old man, next looking like the joyous face of a young girl. It has monstrous aspects as well; no two aspects are the same. Likewise, it appears to change what it is made of, first becoming inlaid wood, then altering into jade or coral, then becoming bright, burnished gold. The only constants seem to be its size and relative mass.

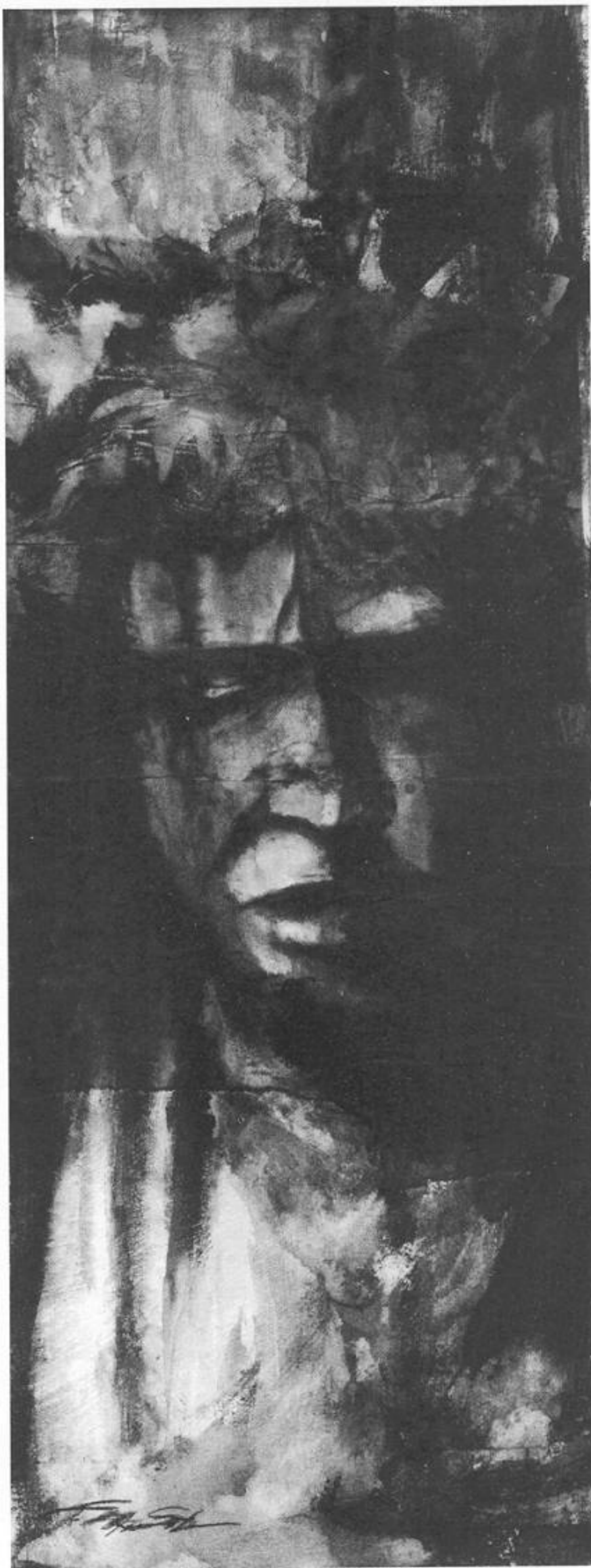
Act III: Return

Scene Ten: The Way is Closed

Once the wraiths have the mask, regardless of how they acquired it, they will need to leave the Summercountry. The mask will have become bonded to a character who does not have the crystal. It makes its own choice as to which character should carry it. The Storyteller should choose a character that hasn't had as much to do or who is quieter than the others to be the recipient so that player can get some time in the limelight. When they near the shoreline, either going back for their vehicle or preparing to take a byway out of the realm, they can see that hurricane-force winds and tsunami-sized waves are breaking on the shore. Sheets of greasy rain, redolent with the charnel stench of death, pour down just offshore. There is no sign of a byway. Orienteering calls no byways into being, nor do any other Argos powers seem to work. They cannot travel to their Haunts or Fetters either, as all roads and channels have been cut or destroyed by the rising fury of the Maelstrom.

Any wraith who succeeds at a Perception + Alertness roll (difficulty 6) notices a glimmer of light near the edge of the shore. If they investigate, they find a lit lantern of the kind that Ferryman carry. Though it flickers a little, the wind does not blow it out and the rain doesn't extinguish it. A rolled-up parchment is thrust through one of the iron cross-pieces. It says, "Remember the spiraling way."

If any wraith has Wraith Lore or Underworld History or can make a successful roll on Intelligence + Enigmas or Occult (difficulty 7), she can remember that Charon used to utilize the Labyrinth to travel when all other ways were closed. He went down into the Venous Stair, which is lo-



cated very close to Stygia. It is up to the wraiths to decide if they want to try to get to Stygia via the Labyrinth.

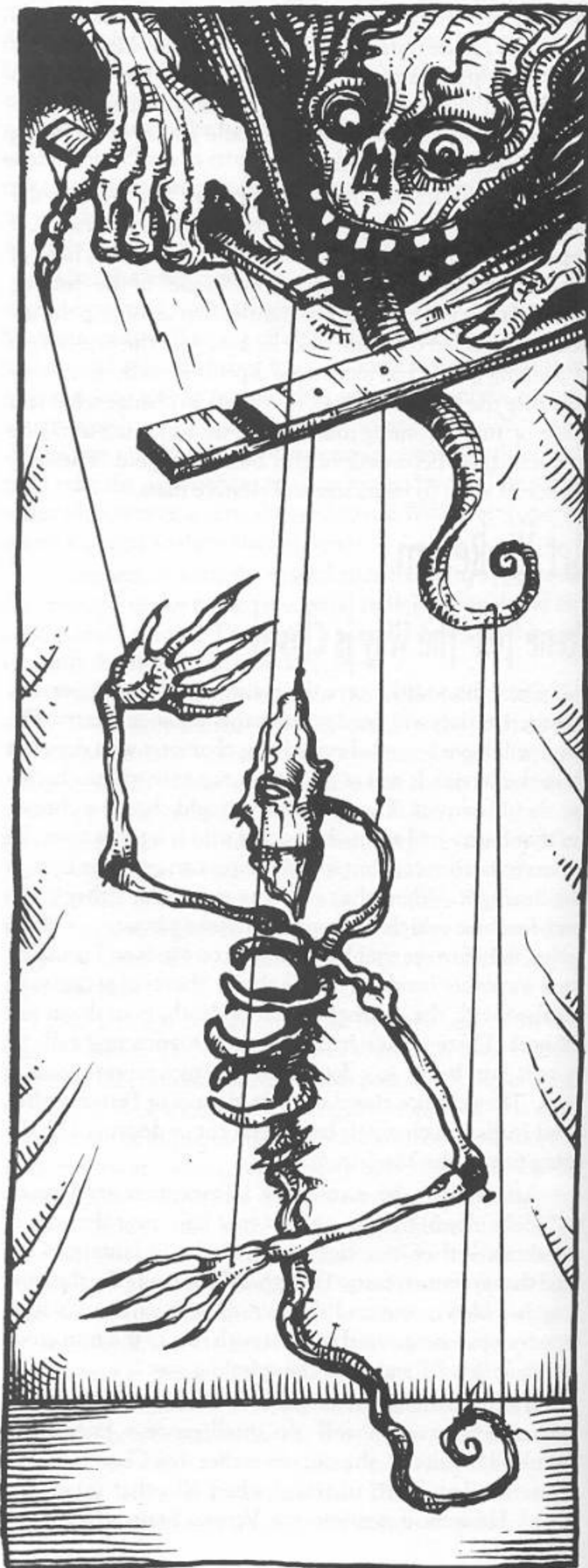
This should be a terrifying thought. There is no guarantee that any of them will make it through. In the lightless depths, they may meet the most horrible end wraiths can imagine — and they will, unless they all work together. As they contemplate whether to do it or not, the water just offshore begins to churn itself into an enormous whirlpool. Horrible screams of terror and anguish emanate from the depths of the whirlpool, and black-rayed figures with glowing red eyes can be seen riding the spirals from the depths below to the surface. A deep, resonating gong begins to sound, echoing through the air from all directions — the gongs that warn that a Great Maelstrom is on the way.


If the characters hesitate, they see that the whirlpool begins to diminish, closing up and moving out to sea. They have one chance to jump into it before it closes and is gone. If they neglect to pick up the Ferryman's light, the only illumination they have in the Labyrinth is that provided by the Spectres' red, gleaming eyes. The Spectres immediately attack wraiths who are not protected by either the light or by a Castigate power which keeps them at bay. The characters are sucked down into the heart of the whirlpool and deposited in a cavernous place with thousands of tunnels, stairways and dark openings leading out of it. They line the floor, walls and ceiling. Spectres line every path. The character's Shadows begin to whisper to them that giving in is so much easier, that joining the Spectres is the sure way to win and prolong their existences. Their Shadows try to force them to drop the light, to split up, to run away, to do anything but walk bravely among the denizens of the Labyrinth, lanterns held high.

As they pass through the ranks of Spectres, each character must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 7). If the character succeeds, she may travel on unharmed by the Spectres. If she fails, she is grabbed by all the Spectres close to her. They drag her off to be Harrowed. Other members of her group can elect to go with the unfortunate wraith and try to help save her. If she overcomes the Harrowing, she (and anyone who went with her) is returned to the group.

Should one of the group think to don the mask, she must make a Willpower roll (difficulty 9) to control it. Utilizing the mask allows the wraith to imbue her companions with Willpowers of 9, unless their own is already higher, to resist the Spectres.

If a wraith botches the roll, the four Spectres who are closest to her attack. She finds that she cannot defend herself against them. Dodging doesn't work and Brawling doesn't help. Her arms become insubstantial and can neither harm the Spectres nor ward off their attacks. Each successful attack by a Spectre rips a portion of her Corpus away, replacing it with the cold nothingness of Oblivion. If all of her





Corpus is lost in this manner, she undergoes a Destruction Harrowing. She becomes a Spectre if she fails and immediately turns on the nearest member of her Circle. The only way to fend off the Spectres is for the other members of the group to interpose themselves between the Spectres and their intended victim and fight for her. If they do so, the Spectres each make one attack against the defender(s), then withdraw. Their damage only causes one point of normal damage against a defender. Characters must make one roll every hour. The Spectres don't seem to be able to take the mask away directly, though if they can force the wraith into a Harrowing, they target the mask as the Quarry for the Harrowing. If the character loses the mask in the nightmare ride, she can spend a Willpower point to lose something else instead (one of her Passions or Fetters). She is then returned to the group, and the Spectres try attacking all over again an hour later.

The wraiths can find their way through by successful use of Argos Orienteering or by following the flame of the lantern as it flickers. It leans toward the correct path, showing them the way. The journey takes five hours. Great rumblings can be heard overhead as though the Underworld is tearing itself apart, and whole troops of Spectres fly past them, heading toward whatever realm they are invading. The wind screams through the tunnels, and the way is slippery with a liquid that seems to be a combination of blood and bile. The Spectres whisper threats and promises to them as they pass. The gong never ceases its slow tolling.

Scene Eleven: Stygia

After five hours, the Spectres all whoop and scream with delight, shrieking out that Stygia has fallen. They dance and caper madly, scooping the characters up off the stairways and whirling them through the air while yelling, "Join us! Join us! We have won!" The lantern's light begins to fail. This is really the characters' last test. If they try to make it and refuse to join the Spectres, they can push through and begin the climb up the Venous Stair. As they climb, the light brightens again.

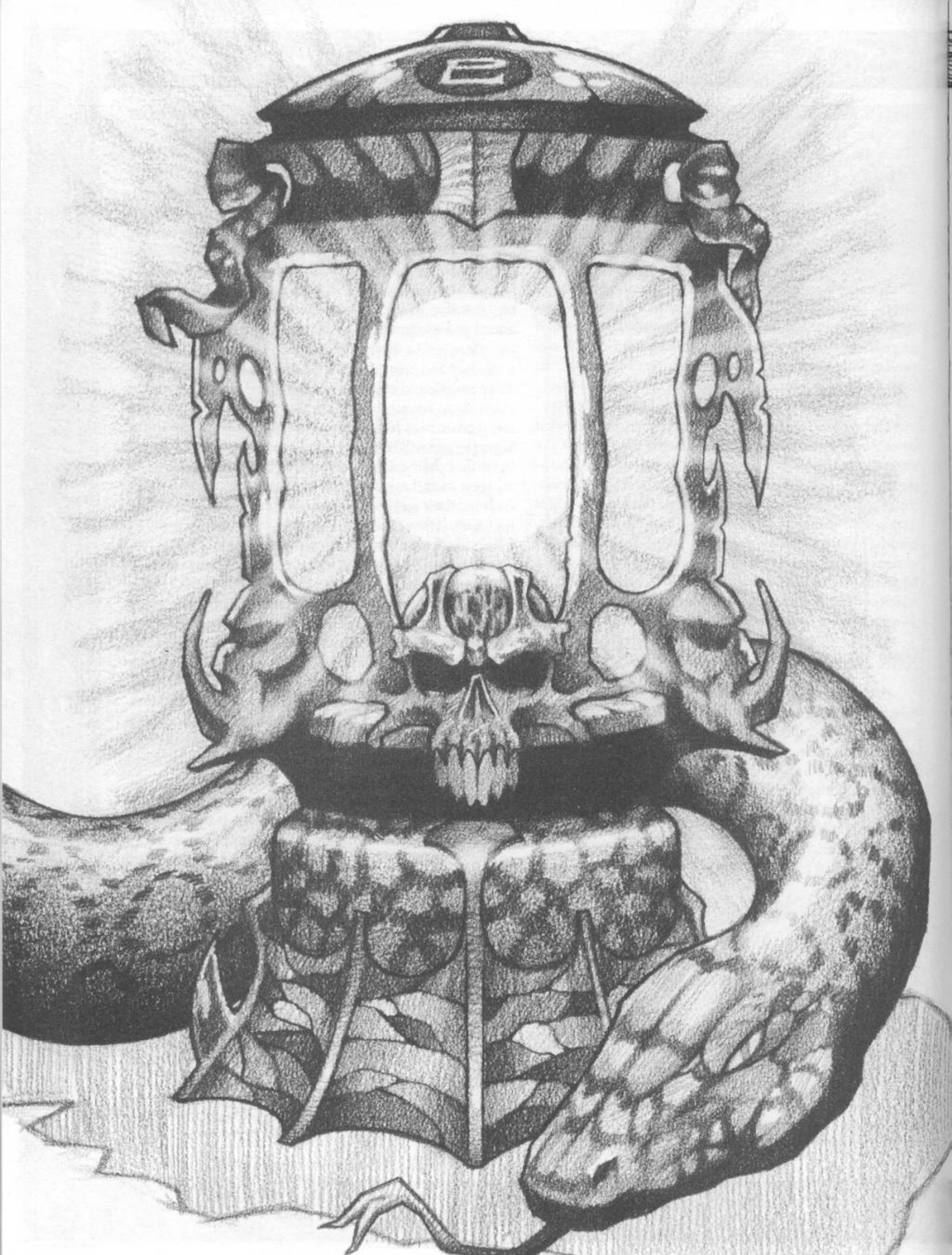
When they emerge, they find the way guarded by an entire Legion awaiting an invasion of Spectres. They mistake the characters for Spectres and move to attack. The wraiths will have to deflect the attack by showing them the mask or yelling to let them know they are here to help Stygia. Though the Legionnaires will remain suspicious, the characters will be escorted to the Smiling Lord's palace.


The Deathlord's palace is a grim, steel castle with leering gargoyles and jagged crenellations. It is surrounded by a moat of boiling blood, fed from spouts which line the rooftop. Another whole Legion surrounds the palace. They are armed and armored with Stygian steel.

Once inside, they are led to a small audience room where a cloaked and cowed figure sits atop a blood red throne. They are allowed to approach and kneel, and once he has given them leave to speak, they can relinquish the crystal and mask to him. If they are collared slaves at this point, the Smiling Lord will offer them positions within his forces and order that their collars be removed. If they made it this far on their own, he will reward them with a minor Artifact each for their service to him and offer them places within his forces. If they refuse his offer, they had better do so gracefully and for reasons other than their dislike of Stygia.

He then dismisses them, dons his mask, and moves to take up a position in defense of Stygia. There is a terrible onslaught of Spectres and storm, and the characters may choose either to help battle the Maelstrom or to find safety within the walls of the Deathlord's palace. Stygia will win since their return of the mask enabled all the Deathlords to coordinate their defenses. Had they not returned the mask, Stygia would have been lacking one-seventh of her defenses, and the city might have fallen. The Maelstrom itself, though mighty, dies down to a lesser storm, making it more easily fought and less damaging than it would have been (from a Level Seven Maelstrom to a Level Three).

As the black mists of the Maelstrom lift, they can see a single Ferryman standing in his lanternless boat in the harbor. He nods to them and slowly sails away.





Appendix: The Ferryman's Sack



Arcanos and the Tempest

A lot is said about the Argos Arcanos throughout the book. It is the Arcanos that is most directly involved with the Tempest, allowing wraiths to travel through it and find their way from place to place. However, it is not the only Arcanos that is useful in the Sea of Shadows. Many of the basic Arcanos powers are helpful. Some of these are:

Castigate

This power is one of the best tools available for dealing with character's Shadows and for holding Spectres at bay. One of the basic Abilities is Bulwark, which can help protect wraiths from the fury of Maelstroms.

Fatalism

Foreknowledge of danger is certainly a tool not to be scoffed at, especially in the Tempest; however, knowing something about one's past or the role one should play in a given situation should not be overlooked either. Having such knowledge might even help the character fight her Shadow or overcome a Harrowing.

Inhabit

This Art allows wraiths to claim objects in the living world. When those objects are destroyed, they become relics. Though not suggested as a way to make money or provide themselves with relic goods, this does provide a means whereby the characters might acquire some tool or piece of equipment they must have to effectively maneuver through a story.

The Book of Lost Arcanos

There are a few Arcanos that are known only to certain groups of people. Some of them should be impossible for player characters to ever learn; others could be discovered during play or taught to them as special rewards by those who know them. The so-called Lost Arcanos are as follows:

Argos

•••• Tempest Run

Tempest Run allows a wraith to try to run ahead of a Maelstrom, utilizing the winds and waves in the vanguard of the storm to shove her along at an accelerated pace. While this is only attempted by the foolhardy, it can be the only chance a wraith has of outrunning the full effects of the Tempest if she is caught too far away from her Haunt.



System: The player must roll Stamina + Argos (difficulty 8). Each success means she has managed to use the Maelstrom without being harmed by it for a distance equivalent to an hour's travel (standard time). If she gains five successes, the wraith is able to use the force of the Maelstrom to travel almost instantaneously to her Haunt, where she can prepare for the storm's onslaught. Failure indicates that the wraith has not managed to keep in the vanguard, but has begun to slip into the Maelstrom itself, taking whatever damage the storm causes (see p. 200 in *Wraith: The Oblivion*). A botch results in the wraith being sucked into the heart of the Maelstrom where she is instantly destroyed and consigned to Oblivion.

The character must spend a Pathos point and a Willpower point to enact this art.

•••• Moving Haunt

This powerful Arcanos allows wraiths to create a Moving Haunt from a relic vehicle such as a car, wagon or ship. Coupled with ••• Lifeweb (Splice Strand), Moving Haunt changes the vehicle from a relic into an Artifact, meaning it does not need to be powered by Pathos to move. The Moving Haunt has all the advantages of a normal Haunt (making Arcanos used within it easier, providing protection from Maelstroms, etc.) and has the advantage of being able to move between the realms and the Shadowlands and through the Tempest. The vehicle is made no stronger than it was originally, and it is still subject to destruction. The wraiths who utilize this Arcanos to make their wagons into Movable Haunts do not share their knowledge of this with outsiders and hunt down those who manage to steal the knowledge.

Castigate

•••• Shadow Summons

With this Arcanos, Archangelics call out a wraith's Shadow and force it into combat against itself. In effect, this pulls the Shadow self to the forefront and suppresses the psyche of the wraith. The Shadow is then attacked by the Archangelic, who attempts to purify it through wounding it with soul-cleansing fire from a flaming sword. While it often serves to destroy the Shadow, the method usually results in the destruction of the wraith as well. Archangelics take the soul-stuff and use it to make other flaming swords. Archangelics do not teach this Arcanos to others, but there are rumors that certain powerful Pardoners are familiar with it.

System: The user rolls his Charisma + Castigate (the difficulty is the subject's permanent Angst score). Success means the user has called forth the Shadow and may do battle with it; failure indicates that the user is unable to summon the Shadow. A botch means that the user cannot discern the Shadow within the wraith at all. He becomes subject to an attack from a horde of Spectres as soon as he leaves the vicinity of the wraith whose Shadow he tried to summon.

This costs two Pathos points and one Willpower point to use.

Fatalism

••• Fated Course

This art enables the wraith to look at her future and choose a course based on what she discovers. This is often used (and misused) in the wraith's dealings with others, but it is also quite useful for finding one's way through the Tempest in the absence of the Argos Arcanos. The wraith can still only use a Pathos point to change direction, but by utilizing Fated Course, the wraith now knows in what direction a byway lies and a little about what awaits her as she travels toward it or upon it.

System: The wraith must roll Charisma + Fatalism (difficulty 6). For every success, she discovers one more piece of information (the way to a byway, where the byway goes, what creatures lie between her and the byway, what she can expect to find there, etc.). Failure means she learns nothing, and a botch indicates that she learns false information (the wrong way; if any creatures are there; that she will be attacked by creatures when, in fact, she won't, etc.).

Use of this art costs two Pathos points (aside from the one spent to change direction).

Keening

••• Spectre Song

This weird art allows the wraith to moan and scream like a Spectre. This can cause fear in other wraiths, and they may believe that Spectres are about to attack, especially if they only *hear* the sound rather than see the wraith who is making it. It is a horrible, nerve-grating shriek and can also be used to briefly fool Spectres into believing that the wraith is one of them. Spectres who believe the wraith will not attack her for one scene.

System: The wraith rolls Manipulation + Keening. The difficulty to fool Shades is 7, for Doppelgangers the difficulty is 8 and for Nephwracks and Malfeans, the difficulty is 9. It is only effective for a short time, as there are other clues that



the wraith is not a Spectre. She does not radiate the black rays of Oblivion and she shines with Pathos. After their initial assessment of the character based on her song, Spectres will realize they've been fooled. The wraith is advised to use the song to gain time to flee the area. The art costs 2 Pathos to use.

Moliate

... Embed

Essentially, this is a variation on Martialry (also a ... Moliate skill). It allows a wraith to embed objects within her Corpus that can be used as a weapon to increase damage in combat. Once embedded, the objects are permanently bound into the wraith permanently unless Moliate is used to remove them. The things which are to be embedded must have substance in the Underworld (i.e. relics, plasm or Artifacts), and must be capable of harming wraiths (such as swords, knives, etc.). If the items are made of Stygian steel, they can inflict aggravated damage on a wraith and increase the wraith's damage on a successful strike by one die. This Arcanos is most often used by Spectres, especially by those who live in the Sea of Broken Glass and embed slivers of Stygian steel in their bodies.

System: The wraith must roll Stamina + Moliate (difficulty is Strength + 2). Each success allows the wraith to embed another small object into his Corpus. Failure indicates that the wraith has harmed himself with the object rather than embedding it, causing a temporary loss of Strength + 2 levels of Corpus. A botch means that the wraith has caused Strength + 2 levels of aggravated damage to himself.

Artifacts and Relics




Darklight

The Sunless Sea is an abysmally dark place, and any lights within it (those carried by wraiths, held in vehicles or shining from the shores of various realms) glitter and sparkle, throwing off reflections for miles and miles. This makes it hard for those who would prefer a little more anonymity or secrecy to pass unnoticed while in the Sunless Sea. The Soul-Pirates of the Far Shores have developed an Artifact known as a Darklight. A Darklight burns with a reddish glow that illuminates the immediate area but casts no brilliant reflections, meaning it is not visible from a long distance away. They utilize their Darklights to get within



J. Cobb



striking distance of their victims without revealing themselves. The light can only be seen from about 50 yards away. When they get so close that other wraiths might become aware of their presence, the Soul-Pirates cover their Darklights with darkened globes, smothering their illumination.

Ferryman's Lantern

This small iron and glass lantern holds a candle that is always kept lit. Most often seen hung from the prow of a Ferryman's boat, the Artifact provides light in dark places, no matter how dark and oppressive they are, even in the Labyrinth. Furthermore, it keeps Spectres at bay as long as those who shelter within its rays maintain their courage (a Willpower roll with a difficulty of 9 is needed to do so). Finally, if someone is holding the lantern and wants to find her way to an unknown destination, the flame of the candle within the lantern flickers in the direction she needs to take.

Life Jacket

This handy artifact is a one-use item, but it can save a wraith from destruction. If a wraith wears the Life Jacket, she can avoid losing her last point of Corpus for one scene. Essentially, the Life Jacket holds the wraith together long enough to allow her to try to escape or take some other action to prevent herself from going to zero Corpus and having to undergo a Destruction Harrowing. She is at one point of Corpus, however, and is highly vulnerable. If she has not significantly changed her options within ten minutes of having activated the Life Jacket, its power reserves are gone and it crumbles to dust. The Life Jacket need not be an actual jacket and is not the ugly, orange, boating jacket one usually associates with the name. It can be any piece of clothing that the wraith wears. If the wraith is not wearing the jacket at the time that she loses all of her Corpus, it does not save her. There aren't scores of these jackets being handed out in the Underworld. They are very valuable and usually only awarded to those who are of great service to the Deathlords. Those wraiths who have Life Jackets do not advertise the fact and would fight fiercely to retain them for themselves.

Shadow Mirror

Shadow Mirrors are made from burnished Stygian steel. They are black and show only a shadowy reflection of the wraith who looks into one. After a moment of gazing in the mirror, a strange reflection appears within it. The reflection vaguely resembles the wraith, but the image is more twisted and sinister. It may be more appealing and compelling as well. This is the wraith's Shadow. The wraith may converse with her Shadow and it will appear as though the figure in the mirror answers back. However, there is no guarantee that the wraith will not fall prey to her Shadow's blandishments.

When the wraith is undergoing the Castigation power of Purify, looking in the mirror assists the Castigator by making the wraith's Shadow more accessible. This decreases the Castigator's difficulty level by one. If a wraith looks into her Shadow Mirror when interacting with an Archangelic, the Archangelic believes the "evil" portion of the wraith is in the mirror and attacks the looking glass rather than the character. If the mirror is shattered when the Shadow has been called into it, the wraith takes a one die Corpus level in damage. As usual, she can soak as using her Stamina.

Tempest Compass

A Tempest Compass is useful for finding the best way through the Tempest. Though most wraiths utilize byways to travel through the Tempest, they are occasionally cut or wraiths are diverted from them. Some Shifting Zones creep up on wraiths and turn them around so that they no longer know what direction they are going. In all of these instances, a Tempest Compass provides a guide for finding the way back to the place they need to be or relocating the byway. Using the Tempest Compass with Orienteering to relocate a proper position reduces the time that it would normally take by half and keeps the wraith from striking off in the wrong direction if she botches. Tempest Compasses are not as rare as Life Jackets, but cost as much as a rare relic. Tempest Compasses are strangely susceptible to Maelstroms and tend to go haywire whenever a Maelstrom is brewing in the vicinity. It is rumored that the Ferryman's boats have Tempest Compasses woven into them and that those compasses are unaffected by Maelstrom interference.

THE SEA OF SHADOWS

In the Swirling Mists of Shadow

The Sea of Shadows is a lake of cold fire, burning through a wraith's self-delusions and setting flame to her Passions. It is a sea, not of murky, viscous water but of souls, and every drop is the pure essence of emotion. Foul Spectres lurk in its depths and enigmatic Ferrymen patrol the byways in search of lost souls. Who knows what else may await in the inky depths below?

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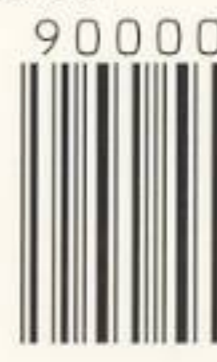


780 PARK NORTH BOULEVARD
SUITE 100
CLARKSTON, GEORGIA 30021



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