

THE LIVE-ACTION GAMING MAGAZINE

Mind's Eye Theatre™ JOURNAL

BECAUSE THE MIND'S EYE NEVER BLINKS



ISSUE No.1

Mind's Eye Theatre™ JOURNAL

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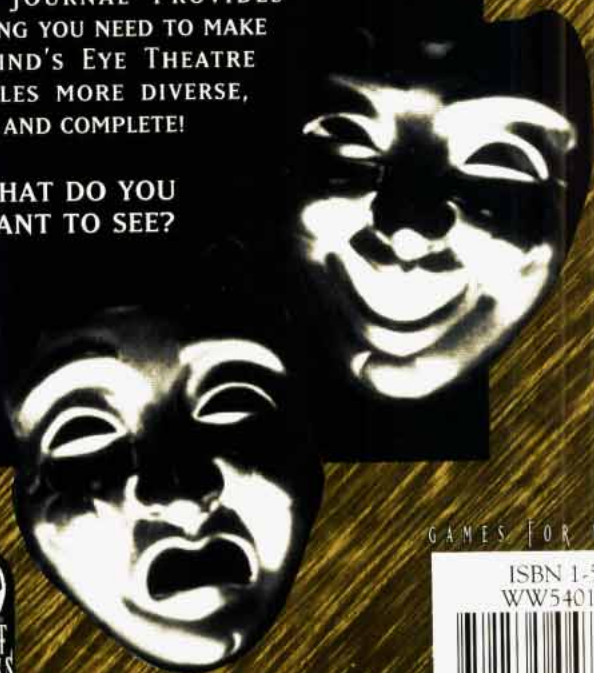
WELCOME TO THE
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- ADAPTATIONS OF THE TRUE BLACK HAND TO MET
- WORLD OF DARKNESS FICTION
- DEADLY ARCANE TREMERE RITUALS
- TOPICAL ISSUES ON LIVE-ACTION ROLEPLAYING AND MORE!

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Andrew "Why are you talking?" **Bates**, for making me feel like part of the family.

Rich "Fed-Ex" **Dansky**, for exploiting an intern who can't pack a box.

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Ken "Elephant Man" **Cliffe**, for my *second* editing test. And for liking peanuts.

Jess "Invisible Gryphons" **Heinig**, for at least giving me something to work with.

Justin R. "I'm sexy" **Achilli**, for making the Sabbath Guide... interesting.

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Mind's Eye Theatre
JOURNAL

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welcome to the Mind's Eye Theatre Journal!

Well, kids, this is our first issue of the **Journal** and my first attempt at actually developing anything other than Carpal Tunnel Syndrome, so I bet you're all wondering exactly what you've got here. Friends and gamers, let me tell you, you've got one of the best ideas to come to live-action roleplaying (LARPing, for those who are brand-spanking-new to the genre) since the release of **Laws of the Night**.

The **Journal** is a quarterly (that's once every three months for those of you new to the *magazine* genre) publication dedicated to filling in the gaps in your White Wolf LARP environment. We offer rules for new character types, original storylines to work into your chronicles, guides for keeping your games under control and running smoothly, and rules updates you won't find in any other **Mind's Eye** release. Plus, you'll find answers to the questions that have plagued your chronicles (*Why can't gargoyles fly now when they could in the Dark Ages?*), original World of Darkness fiction, and columns from those who've been there yet survived to tell the tale. The **Journal** is packed with facts and guides that expand upon what's published in the **MET** books.

In this issue, we take a look behind the scenes with the Tal'mahe'Ra (the True Black Hand), into the Pure Lands of the Savage West at the ferocious Pumonca tribe of Bastet, and into the very jaws of the arcane to unearth some powerful occult secrets known to only the most powerful and wise Tremere (*Now, if only I can get my hands on a Lupine's skin...*). And that's just a sample of what's in store for you here. We've also got an **Oblivion** adventure that will rock your whole shadowed world, a look at what made vampires the true lords of the Dark Ages, and more.

In future issues, we'll look into roleplaying organizations that support **Mind's Eye** (there are a variety of live-action clubs out there), how to keep "problem players" under control, ways to make your **MET** chronicles more realistic in and out of game, and anything else you might need to round out your live-action chronicle.

And you can help make the **Journal** even better. Send us letters on your opinions about the state of live-action roleplaying today. Send us questions about the features and rules you see here, and about the broken rules you find elsewhere in **MET**. Send us horror stories of games gone wrong and how your characters fixed them. We're interested in all aspects of live-action roleplaying, and we want to know what you think.

Stick around. The **Journal** is on the cutting edge of the live-action genre; we've got something for everybody. And if we don't have it yet, let us know. We'll get it for you.

Carl Bowen, Developer

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UP FROM THE PIPES

by Yours Truly



*All that said about the magazine, let me tell you a bit about myself. After all, there's only so much these italicized intro-headers can reveal about me. So, for one time only, you get the inside scoop on how I became developer of the **Mind's Eye Theatre Journal**. If you're interested in the enthralling story of how I got my job at White Wolf in the first place, check out my bio at our website (<http://www.white-wolf.com>).*

Okay, so I got into this by hitting my friends with low-grade plumbing supplies on the weekend. It's been a long and convoluted road from there to here, but in any case, here I am, developing a live-action magazine straight from the source. How did I do it? I scarcely know myself anymore.

My introduction to roleplaying (live-action and tabletop) came in late high school in the form of one large, tape-wrapped piece of padded PVC pipe. On my way out of the school parking lot one afternoon, I noticed two acquaintances hacking viciously away at each other with identically ineffective weapons. I had to stop and inquire as to what the heck these two would-be combatants thought they were doing.

Turns out they were practicing for a roleplaying "event" that weekend in which they would assume the personas of characters they had designed, then lay into the ranks of villainous goblins, ogres and pretty much anybody else who looked at them with a particularly sinister cast. "It's kinda like AD&D, but you get to



actually swing the sword yourself," they informed me. "And you throw beanbags at each other, too."

I, in my infinite wisdom at the time, responded, "AD&D? What's that, a *Dungeons & Dragons* knock-off? How obvious can you get?"

Deciding then that perhaps sword-and-sorcery-type LARPs were not exactly my bag, my acquaintances told me that they participated in another game in which all conflicts and confrontations were resolved by playing Rock-Paper-Scissors—that there wasn't so much of the socking-each-other-with-the-padded-pipes business. That type of game seemed a little more my speed, so they loaned me a battered copy of **Vampire: The Masquerade** as "reference material," and off I went.

Unfortunately, I fell out of touch with my two erstwhile gamer buddies shortly after returning their book to them, and I didn't do much roleplaying until college (though other friends of mine and I did make our own padded swords and hack at each other when the need—and our raging, unrequited hormones—overtook us and we had to vent or die).

In college, I got a slightly better education in the fine points of tabletop roleplaying ("Boy, this *When Will You Rage* anthology is cool. I wonder what it's like to *be* one of these werewolves...."), and I discovered a troupe of live-action gamers on campus. I'd actually been in a **Vampire** tabletop game or two by this point, so naturally I was ready to go. I spent my first couple of live-action games wandering from character concept to character concept until I happened upon something I liked and stuck with it. I was concurrently involved in increasingly more complex and mature tabletop roleplaying games, and I was thoroughly hooked by the end of my senior year. I loved the *World of Darkness*, favored **Vampire** and **Werewolf**, and adored the live-action expression of those two games.

So, after college, on a whim, I sent my résumé to White Wolf (among other publishing companies across the state) and waited to see if there might be a job for me. As luck would have it, my gaming experience (and my preference for White Wolf's material) complemented my editing skills, and I landed a job as an editor. Three short months later, my manager (or *Derfishinkanadian*, *Herr Cliffe*, as I call him when he's well out of earshot) offered me the chance to develop this quarterly.

It's a perfect match, actually. I've come a long way from the "How in the world could you have a die with only *four* sides?" high schooler to the publisher-gamer I am now. Likewise, **MET** has come a long way from its boxed-set roots. The game and its systems will continue to change, and as I grow and change with it, I'll keep you all up to date. If you have questions, comments, advice, death threats (or pretty much whatever), let me know. I'm always here, 24 hours a day (though I only answer e-mail in an eight-hour block between 9:00 and 5:00), and I'd love to hear from you.

Carl Bowen

carl@white-wolf.com



THE CURRENT THINKING

*Ah... conflict. If nothing else, that's what this regular column is for. Sort of a cross between a round-table discussion and a WWF cage-match, this is the place to hash out issues regarding **Mind's Eye**, from licensing to rule-brokenness to LARPing style. Give me your opinions, respond to opinions you see here, bribe me just to get your name in print, whatever. Just keep it relatively clean and stay off the bad side of those with whom you disagree. After all, that keen-edged rapier wit is designed for each others' arguments and opinions, not for each others' personal lives.*

I'm never sure what sparks these discussions. The first couple of letters involve the pros and cons of running an e-mail list about your LARP, between sessions. I found the second topic brewing on an e-mail list based on "Athens by Night," an independent, White Wolf-inspired LARP in Georgia. The topic, in its barest form, is simply this: Is it better to be a "sanctioned" LARP or an independent one, and why. And away we go....

[An e-mail] list is a good way to keep tabs on what's going on, and which way the game is heading. Also, it can provide some insight into other characters, and keep your interest up between games. It is also invaluable for keeping in contact with other players in order to plot and scheme. I think the list doubles as a harpy network sometimes as well, because people argue on it, and say stupid things and then get flamed on it, or sing the praises of some worthy character. [My **Vampire LARP**] doesn't really have any harpies, and I think the list helps fill the void created by their absence.

Ginnie Copley

I also received:

I would like to go on record as saying that I like seeing rules-change discussions on the list. It keeps me from asking the Storytellers the same questions another player has asked. This saves the Storytellers time which they can put to better use plotting new ways to confound [us].

Jason Dilling

PS: If it gets annoying, there's always the delete key.

And onto topic two....

To the Storytellers of "Athens by Night,"

Why in the name of all that is (or is not) holy have you adopted this over-complicated system of numbers, proportions of numbers to each other and statistics that



sacrifices roleplaying (and thus the entire purpose of LARP... which contrary to popular belief is NOT to "beat shit up") for the ability to create characters who are more complicated than they are in the tabletop games? Why not use some facade of "realism" (used in quotes because it is, after all, roleplaying) and get Camarilla-certified so you can be intelligent roleplayers and not absurd rules-mongers? I know lots of great unsanctioned games that are good because the roleplaying is good, not because lots of big vampires run around and diablerize each other.

Paul Daniel Bond

The following responses follow the basic e-mail reply format of cite the original text aside and arguing point by point.

Mister Bond,

Why in the name of all that is (or is not) holy have you adopted this over-complicated system that sacrifices the roleplaying (and thus the entire purpose of LARP...)?

So we should jump on the **Mind's Eye Theatre** bandwagon and just say to hell with clearly defined rules? The live-action environment is, if anything, more complicated than tabletop. It demands a more comprehensive rules system.

Why not use some facade of "realism" (used in quotes because it is, after all, roleplaying) and get Camarilla-certified so you can be intelligent roleplayers and not absurd rules-mongers?

So since we're not in the Camarilla, we're not cool?

Talk about complex. I for one don't want to have to certify my plotlines just so I can become one with White Wolf's fan club.

Steve McDonald — Athens by Night Storyteller

After a personal e-mail back from Bond (in bold).

[Daniel],

I have played with both the **Mind's Eye Theatre** system and our system. I understand that one of the reasons that **Mind's Eye** combat is so poorly defined is because combat is discouraged. I think this is a bad idea, as combat is, in many ways, inevitable in the World of Darkness. Dark forces collide and destroy one another.

Part of the problem here is that a lot of what would be background in a tabletop game (behind-the-scenes strikes by underlings/ lackeys/ ghouls) must be carried out by players in live-action.

You can't just stick your head in the sand and say "combat sucks" and hope it won't happen. Roleplaying is the center of anything we do. But if you leave a section of the rules poorly defined simply because you don't like it, then it will come back to haunt you.

Tehehe. You make me sound like an elitist and that makes me smile. The Camarilla wants you to certify plotlines so bullshit like rampant Masquerade-breaches (and I KNOW you have a massive problem with that, to the point that a justicar threatened to kick you out of the Camarilla if they weren't stopped),



unrealistic gaming (your disproportionate number of Kindred, your Nosferatu prince, your propensity for including wererats, werespiders and lots of other rare creatures into your game), and general stupidity.

1) We, as Storytellers, sent an archon (not a justicar) into the game in the last session.

2) One of the things that makes Athens by Night an exciting and interesting game is the fact that we break out of the form that every other Vampire LARP has set. How many times can you come into a seven-clan game with a Ventrue prince and little or no outside supernatural presence (which seems to be stock-in-trade for every other LARP in the whole wide world) and not get bored?

We're an alternative. Part of being an alternative is doing things differently.

Once word of Steve and Daniel's argument got out to the greater Athens by Night e-mail list, others registered their opinions.

I'll jump in here:

The point of a LARP is just that: to roleplay in live action. Period. The purpose is not to "beat shit up" (I'll say this once again as you ignored it the first time. If it were, you would be right. Since it is not, I am right.

The purpose [of Athens by Night] is not just to roleplay. If we wanted that, we would conduct a play. [ABN] is a game, as well as a roleplaying event. The goal is to balance the roleplaying and game aspects. This is hard, and differentLARPs strike a different balance. But that doesn't make one LARP more "right" than another.

It's just different, that's all.

Richard Coleman

And so did others.

[Mister Bond],

Roleplaying is almost entirely based on the non-rules related aspects of the game. Whether the rules say I must play Rock-Paper-Scissors to do challenges, or play entire games of *Monopoly* to do so, I can roleplay whatever I desire. I can be a smarmy Ventrue car dealer or I can be a pissy, stupid Scottish kilt-wearin' Brujah.

... (and thus the entire purpose of LARP... which contrary to popular belief is NOT to "beat shit up")...

Purpose of a LARP? Who says so... Yahweh? What if in the course of roleplaying, I decide to beat shit up? Am I not allowed? It's my shit, after all. Besides, being Camarilla-certified is no guarantee of being an intelligent roleplayer. Roleplaying (and rules-mongering) is in the individual player, not the rules. *The Masquerade Second Edition* and *Laws of the Night* are each twice the length of AIT's rules [*AIT is another independent LARP run in Atlanta*], and I know we are at least neck and neck with ABN. If you need your rules to be custom tailored as your roleplaying crutch, feel free to find a game that suits you. Meanwhile, I don't tell the Iranians how to run their country... because I don't live there and they don't directly affect any of my interests. Why does this seem to bother you so?

Scott McDaniel, Atlanta Interactive Theater



And others...

Dear Mr. Paul Daniel Bond,

1. How can rules make people beat shit up? Remember guns don't kill people; people who shoot people with guns kill people.

2. The most important thing about LARPing is not roleplaying but is having fun. I can only assume we must be having fun since there are always 100+ people at our games.

3. Of course we have some violence (maybe a little bit more than that) but what do you think will happen when you have 100+ vampires in one city?

4. As for "realism," we are a bunch of people pretending to be vampires. How much more real can we get?

5. There are many different types of people in this world. Some like to "beat shit up"; others like to roleplay. Our Storytellers have not made some world for just one type of person, but for anyone who is interested in roleplaying or "beating shit up," or any other such aspects of LARP.

William Boyer

And finally...

[Daniel],

First, I have played in both the Athens game and other LARPs. While at first glance ABN's rules may appear excessively complex, in reality the system we use is less complex during actual play. To play a character, it is only necessary to know how the rules apply to your character. The point system we use in place of the vocal Trait system is easier to teach to new players, faster to use to generate new characters, and easier to keep track of than the Trait system in *Mind's Eye Theatre*.

Second, the attacks on our Storytellers are completely unfounded. I have been playing tabletop and LARPs for over 14 years as both a gamemaster and player. The people who run our game are by no means power-hungry. There are some violent characters in the game, but generally those people are designed as anarchs, something every campaign needs. The quality of the Storytellers' work is high and the value of their contribution should not be denigrated by someone who has never attended a performance. A wise critic sees the play before he writes the review.

There is more than enough room for many variant games within the genre. In fact, Athens is currently the subject of a scholarly study in live-action theater.

With all due respect,
Jason Dilling

So what does Daniel Bond have to say to all this?

The beauty of the *Mind's Eye Theatre* system is that it gives you freedom. Gone are the days of yore when we all sat with GM screens that described countless modifiers, clarifications and random-monster generators. All the crap is stripped away, and you can concentrate on just enjoying your roleplaying experience. Live action offers you the chance to do more than say, "My character hides behind a tree." By God, you actually hide behind that tree.



The reason the Trait-based system is superior is simple: It actually encourages people to not get so caught up in the rules. I for one hated the days of referencing the book every single time a rules-related question arose. With the Trait-based system, you bid, you resolve and you move on.

Character creation in the system enables you to flesh out your character more than you ever could in a number-based system. What's the difference between one character with a Manipulation of 5 and another with 4? Until you get out there and find the words that describe your character, there is none. The **Mind's Eye** system is simple, it's easy and it makes for more clearly defined characters! No more complex number games that cater to the accountant in the group. Now anyone can join along and not fear that some well-versed rules whore will take advantage of him.

I like the fact that everything [in **Mind's Eye**] isn't defined in extensive books. People should worry about character, not rules. My foes [in this debate] seem to believe that the rules make the man. If there isn't a clear definition of every gun's kick, every explosion's blast radius, every sword's exact length, and every person's time to run the mile, I think it's a good thing. If you want detailed rules and spelled-out reality, play tabletop or do math problems for fun.

FURTHER FUEL

Two very different viewpoints; two opinions with the same answer. Both say their system leaves the chaff behind and makes way for roleplaying.... What's your opinion? Are the MET rules too complicated, oversimplified or just right? How far can we reasonably expect you to stretch our "Golden Rule" to adapt the rules for your setting? How far is too far before you lose the roleplaying and Storytelling aspects that make our games what they are? Let me hear from you!

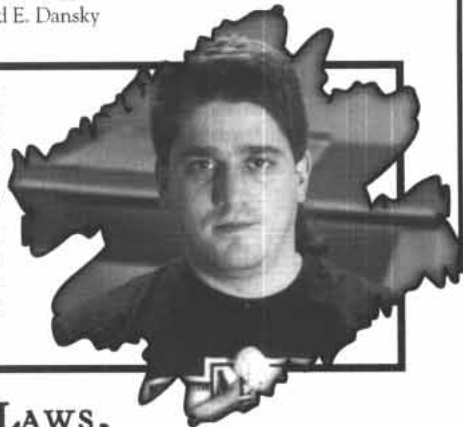
You can e-mail your answers to these points, or opinions on subjects of your choosing to carl@white-wolf.com, or mail them to:

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DEADGUY SPEAKS

by Richard E. Danksy

Rich has been a part of White Wolf since just shortly before Christ crawled from the primordial ocean at Cyprus. He has developed *Mind's Eye Theatre*, *Wraith: The Oblivion* and *Vampire: The Dark Ages*. Watch for this column to showcase Rich's unique insight, wit, observations on life in general, and (should we be so lucky) his views on *Mind's Eye Theatre* development. In his first column, Rich relates the tale of how *Mind's Eye* came into its current incarnation.



CHAPTER ONE: YOUR LAWS, MY TRICEPS

It all started because my arm got tired. Honest. I couldn't make this stuff up if I wanted to.

It was November, 1995. I'd just come on board as the developer for *Wraith: The Oblivion* and *Mind's Eye Theatre*, and I was about to get shipped off to my first convention appearance. The place: Kansas City. The convention: Shauncon. The reason I was there: I was the first developer our con-support guy saw (the others having heard his ominous footsteps and gone to ground until he had seized another victim. Picture the dinosaur sequence in *Fantasia* — the one in which the stegosaurus gets it in the neck — and you've pretty much got the idea).

The folks at Shauncon were very friendly and helpful, and they got in touch with me well before the event to see what I'd be interested in doing, what I'd like to see, and so on; they were perfect hosts. As part of that conversation, they mentioned that they had a long-running *Masquerade* game, a chapter of which would take place at the convention, and that they'd written a special-guest part that they'd love to have me play. So if I could just see my way clear to popping into character for a few hours Saturday night....

"Sure," I said. "It sounds great! Let me know what sort of character it is, so I can bring appropriate costuming."

Well, that's what I said out loud. Internally, I was screaming. "*What are you doing? What if you make a mistake? You've never played anything besides a Toreador with a goofy accent! What if you screw up — they'll lose all respect for you and the product line! AAAAAGGHHHH!*"

(Mind you, this whole thing took place before I was informed that White Wolf developers are supposed to spend conventions drunk and surly at hotel bars, as opposed to playing in games. I have since had my misapprehension corrected and can now be found at most major conventions sitting in the corner of the local watering hole, guzzling various unidentifiable fluids and channeling my inner black-clad hooligan. He likes Amaretto Sours and Purpom hard cider, in case you feel like bribing him.)

So I fortified myself for the potentially traumatic experience. Armed with the proper equipment (10-foot pole, a dozen iron spikes, 50 feet of rope and a .22 automatic), I descended into the "Out of Print" pile in the warehouse in hopes of excavating a copy of the *Players Kit*. Why? Because I was going to be playing a Giovanni — and at the time we had no rules for

playing Giovanni in print. Oops. "This is probably something I should rectify," I said to myself, even as I hacked my way through the tentacled nasties who guarded the piles of books I needed.

Emerging victorious, I sat down in my office with my prize and a copy of *Masquerade 2nd Edition* (not to mention *Antagonists* and, for some unknown reason, *The Book of Props*) and started reading. My goal was to memorize every single word of all of those books before I got on the plane for Kansas City. So I read. And I read. And then I read some more. My e-mail account clogged. My mailbox overflowed. Dirty dishes in my sink at home began breathing, developed language skills and voted to secede from my apartment. In the end, though, it was worth it — I managed to get every single word of those suckers down. I was a walking encyclopedia of rules knowledge. Head held high, I took my seat on the aircraft, settled in with a Thomas Ligotti short-story collection, and let the friendly skies convey me to where I was going.

And somewhere over Tennessee, I managed to forget every blessed word I'd read.

So, to make a long story short (too late, I know), I arrived safely in KC, but as a virtual *tabula rasa* of live-action information. The game rolled around. I did the only thing I could. I tucked the entire MET library under my arm for reference, muttered a swift prayer and went off to play. (No one really needs to hear about the steakhouse meeting with the vegetarian who'd thrown his front door onto the fireplace for warmth, the funky chickeners at the wedding next door, the bar band's salsa-flavored rendition of Van Morrison's Greatest Hits, or about the half-dozen or so gamers whom I found strewn across my hotel room, asleep, Saturday morning. Caveat: I'd never met any of them before, I haven't seen any of them since, I have no idea what any of their names were, and the only concrete fact I have about the matter was the knowledge that at least three of them snored like a goddamned bandsaw factory on swing shift.)

Five hours later, I was back in my hotel room with one noticeable difference. (Okay, two — I'd cleaned the gamers out.) My right arm, the one I'd used to carry the books, was about two inches longer than the left, and it felt like someone had emphatically and repeatedly mistaken it for a large, pinkish piece of linguine. Oh, the game had gone well — I'd wandered into town, made my introductions, acquired the ridiculously powerful magical whosits that I was supposed to remove from play, mucked with a few of the more uppity players and then strolled off into the night. My mission was accomplished, my work was done, and I'd managed to avoid being asked any questions I couldn't answer.

But boy, was my arm tired. The longer I sat there thinking about it, the more I realized that the situation simply wasn't satisfactory. The books were heavy and awkward, and they simply looked out of place next to costuming. Players who had made the investment in tuxedos or evening gowns, or even just the investment of time and effort to look right for their characters, deserved better than to be weighted down with a stack of 8.5-by-11-inch green books. The old format was simply too obtrusive, and it did too much to shatter the game's illusion.

Besides, my arm *was* tired. I had no intention of ever lugging that many books around for that long in that heavy a jacket again. (Costuming note for all you would-be Giovanni out there: Black's a great color for dressing up, but when the only black clothes you have are wool, it's okay to vary things a little. Even in November. Trust me.)

So I started thinking. Problem #1 was that the books were physically awkward. Problem #2 was that necessary material wasn't available to players. Problem #3 was that, and I have to be honest here, the rules didn't work terribly well. (Yeah, I know, they're still not perfect, but we're trying here. Honest.) Scattered over three books and two editions, drawn from dozens of sources, the rules often contradicted one another, making it necessary for folks to tote around hundreds of pages worth of Photoshop-bespangled reference material.

Something clearly had to be done. So Sunday night, I sat down with the two gentlemen who ran the game I'd played in, and over friendly conversation, I floated the idea. "What would you guys think," I said — "and this is just an idea, mind you — of a pocket-sized rulebook for *Mind's Eye Theatre*? None of the storytelling material, minimal background — just the rules in a size that you could carry with you and that you could tuck into a pocket when you weren't using it."

For what it's worth, they liked the idea. I can't tell you exactly what they said (partially because I'm not sure I can quote it accurately, partially because the things I can remember to quote accurately aren't necessarily printable in a family roleplaying journal), but they liked it. If they hadn't, I probably would have scrapped the whole idea and gone back to figure out how many curls I would have needed to do in order to prep for the next game. But armed with a mandate from folks who were elbow-deep in the game, and who knew what they needed to make their games run more smoothly, I could go back home and set up the project (that is, after the incident with the massive hangover, the *Star Wars*' line designer, the ship's bell and the approximately 4000 miniatures).

It took a while, and it took some convincing. The idea of a pocket guide — just rules, nothing else — was so contrary to what we'd done before that some folks were skeptical of it. I knew the idea was a good one, though, and once I noted to People in High Places that we wouldn't be incurring any new writing costs on the book, I got the green light. That's when the fun started.

Initially, the idea of the book was simply to cut and paste the rules files from the old books into the new one. It would be easy, fast and useful — and it would save my sanity, because I was working on *Wraith 2nd Edition* at the same time. Unfortunately, this simple plan ran into a few snags. First of all, the files for the *Players Kit* were nowhere to be found. While I could do without the print specs for the blood capsules that were included in the original box, I did sort of need the files for the lesser clans, their Disciplines and all of the other crunchy goodness that needed to go into the book. Eventually the diskette with the required files turned up. (If I remember correctly, it was in the Marketing department, filed with the details of the White Wolf Microbrewery idea that thankfully never got off the ground, and was labeled "I Gotcher Barney DoomWADs Right Here." But I could be mistaken.) Pulling up the files led to problem number two: They were a mess.

I mean, I knew there were a few discrepancies between *The Masquerade* and the *Vampire Players Guide*, but once I started digging in, I realized that more work was needed. A lot more work. As a matter of fact, so much work was needed that I had no idea where to start. There was only one thing to do: Go back to the source.

I bundled myself for the Atlanta winter (yep, that meant a long-sleeve shirt and jeans) and headed off to the Red Light Café, where the local *Vampire* LARP crowd hung out on Tuesday nights. I sat down at a table and snagged random passersby, asking them what they felt needed changing; scoping out which rules needed to be cleaned up or explicated better.

Hoo boy, did I get an earful. Three hours later, I staggered out under the weight of my notes. Then, masochist that I am, I fired up the computer and asked the same questions of friends who played *MET* all over the continent. The response was avalanche-like in its volume, intensity and ambient temperature. People had a *lot* of concerns. Even worse, a great many of those concerns and proposed fixes contradicted each other. It was hopeless. So I did what any sane man would do in that sort of situation. I screamed for help.

Help arrived in the form of Editrix (no, that's not a dirty word, and get your minds out of the gutter, you filthy-headed brutes) Cynthia Summers, whose experience with actual *Mind's Eye* gameplay dwarfed mine, and who had long since set herself up as the Cerberus of *MET*. Nothing that saw print for the line escaped her baleful gaze — which was a good thing for me. We sat down with the old files, copious notes, e-mails and a healthy supply of caffeinated

beverages, and we decided which changes needed to be made, whose ideas for fixes were worth following up on, and whom we were going to pummel senseless when the process was all over.

I also had the unenviable task of deciding precisely what material went into the book. The basic clans and Disciplines? They had to be in there. The Sabbat? Sort of a necessity, I thought. Minor clans and bloodlines? Well, they weren't available anywhere else. Other Disciplines? If the clans were going to be in there, the appropriate rules had to be as well. Background? At least some, for new players just picking up the book. The basics of the game? Indubitably. A little bit of common-sense warning? A necessity, in light of all the rumbles about PTAs and religious-watchdog groups hassling MET games. A FAQ? Considering the number of changes we'd made, it sort of had to go in there.

You see how books get big, fast? Suddenly a 50,000-word cut-and-paste job had turned into a 110,000-word monstrosity. Some things got cut out of the draft — there was no choice if we wanted it to fit between two covers — but still, it remained a towering, imposing pile of verbiage.

A month or so later, a manuscript emerged. With much fanfare and other goofiness, it went through the copy-editing process — multiple times — and eventually emerged into the light of Production and layout.

Those of you with long memories might note that *Laws of the Night* was the first of the MET books to not have a cover adorned with photographs and Photoshop. Rather, the book's cover has a subdued gray marble background and little else — just logos (which are something of a design necessity). That was deliberate. The idea (hashed out in many discussions with the talented Mr. Larry Snelly and Ms. Katie McCaskill, who laid out the book) was to create a book that a character could carry — or even open — during play, without having it look like, well, a game book. Hopefully, we could put the rules in something that the most foppish Toreador or the most staid Tremere wouldn't feel awkward about whipping out in the midst of heavy roleplaying.

Digression: I consider the illusion of the game world to be one of the most important aspects of gameplay. I'm a big fan of deep immersion; every time a test goes off or dice hit the table, it's a forcible reminder that you are Just Playing A Game. I like my illusions, and I like them with as little duct tape holding them together as possible. That means if I have to check a rule during gameplay, I want to do so in a way that seems like part of the action. Ergo, the book that gets pulled out for that check should look like an in-play prop, something my character would have naturally.

That wasn't the end of it, not by a long shot. The book was too long, which meant that even more material had to be cut or squeezed — Katie did heroic work shrinking headers, smooshing sidebars and annexing borders so that everything that was vital would fit. Suddenly, from what had been a jumble, there emerged a book.

For all of its flaws — and I know the book has them, thank you — it does what it was intended to: It makes looking rules up in gameplay easier; it addresses the concerns of the people who helped poke at it. Most of all, it's useful.

And that, after all, is what I was after from the very beginning.

— the deadguy —



ENOCHIAN MYSTICISM

by Jess Heinig

*The World of Darkness is vast and intricately balanced. To represent that complexity through live action (in the core rulebooks like **Laws of the Night**), certain elements have to be left behind for considerations of space or thematic integrity. However, fear not. Picking up where the core books leave off is a job for the **Mind's Eye Theatre Journal**. In this article, we take a look at the True Black Hand and the Disciplines that are uniquely its own. (Don't worry; the powers aren't as broken as they sound).*

Millennia old, drawing inspiration from apocalyptic rantings and slumbering monstrosities, the Tal'mahe'Ra—the True Black Hand—once awaited the End Times prophesied in the *Book of Nod*. Far more successful than most Gehenna cults, the True Hand claimed exclusive dominion over rare powers and mysterious secrets. These elders infiltrated and manipulated Camarilla and Sabbat alike, sometimes simultaneously. Their crusaders hunted and killed vampires with a skill worthy of the Assamites.

However, even the most fervent fanaticism is no equal to the destruction unleashed in the Final Nights. The deaths of powerful vampires and the chaos of war has split the True Hand from its former contacts and allies, forcing its former members to hide or be destroyed. Crushed under the weight of centuries and the inevitability of change, the True Hand is no more, its vampires little better than the squabbling Cainites against whom they so recently fought and maneuvered.

Once, the True Hand sought to serve the will of the Antediluvians. Its holdings in the Shadowlands—the realm of the dead—lay beyond the reach of its enemies, and its careful manipulations and unique abilities allowed it to control entire broods of vampires with ease. The hierarchy of the True Hand is now disrupted, and its resources are scattered and broken. Only by integrating themselves into Kindred society can the True Hand's former members survive.

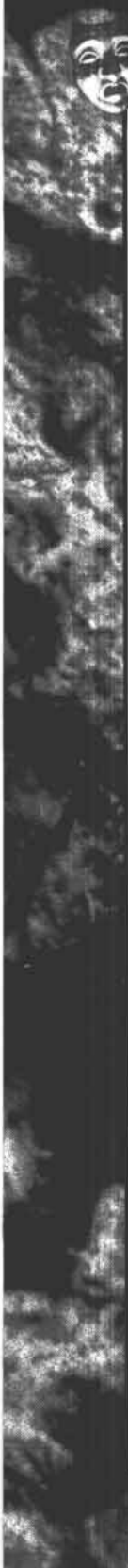
(Note: The True Black Hand and its adherents are not necessarily suitable for all styles of play. Storytellers should choose whether or not they wish to acknowledge the existence of the Black Hand in their individual chronicles. Certainly, the bloodlines and Disciplines presented here diverge considerably from those of "mainstream" vampires, and can be unbalancing.)

Also note that the Nagaraja as presented here differ slightly from their tabletop incarnation in *Dirty Secrets of the Black Hand*. This is an intentional result of updating them to conform to the standards of the revised **Vampire**.)

NAGARAJA

Of course mankind continues on after death, my childe. Our existence should be enough to prove that. But what of the others who do not share in our particular cursed blessing of immortality? Why, they continue on as well, I assure you. That man there,





by the corner, is going to die in the next few nights, as a matter of fact. I am quite sure that we will see him again shortly thereafter. How can I tell? Suffice it to say, I can see such things. And yes, I can teach you as well, though your tutelage will begin a bit differently than mine. We don't have quite so demanding a schedule ahead of us as I did when I was inducted into this world.

But come. We will return to this subject in time. You and I must dine tonight, and I have prepared a most succulent repast. Do you remember the woman I pointed out to you a week ago? The woman who had been having those terrible headaches...?

The forbidden experiments of the Tremere were not the only magical works to produce results. In the early days of the True Hand, a subset of mages obsessed with the secrets of death and the afterlife bent their collective will toward understanding vampirism. At last, convinced that their research granted them the power to manipulate the vampiric curse to their own ends, they conducted a great ceremony to strike the life from their bodies and become undead forever.

The Nagaraja still exist, and they continue to study and develop the secrets of death and what lies beyond. Their command of necromantic arts is rivaled only by that of the Giovanni, and the Flesh Eaters have some secrets that not even the upstart Necromancers have discovered. Without the True Hand, the Nagaraja is a directionless and dying bloodline; whether it survives the coming reckoning or falls to the paranoid waltz of the Jihad remains to be seen.

Clan Disciplines: *Auspex, Dominate, Necromancy*

Advantage: Instead of practicing the forms of Necromancy pioneered by the Giovanni, the Nagaraja use Vitreous Necromancy (sometimes called "Nihilistics") — a special path concerned with the energies of death and decay. Should your game include the additional Necromancy powers from **Vampire**, the Nagaraja use Ash Necromancy and are capable of learning Vitreous Necromancy after attaining expertise to an Intermediate level. Otherwise, use Vitreous Necromancy as their primary Necromancy path, giving them access to unusual abilities unknown to other clans and bloodlines. Because of their sensitivity to the energies of the dead, Nagaraja can automatically sense the presence of any wraiths in their vicinity (about 10 feet), although they cannot necessarily see or identify particular wraiths (at least, not without Ash Necromancy or the Merits: *Ghostsight* or *Speaker with the Dead*).

Disadvantage: In addition to drinking blood, the Nagaraja must consume human flesh. A Nagaraja must devour two health levels' worth of flesh each day, preferably fresh. A normal human corpse is considered to have three servings of "the other white meat." Vampiric flesh will not do, as it rots and decays once it is devoured. A Nagaraja who fails to "get his pound of flesh" gains the Negative Trait: *Sickly* for each night of fasting; these Traits disappear if the Nagaraja later consumes additional flesh (one serving for each Trait).

Nagaraja have no special capacity for eating food other than raw flesh, unless they take the Merit: *Eat Food*.

INCLUDING THE NAGARAJAIN YOUR CHRONICLE

As a bloodline of perhaps a dozen members from a vampiric society now nearly destroyed, the Nagaraja would seem to have limited potential for use as characters. With the extent of the True Hand's influence in vampiric society, though, such is hardly the case. Agents of the True Hand from almost all clans infiltrate various



levels of the Camarilla and Sabbat, and even in the wake of recent upheavals, they continue to advance their own schemes while hiding within the other sects.

Formidable necromantic prowess combines with the wisdom of great age to make the Nagaraja cunning and dangerous adversaries. Obviously, other necromancers are the most likely to know of the Nagaraja; the Giovanni family in particular considers the Nagaraja a nuisance, but still casts a jealous eye toward the bloodline's secrets. For their part, the Nagaraja take an interest in the larger movements of Kindred society. Any seemingly insignificant political or social change within either Camarilla or Sabbat could conceal the maneuvers of the ancients; such chess matches draw the attention of the True Hand and its members. Without the safety of any secure haven or widespread allies, the Nagaraja must travel where their studies and needs take them — and so one or even two may appear just about anywhere, if only briefly.

Due to their scarcity, Nagaraja shouldn't arrive in a chronicle in droves. Rather, they are harbingers of terrible portents, foreshadowing the schemes of ancient vampires playing in the Jihad. Too much an unknown quantity to be actively persecuted, the Nagaraja are largely an enigma to the more common clans.

Possible ideas for adding Nagaraja to your chronicle include:

- Nagaraja follow up on hidden or lost necromantic secrets with an almost religious fanaticism. A character unearthing an unusual bit of occult lore may attract the attention of a Nagaraja.

- The movements of the ancients always draw the attention of the Tal'mahe'Ra. A Nagaraja agent may use his necromantic abilities to investigate unusual conspiracies or hidden influence in a city.

- Since very few Nagaraja exist — and as they are not exactly protected by the sheltering arms of the Camarilla or Sabbat — it makes sense for them to seek out places to hide, or allies on whom they can depend. A single Nosferatu contact or a Brujah bodyguard can go a long way toward making unlife safer and more productive, and the Nagaraja aren't above making such contacts surreptitiously.

- With their small bloodline size, Embracing potential recruits seems like a valid strategy for Nagaraja. Of course, educating a brand-new vampire and teaching her to avoid notice, unearth the secrets of unlife and defend against potential threats is a risky undertaking, so the Nagaraja seek out only the most talented and intelligent recruits. A mentor-student team might seek shelter with a small group of neonates or ancillae, so that the fledgling Flesh Eater can adjust to her new condition in relative security.


VITREOUS NECROMANCY

The forbidding workings of Vitreous Necromancy can be used to sense and manipulate the dark energies of entropy, decay and death. Formerly called "Nihilistics," this type of Necromancy is practiced almost exclusively by the now-vanished Nagaraja bloodline. Other necromancers would give much to unearth this Discipline's secrets, for it is a powerful adjunct to the ability to control the Restless. Its true capabilities, however, lie buried with its makers in the realm of the True Black Hand.

BASIC

Eyes of the Dead

Tapping into the flow of death energy, you can see through the eyes of any wraiths who happen to be around you. By examining auras with the ghostly sight of the dead, you can determine relative states of health, decay and injury.



System: You must expend a Mental Trait to use this power. Once activated, you are capable of using a wraith's Deathstare for the remainder of the scene, or until you pull your perceptions back into your own body (your normal sight is co-opted by this power). You see from the wraith's perspective, allowing you to view the decaying architecture of the Underworld. By looking at a person or object, you can determine if the subject is damaged or diseased. You can also see the ebb and flow of baleful magic (curses and binding enchantments).

Hour of Death

Like *Eyes of the Dead*, this power lets you see with the perceptions of a wraith. You can pick out auras using your own vision, and see the telltale marks of death on all things.

System: Activating this power calls for the expenditure of a Mental Trait. Like *Eyes of the Dead*, you can determine injury and disease with this power, simply with your normal sight (instead of borrowing a wraith's vision). You may be able to tell if a subject is about to die — if a character is dying, you may ask a Narrator how long the subject has to live (as determined by the target's remaining Physical Traits). You can also distinguish between different forms of entropy, so you can tell the relative power of various curses and harmful spells.

INTERMEDIATE

Soul Judgment

Tapping into the Beast that resides even in ghosts, you can sense a wraith's dark passions, the emotions that give it strength but also feed its hatred of the living. You can determine whether a wraith is in the thrall of its Beast (called the "Shadow"), allowing you to plan your dealings accordingly. Since many wraiths are unaware of what their Beasts do while in control, this power allows you to bargain with them in ways that may not be immediately apparent.

System: You must expend a Willpower Trait and make a Mental Challenge with the wraith in question in order to determine whether its higher self, or "Psyche," has been overridden by its Shadow. This power also allows you to determine whether the wraith is routinely dominated by its Shadow; such wraiths are called Spectres and are exceedingly dangerous.

Breath of Thanatos

Drawing entropic energy out of your own dead body, you can breathe a fine, invisible mist of death over an area. This energy settles like a seething cloud that attracts the attention of malefic spirits.

System: You must expend a Blood Trait and make a Simple Test (win or tie) to exhale the *Breath of Thanatos*. If successful, you can cause the ghostly cloud to settle over an area around you; Spectres will come to this area, very likely to harass anyone within. Alternately, you may breathe the mist at an individual (requiring a Mental Challenge to direct the gases successfully). In this case, the victim suffers one health level of aggravated damage and is afflicted with the Negative Social Traits: *Repugnant* x2 for the remainder of the evening; the energies give the victim an eerie, pallid aura. Also, such a victim registers as tainted by Oblivion and Wyrms-energies. Multiple uses of this Discipline in the same evening are not cumulative on any one victim.

ADVANCED

Soul Feasting

This puissant power allows you to literally drain the energy of ghosts and the dead, absorbing it for your own purposes. You can then use this energy to fuel your undead powers.


System: You must expend a Willpower Trait to activate this power for the duration of a conflict. You can attack wraiths with your bite, just as if feeding normally. If you manage to bite successfully (with a Physical Challenge), your fangs penetrate into the Underworld and allow you to devour the wraith's energy — each Corpus level (health level) stolen in this fashion gives you one Trait of Entropy. (If you "drink the wraith dry" in this fashion, the unlucky spirit falls into a Destruction Harrowing.) Alternately, you may simply draw entropy from your surroundings, if you are in a cemetery, Haunt or other place of the dead; in this case, you gain one Entropy Trait for each Mental Trait that you expend, up to three Traits total from any given area. These Entropy Traits may then be used to power Disciplines in the place of Blood Traits, although they cannot be used for any other functions common to Blood Traits (such as healing, reviving someone from torpor or improving Physical Traits). Entropy Traits gained with this power last throughout the evening, until spent.

TRUE BRUJAH

I find it most intriguing, really, that more of the Rabble don't know about us. Troile was so proud of his victory over our father, and the younger ones have such a time controlling themselves that it would seem obvious that those of Troile's line would be different. It seems that the self-proclaimed scholars should be able to make the connection easily enough and hypothesize our existence, at least. But the young one I... questioned... had never heard of my brothers and I. He kept insisting (even when I applied white-hot brands to him) that he was a "true Brujah." He honestly did not see the difference between himself and I. But he will learn soon enough, I suppose. He waits now in the hopes that the coming of day will let him escape into brief sleep.... It's of no consequence, ultimately. I have an eternity of night to convince him otherwise. Then I can get back to my real studies.

According to the legends of the Kindred, the Brujah clan hails from the lineage of Troile, an upstart who diablerized the original Brujah Antediluvian. Though Troile stole the ancient's power, he failed to usurp the entirety of the bloodline, and to this day several very old and very cunning descendants of the original Antediluvian are rumored to exist. Following the tradition of scholarship handed down through their bloodline, the survivors' logical minds and keen intellects focused on the acquisition of knowledge and the finer points of philosophy; their calm, rational natures led to a reputation as legendary thinkers and keepers of wisdom. In addition to this wisdom, the True Brujah honed a keen sense of perception, leading them to develop unparalleled political machinations and an uncanny sense of history. Originally founding members of the True Black Hand, the True Brujah — if, indeed, any remain — are said to control the perceptions of time and even, among the eldest, the currents of the ages.

A keen grasp of philosophy makes for a well-honed mind, but not necessarily an understanding or moral one. Indeed, the True Brujah as a whole left behind human morality centuries before. In their quest for knowledge and their search for perfection of the mind, they delved into much forbidden lore. Bent to the purity of developing Platonic ideals, they did not recognize the dangers of consorting with infernalists, and they welcomed rites and sacraments most foul. With the patience of timesight and a drive unfettered by emotions or morality, the True Brujah brought about their own doom at Carthage and other places. Even when forming the True Black Hand, they refused to rectify their errors, and their demonic taint and ties continued to infect them — and still do in modern nights.



Having fled the destruction of their sect, what True Brujah remain would presumably be solitary and independent figures, weighted by powerful blood and centuries of age. Beyond vengeance, petty politics or material concerns, these introspective Cainites have only their shared thirst for knowledge left. If any survive, they are surely ensconced in the furthest corners of the world, studying esoteric works beyond the ken of mankind or younger vampires.

Clan Disciplines: *Potence, Presence, Temporis*

Advantage: True Brujah are exceedingly controlled and unemotional. Devoid of passion, they find it easy to resist the ravages of frenzy, as they are not easily moved to displays of rage or terror. A True Brujah always gains one free test to attempt to avoid frenzy (generally at the standard Trait difficulty), even without expending a Willpower Trait. True Brujah also gain a single retest against powers or Disciplines that would incite frenzy in lesser vampires.

Disadvantage: Because of their detachment and coldness, True Brujah have difficulty holding to moral or philosophical concerns. To them, such abstractions are intellectual exercises, nothing more. True Brujah are likely to gain Beast or Path Traits as a result of their inability to hold to a system of beliefs. Any time that a True Brujah would be called upon to test for a new Beast or Path Trait, the player must make two tests and take the worst result. If a Storyteller decides to assign a new Beast or Path Trait without a test, the player should make one Simple Test; failure indicates that the character gains two Beast or Path Traits instead of just one.

INCLUDING THE TRUE BRUJAH IN YOUR CHRONICLE

Time and contemplation weigh heavily on the True Brujah. Determined to reclaim their stolen destiny from the brood of Troile, they weave convoluted and long-running plots to take revenge for their losses. Though slow to anger, their fury is as boundless as any vampire's when they are roused.

The appearance of a True Brujah is not something publicly bandied about. Indeed, most Kindred are completely unaware of the existence of the bloodline proper. Generally, a True Brujah masquerades as a Ventrue or Lasombra when associating with Camarilla or Sabbat groups, relying on age and experience to dissuade investigation into the truth. After all, with their history at Carthage and their supposed betrayal by Troile, they are quite experienced in deception and hidden warfare.

For the most part, True Brujah are historical scholars, antiquated relics of a bygone age who mull over much philosophy but rarely act. The days of the bloodline's prominence — if, indeed, they ever truly were the basis of the Brujah clan — are long gone, and they now concern themselves with memories of the past. As a result, True Brujah often cloister themselves from all but a few Kindred, seeking memories of their former glory or the sleep of ages. Only a rare few actively involve themselves in the present, and even they are hard pressed to keep up with the constant changes of the frightening modern age. Whether or not the coming Final Nights will rouse the True Brujah to action — or lead to their ultimate destruction — remains to be seen.

Possible ideas for adding True Brujah to a chronicle include:

- With their time senses, True Brujah often have a good idea of important places in the unfolding of history. The ebb and tide of unusual events can draw a True Brujah to investigate.
- With their scholastic knowledge and long history, True Brujah are always in search of new discoveries. When a piece of arcane lore is unearthed in a particular chronicle, a



True Brujah may arrive to find out about it — and possibly to destroy it, if it should be dangerous.

- The fight against Troile and the upstarts of the Brujah line occupies many True Brujah, at least intellectually. In general, the True Brujah are hesitant to move against these foes due to the massive forces that the Rabble could bring to bear against the True bloodline. However, a True Brujah gladly makes efforts to stymie a false Brujah's influence and schemes.

- With the Final Nights encroaching upon the Tal'mahe'Ra from all sides, many members of the sect have been separated from normal channels of communication and protection. A True Brujah could seek out other Black Hand allies, or he could search for a member who has disappeared.

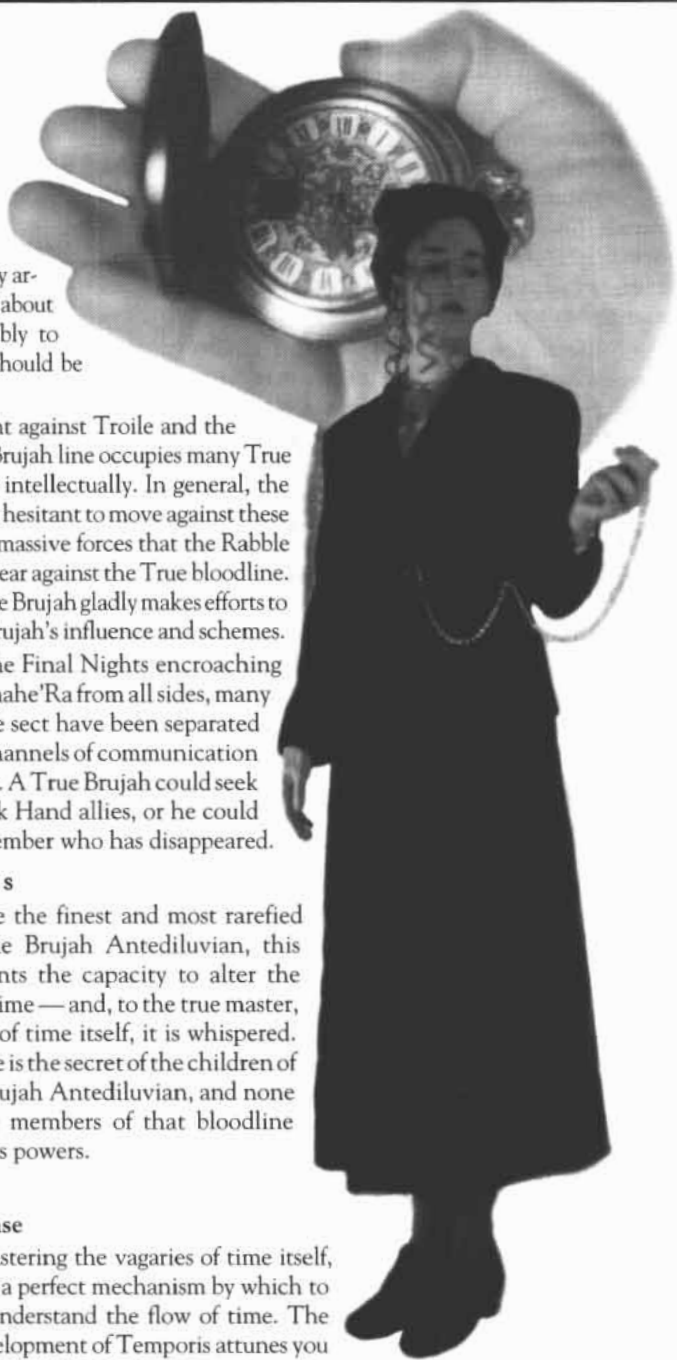
TEMPORIS


Said to be the finest and most rarefied creation of the Brujah Antediluvian, this Discipline grants the capacity to alter the perception of time — and, to the true master, even the flow of time itself, it is whispered. This Discipline is the secret of the children of the original Brujah Antediluvian, and none outside of the members of that bloodline ever learned its powers.

BASIC

Time Sense

Before mastering the vagaries of time itself, one must have a perfect mechanism by which to measure and understand the flow of time. The most basic development of Temporis attunes you to the flow of time; you can keep time with perfect precision. Unnatural eddies in the flow of time are also sensed. Magical alterations of time, or other uses of Temporis, are therefore quite apparent.





System: No challenge or expenditure is necessary to use this Discipline; once a practitioner becomes familiar with the ebb and flow of time, its rhythms are always apparent.

Ramble On

By affecting a subject's sense of the passage of time, you can force the individual to continue performing a particular action. The victim is entranced, carrying on his action long after he intended to stop. An individual taking a walk, for instance, continues walking even after he has overshoot his destination; a victim trying to run away becomes so intent upon fleeing that he keeps trying to run even after he has been captured.

System: You must make a Social Challenge against the target to use this power. Once activated, the subject automatically attempts to repeat the same action performed in the current turn in the next turn. Thus, in the next turn, the victim repeats what he was doing previously, as long as the action is repeatable. A character who picks up a book, for instance, cannot be made to try to pick up the same book once he's already holding it; in the presence of several books, though, he could be made to pick up an additional book.

INTERMEDIATE

Zombie's Curse

Warping a target's perception of time, you can make the victim take longer to do anything. The subject slows down, moving as if smothered in molasses, and he has difficulty reacting to things happening at "normal speed."

System: You must engage in a Social Challenge with your victim in order to affect her perception of time. If successful, the subject is slowed for the next 15 seconds (four turns). A slowed victim may still use weapons and powers, but her actions always come after everyone else's, and she may have difficulty in combat. The slowed target suffers from the Negative Traits: *Clumsy* x2 due to dulled reactions.

Cowalker

Blinking outside of time, you can move briefly between ticks of the clock. A concerted force of will allows you to step beyond the bounds of normal time, so that you are able to act while the world is frozen around you.

System: Expend a Willpower Trait to step between seconds, and you are able to take one action (and only one, without any enhancements from *Celerity* or other powers) between turns. You cannot affect anything else that is frozen in time — thus, you could battle another individual who is also using this power, but you cannot open a door, punch someone or turn on a light. In effect, you are free to move for one turn — generally, to a distance of three steps. However, if you can get out of reach of your opponent or find a suitable hiding place, you may be able to use this power for a Fair Escape. You can also attack from surprise by using this power in combat, at least the first time you "blink."

ADVANCED

Frozen Object

You can literally warp the fabric of time around an object, causing it to exist in a pocket outside the flow of the seconds. Such an object retains any energy or properties that it had when frozen, but it cannot be affected by interactions from the normal time stream. As a result, you can throw a knife and then leave it in mid-air, or halt time for a grenade thrown at you long enough to escape.



System: An object may be frozen for up to 15 seconds (four turns) of normal time. You must decide how long to freeze the object when halting it. Although you do not need to touch the item, you must be able to see it, and it cannot be in the possession of another individual. Therefore, you can freeze a knife, a bomb or a falling object, but unless you have some means of seeing a bullet (such as by stepping outside time with the *Cowalker* power), you cannot affect it. Frozen objects retain their energy but cannot interact with the physical world; thus, a thrown knife resumes flying once this power elapses, but it cannot be plucked from the air while frozen. Activating this Discipline requires the expenditure of one Physical Trait.

MASTER

Control Aging

You can alter the effects of time upon a particular subject. With a touch, you can rapidly speed up, slow down or even reverse the accumulation of time in your target.

System: You must grasp your target physically in order to control time's effects upon it; this may require a Physical Challenge in the case of unwilling subjects. The object can be no larger than roughly man-sized — generally, 500 pounds or so is the upper limit. You must then expend one Physical Trait for each decade that you wish to add to or subtract from the victim's age. Note that vampires altered chronologically with this power do not undergo physical changes (they are immune to the ravages of time), but may suffer supernatural difficulties (such as inability to gain sustenance from the blood of animals or even humans). Once this power is used on a given individual, it may not be used again on the same subject in the same game session.

Domain of Evernight

By dilating the perceived flow of time around yourself, you can make it appear that time has sped up incredibly. Everyone in the area — including you — experiences a highly altered flow of time. This power can be used to great effect when defending a haven, by causing night to come with rapidity or by exposing vampiric foes to daylight.

System: This power affects only a single room at a time. You must win a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty seven Traits) to cause one hour of time to pass in the space of a single turn (about five seconds of real time or so, when not in combat). You must have a Narrator present in order to use this power; all events in the given room are taken "out of location" as the area steps outside of the normal time stream. Those who step into the area are immediately included in the perception-distorting effects. If a room is affected with this power, those inside cannot return to the normal flow of the game until outside time "catches up" with their perceived time frame.

For example, if Laocrines the True Brujah activates this power in a side room at seven o'clock, he can make a Mental Challenge to cause everyone in the area to experience dilated time for an hour (although subjectively the inhabitants of the room experience only a single turn). No one who enters the room or is in the area of effect can leave the room until eight o'clock outside.

Due to the potential disruptiveness of this power (possibly causing several players to wait for an hour or more before returning to play), Storytellers should exercise extreme caution in allowing its use in their games.

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FRONTIER FELINES: PUMONCA FOR WYLD WEST

by Jess Heinig

The Nuwisha and the Corax aren't the only newcomers to Mind's Eye Theatre with the advent of Laws of the Wyld West. Enter the Bastet. Lihe, graceful and utterly ferocious, they embody Gaia's curiosity and sensuality. And of them, the Pumonca best embody the spirit of the American Savage West.

The Pure Lands have been home to these self-sufficient wanderers for millennia. Spread across the plains, swamps and mountains of the frontier, these hardy loners have survived the depredations of the Storm Umbra and the arrival of the Wyrmscomers. Silent killers, sleek hunters and relentless warriors, the Pumonca, the children of Cougar, are the feline cousins of the Native American tribes, and they are dangerous foes to the arrogant European Garou.

Stubborn but hard-working, the Storm Walkers are fearsome protectors of the American heartlands. Bound to the earth in spirit and in fact, they wander across the entire continent, living out the brutal seasons through sheer endurance. Technology and magic alike hold no draw for them; the Pumonca survive upon the merits of their own physical prowess and skills.

Despite their physical resilience and determination, though, the Pumonca fall before the settlers from across the ocean. Without the powerful magics of the European wolves, they cannot combat the Gifts and rituals of the other shifters. As solitary wanderers, they cannot combat the packs that seek to claim territory. It is not until the 1880s that Old Stone Face, a Choctaw shaman, draws the tribe together for a mystical rebirth. From this spiritual awakening, the Pumonca draw once more upon their Gifts, and present a united face to protect their lands from the depredations of Wyrms-creatures and wolves alike.

BASTET BASICS

Bastet characters in *Mind's Eye Theatre* games share many similarities with their wolf cousins — and they use the same format for character creation — but the big cats do have some pointed differences.

- Bastet have and use Rage, Gnosis and Willpower just as Garou do, except as noted otherwise in the following text.
- Each of the Bastet tribes has its own supernatural forms. Unlike the Garou, the different tribes tend to take on different characteristics when shifting, so the Crinos form of a particular Bastet may differ in Traits from the Crinos form of a Garou, or even from that of a Bastet from a different tribe.
- Bastet cannot step sideways naturally. Only through the use of a special Intermediate Gift (*Walking Between Worlds*) — or if they are within their Den-Realm — can they enter the Umbra as do Garou.

- 
- Bastet never have the Backgrounds: *Past Life* or *Totem*.

• A Bastet's initial Rage and Willpower Traits are both based upon her tribe; Bastet do not have Auspices (though they do have *Pyrio* — a representation of their true nature that goes deeper than the standard Nature and Demeanor Archetypes).

• Bastet can regenerate just like Garou. They also take aggravated damage from silver, like Garou, and suffer all of the deleterious effects of that metal listed in **Laws of the Wyld West** — defending with only half Physical Traits, and so on.

• All Bastet have a tendency to shift forms accidentally. Whenever a Bastet player expends a Willpower Trait, she must make a Simple Test. Failure (a loss, but not a tie) indicates that the character shifts forms accidentally, changing one form per turn until the player expends a Mental Trait to stop (or until the scene ends). This shifting generally proceeds from one end of the spectrum to another — a Bastet does not generally shift from Homid to Sokto (the equivalent of Glabro) and then back to Homid.

• Each Bastet tribe has three Yava. The Yava are tribal secrets that may or may not be true. Regardless, these secrets impact the tribe heavily; any outsider who learns these Yava can fight the Bastet more effectively. Each Yava that an individual learns is good for two bonus Traits on all challenges against Bastet of the appropriate tribe. Yava cannot be extracted forcibly from a Bastet with magic; the character must voluntarily decide to give up the secrets. Bastet cubs who do not show the wisdom necessary to guard the tribal secrets are simply never taught any Yava.

• Just as the Garou have their own tongue, the Bastet speak *Kheuar* (“kew-arr”), their own inter-tribal language. *Kheuar* is usable in all forms, though complex messages require Homid or Feline form.

• The Bastet's keen sense of smell, combined with their vibratory sensitivity derived from their whiskers, allow them to claim the benefits of *Heightened Senses* for the purposes of negating penalties of darkness — that is, a Bastet usually suffers only one penalty Trait in darkness, whereas most creatures incur a two-Trait penalty. This sense does not function in Homid form and does not allow the Bastet to detect supernaturally hidden creatures (like *Obfuscated* vampires).

- Bastet heal and regenerate just like Garou.

• Bastet have some special Gifts and Backgrounds available, as shown below.

• Bastet have homid, metis and feline breeds, corresponding roughly to the homid, metis and lupus breeds of the Garou. These breeds function in exactly the same fashion as for Garou, *except* that all Bastet start with one additional Trait of Gnosis due to their innate spirituality. Also, the starting Gifts available by breed are:

Homid: *Cat Claws, Sweet Hunter's Smile*

Metis: *Create Element, Sense Primal Nature*

Feline: *Mark as Mine, Kitten's Cry*

• Since Bastet do not have Auspices, they don't start with an Auspice Gift. Instead, they start with one Breed Gift and one Tribe Gift, as well as a General Gift.

PYRIO

Bastet *Pyrio* are mainly roleplaying tools, as they reflect the Bastet's true nature, beneath even the Nature and Demeanor Archetypes. This is not to say that a Bastet's *Pyrio* must be different than his Nature or Demeanor (some Bastet are straightforward and honest about the face they show the world), but these different levels of identity



often surface in how individual Bastet deal with different facets of their existence. The time of day at which a Bastet undergoes her First Change roughly determines her Pyrio, though the characteristic is certainly not set in stone.

In game terms, Pyrio serve little function outside of being roleplaying guides. However, Storytellers can choose to allow players to regain Willpower Traits for portraying a character's Pyrio through exceptional roleplaying.

The three standard Pyrio for Bastet include:

Daylight: Daylight Bastet are clear and direct, welcoming all with an open heart.

Twilight: Twilight Bastet have a tendency (some would say a knack) for obscuring issues and looking at things from all sides. These cats are more attuned to and interested in the worlds of magic and artistic expression.

Night: Bastet with the Pyrio of Night are secretive and reclusive. Short tempered, though withdrawn, these werecats value their privacy and the ability to conduct their own business without being disturbed.

BASTET RANK AND RENOWN

Among the cats, secrets and rumors are stock in trade — and so, too, are tales of cunning and bravery. Though the Bastet have a much looser society than do the Garou (there are far fewer of the cats), they pass stories when they meet, and they spread tales of Renown. As an individual Bastet performs deeds of great accomplishment (or venality), her reputation spreads among other cats, to be recognized at *taghairms* (moots).

Just like Garou, Bastet measure Renown as a means of awarding Rank and status. However, because Bastet are solitary creatures, they rarely have the opportunity to meet in groups to pass on their stories. Similarly, each Bastet is measured on individual accomplishments, so none can judge when it is time for another to rise. As a result, Bastet gain Renown much like the Garou, but they may gain Rank only by petitioning a spirit. Additionally, the fractious nature of Bastet society makes renunciation of Renown a rather moot point.

Bastet use the Renown of *Cleanness*, *Ferocity* and *Honor*. These distinctions correspond roughly to the Garou Renown of *Wisdom*, *Glory* and *Honor*, respectively. The same Trait descriptions can generally be applied, and a Bastet gains or loses Renown for actions similar to those that affect a Garou, though Bastet are more likely to gain or lose Renown for personal deeds rather than for quests and services.

Without Auspices, Bastet gain Ranks as a function of total permanent Renown Traits, as shown in the accompanying table. Improvements in Rank allow a Bastet to increase her Traits, just as for a Garou (see *Laws of the Wild*, pages 177-182).

BASTET RANKS		
Rank	Title	Renown
1	Tekhmet	3
2	Aka	10
3	Tilau	15
4	Ilani	20
5	Bon Bhat	25



BASTET BACKGROUNDS

With their special heritage, Bastet have access to some Backgrounds that are simply unknown to the Garou. In addition to many of the Backgrounds described in *Laws of the Wyld West*, a Bastet can choose from *Den-Realm*, *Jamak* and *Trinket*.

DEN-REALM

A *Den-Realm* is an area of territory marked and claimed by a Bastet. Within a *Den-Realm*, you can Step Sideways (subject to the normal limitations imposed upon Garou, but without a reflective surface), you can peek into or out of the Umbra (just like a Garou Peeking), you can sense disasters and attacks, and you can “skip” from one point in the realm to another instantly at a cost of one Gnosis (but only once per scene). Also, you can always find your *Den-Realm*, no matter where you are; and by touch, you can take people with you into the Umbra if you step sideways (if the subject is willing).

The number of Traits expended for the Background determines the size of the *Den-Realm*.

One Trait: A small house.

Two Traits: A large manor.

Three Traits: A full block, about five square miles.

Four Traits: Two square blocks; about 10 square miles.

Five Traits: Five square blocks; about 20 square miles.

Storytellers can choose to limit use of this Background, since it can give a Bastet large amounts of control over much of a game area. Also, characters may be required to perform a special Rite or quest to secure a *Den-Realm*, instead of simply purchasing one at the outset of play.

JAMAK

Unlike Garou, who run in packs and take totem spirits as patrons for their packs, Bastet are individuals who deal with spirits on a one-to-one basis. A Bastet with this Background picks a totem spirit, as usual, but applies it like a personal totem: It works for the Bastet only. Also, since cats are by nature independent, the Bastet and the totem may “part ways” and the player can then trade the levels in this Background to gain a new and different *Jamak* at a later date (although this certainly requires a quest or story relating to the discovery and bonding of a new spiritual mentor). Generally, a *Jamak* is a small, Gaffling-level incarnation of a larger spirit, and so each *Jamak* has its own personal name, instead of simply being “Bear” or “Unicorn.”

Buying a *Jamak* is just like purchasing the *Totem* Background, but the player must pay all of the associated points himself.

TRINKET

Bastet tend to pick up curious or shiny items. With this Background, your character has discovered something with magical powers. This could be a magical Talisman or a spiritual Fetish; whatever the case, its full powers and potencies are determined by the Storyteller. Since Bastet often dabble in magics unknown to the Garou, it's possible for the object to have some startling powers unknown for most Fetishes.



Purchasing a Trinket is much like purchasing the Fetish Background, but the Storyteller can choose to give the object sorcerous powers or other abilities normally outside the realm of spirits. A Bastet could have a Talisman that enchants people, shoots fire, summons rats... just about anything, subject to Storyteller approval.

SORCERY AND MAGIC

Intensely mystical creatures, Bastet find that they can sometimes learn sorcery and wizardry practiced by mortals. It's unusual and taxing, but it does happen.

The Pumonca are particularly unlikely to ever develop sorcery — it's simply an area of power for which they have no inclination. Should a Bastet unearth the means and motives to develop sorcerous powers, though, the player may purchase sorcery paths from **Laws of the Hunt**. Of course, such purchases are subject to the usual rules for shifters and outsiders learning sorcery: The player must expend 33% more Experience Traits on all purchases (four Traits for Basic levels, eight for Intermediate, 12 for Advanced). Nobody said that learning the hidden mysteries was *easy*...

BASTET BREED GIFTS

HOMID GIFTS

Basic

- **Cat Claws:** You are able to unsheathe your claws even in Homid or Sokto forms. Doing so costs one Physical Trait; the claws remain usable for the remainder of the scene, or until you re-sheathe them. In all respects, these claws are used normally, inflicting aggravated wounds. However, they are uncomfortable and look quite unusual in Homid and Sokto forms, and thus cause you to suffer the Negative Physical Trait: *Painful*.

- **Eavesdropper's Ear:** Your sensitive ears are privy to whispers and distant conversations. With the expenditure of a Mental Trait, you are able to listen in on distant or quiet conversations (cup your hand next to your ear to indicate use of this Gift). This Gift lasts for the duration of the scene, and may cause you problems if you suddenly find yourself exposed to loud noises.

- **Jam Gun:** This functions just like the Garou Gift of the same name in *Laws of the Wyld West*.


- **Sweet Hunter's Smile:** You can win people over to your side quickly with your cat-like charms. By expending a level of the *Primal Urge* Ability, you gain the additional Social Traits: *Magnetic* x2 or *Intimidating* x2 (your choice). These Traits can be used up just like any other Social Trait.

Intermediate

- **Babel's Cure:** You can translate any language into an understandable form or into unintelligible gibberish. You must expend a Social Trait to activate this Gift, which then works on any language (even written ones). Everyone within 50 feet (generally, within the same room) is affected; you can choose to cause everyone to be comprehensible or to make all communication worthless for one turn.

- **Craft of the Maker:** See the Gift: *Reshape Object*, in *Laws of the Wild*, page 93.

- **Monkey's Uncle:** The shifting nature of your forms allows you to alter your human appearance. You can change your Homid form to look like any sort of human. You must expend a Social Trait in order to use this Gift; you then assume any human appearance desired. You should wear a special card to indicate this



change, and beings with supernatural senses may attempt to detect your change (though they cannot see your true form) by making a Mental Challenge against you.

Advanced

- **Deny the Hungry:** A simple gesture allows you to destroy food, drink and arable land. You render any comestibles completely toxic and spoiled.

You must expend a permanent Rage Trait to invoke this Gift; you then completely destroy the value of a quantity of water up to the size of a small lake, the arability of a square mile of land, or the nutritional value of a full ton of food. Spoiled food is rendered rotten forever, but plagued water and land remain barren for a full year before returning to a clean and usable state (through the bounty of Gaia's renewal). Note that Bastet using this Gift cannot reverse it, and they suffer the depredations of its effects; Bastet can be poisoned by spoiled supplies just like anyone else.

METIS GIFTS

Basic

- **Blinding Moonbeam Gaze:** Cat's eyes reflect moonlight, and your eyes are no exception. You can cause bright beams of moonlight to emit from your eyes. You must win or tie a Simple Test to activate this Gift; then, your eyes generate beams of moonlight allowing you to see in the dark or startle opponents for one turn. With a Physical Challenge, you can blind an opponent, causing him to suffer penalties for fighting blinded (two-Trait penalty and an automatic single retest on any successful challenge) for a turn.

- **Create Element:** See *Laws of the Wild*, page 94.

- **Sense Primal Nature:** Like Gifts that allow the Changing Breeds to sense the presence of the Wurm, Bastet Gifts enable them to detect the touch of Rahjah, Nala or Cahlash (Weaver, Wyld or Wurm, respectively). See *Sense Wurm*, in *Laws of the Wild* on page 94, but a Bastet can sense whether a particular object, place or creature has an affinity for any one of the three members of the Triad. If a test is called for, the difficulty is one Trait higher than usual due to this Gift's less discerning nature.

- **Whisker Sight:** By attuning your senses to the gentle vibrations detected by your whiskers, you can feel out your surroundings even when unable to see. You must expend one Mental Trait. You gain total perception of everything within 10 feet of you. This even lets you make a Mental Challenge to notice hidden or invisible objects, although insubstantial creatures or things (like wraiths) remain beyond your perceptions. This sense removes all penalties for fighting in darkness, and lasts for a scene.

Intermediate

- **Fist of Cahlash:** Your snarl of anger smites matter and wounds foes. With the expenditure of a Rage Trait and a feral growl, you can make a test of your permanent Rage against a difficulty of six Traits (for inanimate objects) or eight Traits (for creatures). If you succeed, your target is destroyed (if an object of 10 pounds weight or less) or suffers one Health level of aggravated damage (if a creature). This Gift has no effect on spirits or ghosts of any kind.

- **Moon's Gateway:** With the blessing of the moon at night (only), you can open a Moon Bridge briefly. The gateway takes the form of a swirl of silvery fog, and any traveler hoping to use it must step in before it disperses. You must expend one



Gnosis Trait to create the gateway, and make a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty dependent upon your familiarity with the destination — five Traits for your own home, 20 or more for an unknown place or otherworldly Realm. You may travel up to 100 miles for each Gnosis Trait expended in the formation of the gate. Failure to form the gate properly causes it to not function at all.

- **Redeem the Waste:** You can call upon the healing power of Gaia to renew areas that have been defiled. By sniffing about and attuning yourself to the land, you lend it some of your own healing strength. You must expend one Gnosis Trait and make a Simple Test. If you win or tie, you manage to cause one square half-mile of despoiled land to begin healing. Barren lands become fertile and plague-ridden plants grow again. This removes any sort of taint or poisons, curing the land permanently unless it is despoiled again at a later time.

- **Spirit-Touch:** You can lash out with your claws and strike across the Gauntlet! With the *Spirit-Touch* Gift, you may touch or strike beings on the other side of the Gauntlet — so you can remain in the physical world while attacking a victim in the Umbra, for example. To do so, you must first win or tie a Simple Test and then make your normal challenge. This power allows you to attack spirits or Umbral enemies, or to strike from the Umbra at your foes in the material world.

Advanced

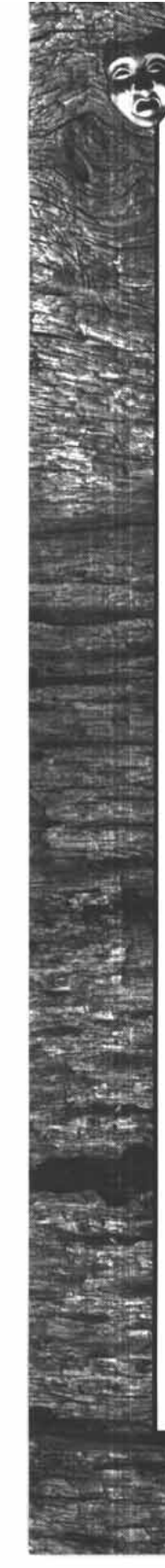
- **Moon Sense:** You can extend your senses to view distant places as with the extrasensory powers of *Clairvoyance* and *Auspex*. Anything under the light of the moon can be seen as you gaze into a pool of still water. You must expend a Gnosis Trait to activate this power, and then make a Static Mental Challenge with a difficulty dependent upon the range — six Traits for a nearby and familiar locale, up to 20 Traits for a distant, alien location. Each additional minute of viewing costs another Gnosis Trait. To represent this Gift, you need the assistance of a Narrator; generally, the Narrator should remain at your physical location (so that you can be discovered) while you go and spy on the remote place. Of course, using this Gift simply entails looking into a pool of water, so you can react if you are discovered or attacked by someone at your “actual” physical location. Individuals with *Auspex* or other supernatural sensory powers may try to detect your scrying with a single Mental Challenge; if successful, they become aware of your viewing and the Gift’s effects end instantly.

- **Wrath of Nala:** Calling upon the howling winds of the four corners of Gaia, you whip up a terrible storm. You must expend a Gnosis Trait and three Social Traits. Within a few seconds (a turn at most), a terrifyingly potent storm rises, whipping about the area and causing all manner of difficulty. Storytellers may assign various Trait penalties to actions as a result of the storm — ranged combat is difficult, flight is impossible, and sensory powers are largely overwhelmed. This storm lasts for the duration of a challenge (about five minutes or less).

FELINE GIFTS

Basic

- **Kitten’s Cry:** Mewling like a helpless kitten, you can cause your opponents to stop their attacks, or to draw people to take pity upon you. You must engage in a Social Challenge with your victim while mewling piteously. If you succeed, your opponent stops attacking you (although he may resume if you then take the opportunity to counterstrike), or your target feels disposed to assist you (with



healing Gifts, the assistance of Influence, or just some kind words). This Gift does not endear you to those who take joy in harming the weak — Wyrms-creatures and other tainted souls simply redouble their ferocity.

- **Mark as Mine:** Treating an object or area with musk allows you to mark your territory and objects. Any shapeshifter automatically recognizes the mark as the sign of a werecat, while other supernatural creatures are aware that some sort of forbidding sign or warding (“Keep Out!”) has been placed. You must expend a Gnosis Trait in order to use this Gift on any one object or location; you may remove the mark by using the same Gift a second time, and creatures with supernatural perceptions may be able to see and remove the Gift with their own powers (at the Storyteller’s discretion). This Gift does work on creatures, but does not harm them in any way.

- **Perfect Cover:** Making mystic scratches and markings around a place or object, you can conceal it from discovery. You must expend a Gnosis Trait and make a Simple Test (win or tie). If you succeed, the object or place is hidden completely from mortal perceptions, and even paranormal senses have trouble picking it out (add two Traits to sensory difficulties). This Gift can be used only on a person, place or thing that is already at least partially concealed — in shadows, among rubbish, half-buried, in a pile of leaves and bushes. You may use this Gift to hide yourself.

Intermediate

- **Ghosts at Play:** Spraying musk around an area, you can expose spirits and ghosts. You must make a Static Social Challenge (difficulty of the local Gauntlet). If you succeed, all spirits and ghosts in the area (within 10 feet) become visible for a turn.

- **Hand of Will:** The powers of the willful mind extend beyond the barriers of the physical world. With your penetrating gaze, you can telekinetically move objects that you can see. Expend a Gnosis Trait and a Willpower Trait; you can then move things at range. Each permanent Willpower Trait that you possess grants the equivalent of three Physical Traits’ worth of lifting power at range, although you cannot actually hit, crush or manipulate things. This telekinetic push can be exerted for one turn; each additional turn of telekinesis requires the expenditure of a Willpower Trait.

- **Underbelly:** With your keen perceptions, you can spot the weak points on a given foe. You must make a Mental Challenge against your subject (difficulty determined by the Storyteller for objects). If you succeed, you may make a Simple Test as a follow-up to your next successful strike; on a win, you score an additional level of damage. Using this Gift against mystic protection requires the expenditure of a Gnosis Trait, and the Gift doesn’t work on spirits of any kind.

- **Whisker Sight:** As per the Basic Metis Gift of the same name.

Advanced

- **Judgment of Pestilence:** Calling upon the boons of Mother Cat and the natural winds, you can pull the ravages of disease to or away from a particular location. You must expend a Gnosis Trait and make a Simple Test to absorb a disease from a particular location. If you succeed (win or tie on the test), you can then carry the disease, unharmed, to another location, there to release it. If you fail, or if you carry the disease for more than a single night or day (at the next sunrise or sunset), you are overwhelmed by the toxins and die immediately.



GENERAL GIFTS

(Note: These Gifts are all Basic Level. A player may choose one of these Gifts at character creation.)

- **Banish Sickness:** By spending a Trait of the *Medicine* Ability and winning a Simple Test, a Bastet can purge a subject's body of illness, disease or venom. Particularly virulent diseases require an expenditure of from one to three Gnosis Traits depending on severity. Some illnesses (such as cancer or leprosy) may even be incurable.

- **Catfeet:** As the Basic Lupus Gift in *Laws of the Wild*, page 97.

- **Command Attention:** By entering a room and making a number of Simple Tests with a Narrator equal to the number of Social Traits he has, a Bastet may draw on his innate sensuality and feline presence to get the attention of everyone inside. Activating the Gift requires at least one victory (not a tie) on the Simple Tests, and if successful, the Bastet draws the immediate attention of everyone in the room as he enters. He also gains a Bonus Social Trait (dependent on what effect the Bastet was hoping for when he entered the room) for every Simple Test he wins, for use in the next Social Challenge. This Bonus applies only once upon entering the room, and each Bonus Trait won must be the same.

- **Dowsing:** By pawing and sniffing around (i.e., making a Mental Challenge), a Bastet can locate nearby water sources and determine whether or not said water is safe to drink. The difficulty of this challenge is based on how far away the source is (it must be within 100 feet) and how much water is present.

- **Lick Wounds:** As the Basic Theurge Gift: *Mother's Touch*. However, a Bastet can use this Gift to heal herself, and she can use the Gift as many times as she wants (at the cost of one Gnosis Trait per "lick").

- **Open Seal:** As the Basic Ragabash Gift.

- **Pathfinder's Pride:** By succeeding in a Mental Challenge against a difficulty based on the complexity of the surrounding terrain, a Bastet can improve his better-than-average sense of direction. Using this Gift, a Bastet can navigate a maze, tramp out of a tropical rain forest or work his way out of a bustling city. Keep in mind, however, that this Gift only shows the Bastet a way out; getting there is up the werecat.

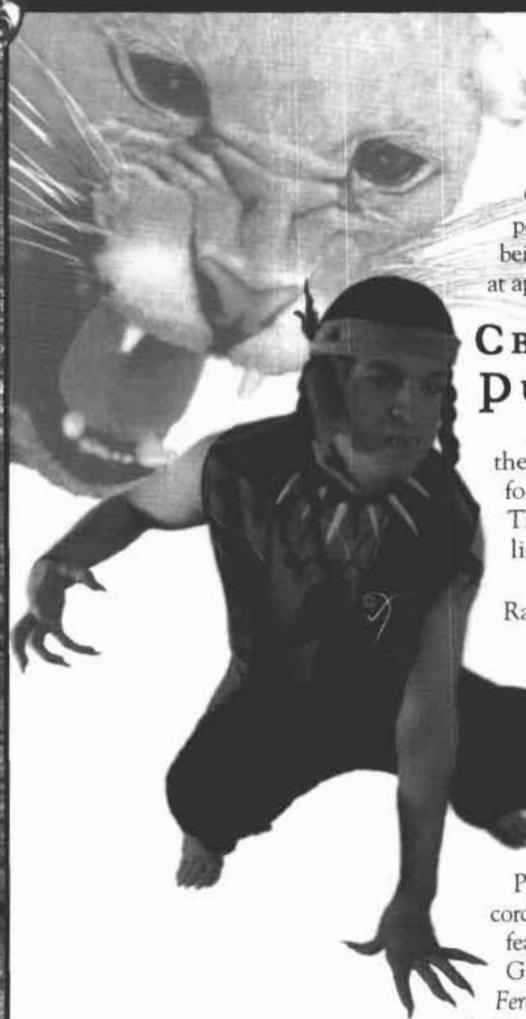
- **Razor Claws:** As the Basic Ahroun Gift.

- **Sense the Truth:** As the Basic Philodox Gift: *Truth of Gaia*.

- **Sense Unmaker's Hand:** As the Basic Metis Gift: *Sense Wynn*.

- **Silent Stalking:** Calling on their innate stealth and predatory nature (and winning a Physical Challenge against five Traits), the Bastet can stifle all sounds of her passing, no matter what surface she crosses. Gravel does not crunch beneath her boots, snapping twigs do not betray her and creaking boards remain silent beneath her. This Gift does not, however, conceal the Bastet in any way other than to stifle the sounds she makes.

- **Spirit's Sight:** By spending one Gnosis Trait and winning a Simple Test, a Bastet can peer across the Gauntlet. She cannot breach the barrier physically, but using this Gift is an excellent way to gather information. This Gift lasts for one scene or until the Bastet is knocked unconscious.



- **Treeclimber:** By extending and sharpening her claws, a Bastet can climb nearly any vertical surface. Activating the Gift requires a victory in a Physical Challenge against a difficulty dependent on the nature of the surface being climbed, and the character moves at approximately 10 feet per turn.

CREATING A PUMONCA

As one of the nine tribes of Bastet, the Pumonca follow all of the rules for Bastet characters shown above. They have their own tribal peculiarities as follows:

- A Pumonca starts with two Rage Traits and two Willpower Traits.
- Beginning Gifts may be *Mockingbird's Mirror* or *Wanderer's Boon*.
- The Pumonca gain different Traits in their different forms than Garou do. A Pumonca's Homid form is similar to a Garou's, though most Pumonca have lean bodies, whipcord muscles and predictably catlike features. In Sokto form (equivalent to Glabro), the Pumonca gains the Traits: *Ferocious*, *Quick* and *Tough*, but suffers the Negative Social Trait: *Bestial*. In Crinos

form, the Pumonca gains the Traits: *Brawny*, *Ferocious* x2, *Nimble*, *Quick* x2, *Robust*, *Relentless* and *Tough* x2, but suffers the Negative Social Traits: *Bestial* x2 and *Tactless*. In Chatro (great cat) form, the Pumonca gains *Ferocious* x2, *Quick* x2 and *Relentless* x2, but takes the Negative Traits: *Bestial* x2 and *Shortsighted*. In Feline (cougar) form, the Pumonca gains *Quick* x2 and *Tireless* x2, but suffers from *Bestial*.

PUMONCA YAVA

- A Pumonca is one with her land; if she leaves it for more than a full lunar cycle, she dies.
- The essence of poisoned land (toxic waste, radiation, sewage) is deadly to a puma. Immerse him in its toxins, and he will perish quickly.
- All beasts fear the puma. No horse will bear him, no dog will follow him. The great cats are his kin and they befriend him, but no other animal can approach without terror.



PUMONCA TRIBAL GIFTS

Basic

• **Mockingbird's Mirror:** The simple trick of mimicry allows the Pumonca to throw his voice anywhere, and to even imitate various sounds: people, machines, animals. This Gift allows you to mimic sounds for the duration of the scene; to fool someone, you must succeed in a Social Challenge. If you attempt to mimic a sound outside of your normal vocal range, you must also spend one Gnosis Trait.

• **Raincalling:** Calling upon beneficent winds and storms, you can draw out rain for crops or cool off on a hot day. Expend one Gnosis Trait and engage in a Static Social Challenge (six-Trait difficulty for a blustery, cloudy day; 15 Traits for clear, cloudless and utterly dry weather). If you succeed, a small pocket of clouds forms and a shower comes down for about 10 minutes (one conflict). This does not cause any injury, but can put out some fires and cool off characters.

• **Stonework:** As per the Garou Gift: *Reshape Object*, in **Laws of the Wild**, page 93, except that it works on only stone, dirt or clay, and the effects are permanent.

• **Wanderer's Boon:** This Gift is a necessity for the long-traveling Pumonca. The hardened traveler ignores seasons, climate, hunger and thirst. With the expenditure of a Willpower Trait, you may ignore all of the negative effects of hunger, thirst or temperature (choose one) for the entire session.

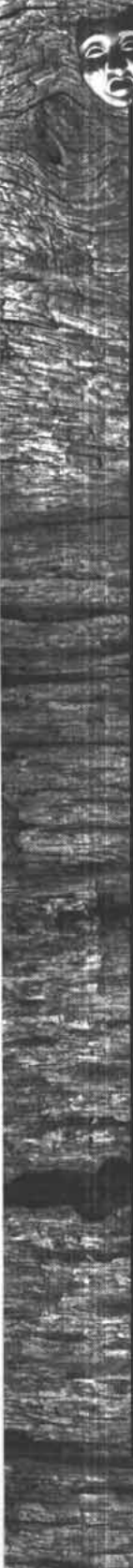
Intermediate

• **Bayou Shambler:** The swamps of the Southern wetlands are home to many and mysterious legends, and a proper swamp cat knows them all. You can call out a swamp elemental, a conglomeration of plants, oozes and vines, by crooning to the proper spirits in swampland. You must spend a Rage Trait and a Gnosis Trait (probably in successive turns, since they may not be spent in the same turn), and make a Simple Test. If you win or tie, you summon a foul-smelling morass of animate swampy matter that is probably favorably inclined toward you. A swamp elemental has the Traits *Brawny* x2, *Rugged* x2, *Tireless* x2 and *Tough* x2, a normal health level chart (although it suffers no penalties from wounds), and one level of each of *Brawl* and *Stealth* Abilities. The swamp creature remains for up to five turns.

• **Element-Folk Favor:** With the expenditure of a Gnosis Trait and a successful Social Challenge (difficulty of the Gauntlet), you can summon up an elemental spirit for aid. See the elemental spirits in **Laws of the Wild**, under *Elemental Gift*, page 97. Only Pumonca can use this Gift; anyone else trying is destroyed by angry elementals. The elemental remains for one scene, one hour or one task (whichever comes first).

• **The Hungry Earth:** Rousing the ire of Mother Gaia, the Pumonca causes the earth to tremble and crack. You must expend a Rage Trait and make a Social Challenge with a difficulty equal to *twice* the area's Gauntlet. If you succeed, a natural disaster befalls everyone within 100 feet — swamps beget quicksand, mountains suffer rock slides, snowcaps suffer avalanches, deserts and plains crack open and swallow offenders. Everyone in the area takes one health level of damage automatically (so this Gift probably injures just about everyone in play).

• **Thunderbolt:** From a pact with Thunderbird, you can call a stroke of the storm out of the sky! Any cloud, however small, can serve as a source for this power. Spend a Rage Trait and make a Physical Challenge to hit the target; success causes



the victim to be struck by lightning, scoring one level of aggravated damage for every two Traits of permanent Gnosis that you possess (round down).

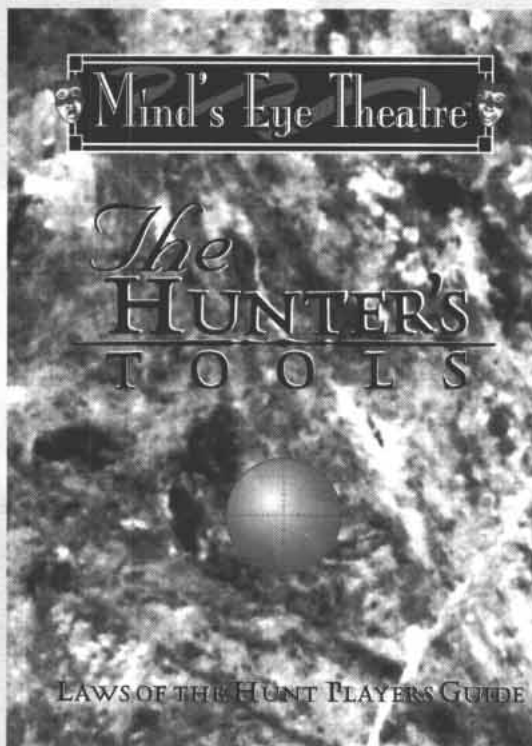
Advanced

- **Earthspeaking:** Whispering to the rocks in their own tongue, you can discern what has passed on the earth before. The spirits respond to a single paean. You must expend a Mental Trait to see into the past; you gain a vision or impression of events that happened there before, much like the vampiric power of *Spirit's Touch* or mortal *Psychometry*. However, your vision is quite vivid and includes many components of sight and sound, not just emotional sensation. Ask a Narrator for details; cats who use this Gift too often may find themselves subject to unwanted emotional problems or Derangements from the recurring intensity of past events.

- **Thunderbird's Cry:** As per the Metis Bastet Gift: *Wrath of Nala*.



More Than Human



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May 1999



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"MASTER-LEVEL" THAUMATURGY RITUALS

by Charles Bailey

A question arose in the *Frequently Asked Questions* section of this issue of the *Journal* about Master-Level Thaumaturgy rituals. "What sorts of secret sorceries are available," many have wondered, "to those vampires who have dedicated their unives to attaining undisputed mastery over the secrets of Thaumaturgy?" Far from being inclusive, the following list should give you a fair idea of where to start.

The rituals of "Master-Level" Thaumaturgy present some of the most arcane and confidential secrets of the Tremere, as opposed to a next step higher along any particular Thaumaturgy path. These rituals are taught to only the most trusted of the clan, and those who possess these secrets are watched to ensure that said secrets do not find their way to outsiders.

For a player to purchase these rituals, the character must be of at least seventh generation and of exceptional standing with House and Clan Tremere. The cost is the same as for any Master-Level Discipline, however this level of Thaumaturgy does not impart any additional powers; it simply allows the character to learn these closely guarded rituals.

We recommend that Storytellers require characters to pursue research into these rituals in-game (through the use of Influences and Abilities) to represent the rarity of this class of blood magic. Each ritual requires a rare component that should be gained through roleplaying; it is doubtful that your local Chantry would have, say, a Lupine skin lying around.

RAISE THE DEAD

Johnny Dasko had just sunk his fangs into the prostitute's neck when a hand came down on his shoulder from behind. "Always when I'm feeding," he thought. He took a quick gulp then pulled his head back, still keeping a grip on the whore's hair. "This better be good."

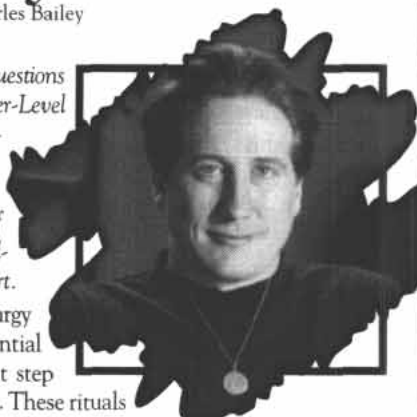
"Lord Asteron requests your presence," the figure behind him stated. "Come with me."

Johnny was about to slam-dunk the weirdo into a nearby dumpster, but the name it invoked gave him pause. Asteron was one of the old Warlocks his sire was always muttering about. The figure stepped forward, and Johnny saw a symbol carved or tattooed on its forehead — that and the fact that most of the "man's" hair was either white or gone, and that its eyes had sunk deeply beneath its dolorous brow. "Hurry. After this task, I am to be released from this bondage."

Johnny nodded and let the whore fall to her knees on the alley floor. He didn't like the Tremere, but he understood one thing... freedom. If his going with this walking corpse meant its release, he was all for it.

This ritual allows the thaumaturge to resurrect a dead body. The corpse is not truly the same person brought back from the dead; the body merely acts as the host for a spirit that the thaumaturge coerces into inhabiting the corpse.

This existence is torturous for the spirit in question, and most spirits seek release from the bondage. Unfortunately, there is no way for the spirit to become free unless the thaumaturge lifts the enchantment, or the body decomposes. The





Warlock most likely uses this fact as a bargaining tool to get the spirit to do his bidding. However, the spirit retains its free will and it can act as it wishes.

Requirements

The thaumaturge must have a cadaver with flesh still on the bones — the fresher the corpse, the longer the ritual holds the spirit. If the caster wishes the corpse to interact with the outside world, it is recommended that the body be less than a week old.

He must brand a symbol that translates as “debtor” on the corpse's forehead, and must pour the wax from a black candle over the heart and throat of the subject. The wax is the symbol that initially binds the spirit into the corpse. The room in which this ritual is performed must be completely devoid of light with the exception of the black candle used. The entirety of the ritual must also be conducted in a salt circle with a diameter equal to the length of the body, from head to toe.

System

The casting character should possess either *Spirit Eyes* (Basic Spirit Thaumaturgy) or *Spirit Slave* (Intermediate Spirit Thaumaturgy) before purchasing this ritual, as either allows the character to interact with the spirits necessary.

The character must defeat the spirit in a Static Mental Challenge versus 14 Traits to successfully coerce the spirit to enter the corpse. Once the spirit is bound into the cadaver, the thaumaturge has no firm control over the actions of the corpse, other than what is gained through roleplaying.

The corpse's initial Physical/Mental/Social Traits should be determined by the Storyteller after the ritual is completed. The corpse possesses the same number of health levels as a regular character. These levels can be lost to damage other than decomposition, and cannot be healed back. However, the corpse is not subject to wound penalties.

At the beginning of each game session, the thaumaturge player must engage in a Static Physical Challenge versus 12 Traits. If the player loses, the corpse loses a health level due to decomposition.

Once the corpse loses all of its health levels, the spirit is released and the ritual effect is ended.

The corpse of a vampire who has suffered Final Death cannot be used in this ritual.

RITUAL OF HOLDING

It wasn't easy, but Yusef had finally located his target. Carvel had been missing almost half the night, but Yusef had not yet given up. And now he had found him, not two blocks from the target's despicable "Chantry." Yusef had waited long for the chance to spill a Tremere's blood, and now would be his chance.

Stealing from his hiding place in the shadows of a two-story parking deck, Yusef crept up on Carvel unawares. In a burst of speed that scattered litter and dust in its wake, Yusef swept Carvel into a darkened alley across the street from where he stood. The Tremere fought briefly, but Yusef tackled him to the ground, blanketed the area in a heavy cloak of silence and pinned the vampire down with a knee on each of Carvel's slim elbows. Mouthing the words, "Welcome the sun," he pulled two wooden stakes from beneath his plain wool jacket. As per his orders, he would leave the Tremere paralyzed until the sun rose overhead. Yet, the Tremere seemed more surprised than afraid or worried.

Without even a shrug, Yusef plunged the first of his two stakes into the Tremere's chest. Unsurprisingly, the shaft exploded into harmless chips when it touched Carvel's skin. Yusef had been warned that many Tremere knew a ritual that protected them from



a single stake, and he had come prepared. Smiling, he brought the second stake down where the first had disintegrated. Let the Tremere choke on his proud faith in his rituals.

Amazingly, the second shaft went the way of the first. Yusef's fingers closed on air, and he faltered in shock. The hesitation was all Carvel needed. In an instant, Yusef found himself pinned. Carvel put a hand over Yusef's heart and mouthed the words, "Welcome the Devil." A moment later, Carvel's eyes danced as his hand erupted in flames.

This ritual enhances the effects of other rituals. The effects of this enhancement differ according to the type of ritual with which it is used.

Requirements

Performing this ritual adds six hours to the casting time of its partner ritual.

The material component of the Ritual of Holding is a solid-gold sphere. After completion of the initial ritual, the thaumaturge immerses the sphere in two points of his blood and spends six hours chanting over the sphere. After that time, the sphere absorbs the blood and the second ritual is considered complete.

Only one ritual may be extended by a given casting of the Ritual of Holding

System

To represent the concentration required for this ritual, the character must engage in a Static Mental Challenge against 14 Traits. If she loses, the Ritual of Holding fails and there is no change to the original ritual.

The benefit of the Ritual of Holding is specific to the ritual with which it is used. The player may suggest the effect that she wishes to achieve, but the Storyteller is the final authority as to what actually happens. Some suggested effects include:

Blood Walk: Extends the reach of the ritual to the progeny of the target, or to those whose blood the target has tasted.

Engaging the Vessel of Transference: Exchanges only one Blood Trait for every two taken.

Shaft of Belated Quiescence: Makes it impossible for Cleansing of the Flesh to remove the shaft.

Once the effect of the ritual is decided, the Storyteller should fill out a card detailing the results, and give it to the player.

The player and Storyteller should discuss the effect that Holding has, and they should conduct any tests involved in advance of the ritual. Doing so allows the character to perform the ritual during downtime rather than miss an entire game session.

UTTER DESTRUCTION OF BONDS

Here I am, locked in the back seat of a car, in the middle of the junkyard outside of town, with less than 20 minutes before dawn. I've tried all the doors, but they seem to be welded shut from the outside. On top of that, I'm too weak to break through any of the bullet-proof windows. I guess the prince was serious, after all.

There's garbage everywhere. If I could just get out of this metal prison, I could burrow under it and sleep in relative safety. As it stands, I've got only a few minutes before Apollo's chariot breaks the horizon and fries me alive.

But I'm calm.... I've been in tighter spots. I clear my mind and start chanting. The incantation is long and complex, which is a pain since I'm getting drowsy and I'm almost sweating blood. But the hardest part comes last.... I don't have a knife. For this to work, I have to cut out my own tongue,



and that's no small trick even with a knife. So instead, I blank my mind, grab my tongue by the tip and bite it out with my teeth. I nearly black out, but I still have the presence of mind to smear what's left in my hand against the window. With a whoosh! and a pop!, the window explodes outward and I pile out through the gaping, ragged hole. Half-blind with pain and terror, I claw my way to the nearest festering pile of refuse and worm my way into it, the rays of dawn pushing me forward.

This ritual is incredibly powerful, yet few realize the full extent of its potential. The ritual, once completed, opens any designated object and prevents the object from ever being closed again.

Requirements

The caster utters a 10-minute incantation, at the end of which she removes her tongue, crushes it and smears it on the object to be opened.

System

Removing the tongue inflicts three aggravated health levels of damage, and renders the character unable to speak until his tongue can be grown back. Additionally, one Willpower Trait must be spent for the character to steel himself for the gruesome task of removing his tongue.

The ritual can be used to open manacles, chests, safes, boxes, windows, doors and eyes. If used to destroy a ward, no other can ever be placed in the same area again. This ritual can also be used to open dimensional portals that are tied to objects, although Storytellers should be very careful when allowing this application of the ritual; the portal cannot be closed once this ritual is used to open it.

(**Note:** Utter Destruction of Bonds cannot be used to break Blood Bonds or mental commands issued with the Dominate Discipline.)

RECLAIMED TREMERE *ANTITRIBU* RITUALS

After the destruction of the Tremere *antitribu*, these rituals were discovered and brought back to Vienna for study. These are the first of the *antitribu* rituals to be released for use within the Tremere clan as a whole. Any character who wishes to learn any of the *antitribu* rituals should be prepared for several months of research and roleplaying before being able to learn even one of them.

CHILL OF THE WINDSABER

Valentine had tracked the Tremere all over Russia, and now, just over the border, she found him at last. The Tremere Larian had killed Valentine's uncle — by all reports, he had actually skinned the ancient Silver Fang — and Valentine declared that she would quench her Rage with Larian's blood. She plodded through the ankle-high snow toward the cabin where Larian was reported to be holed up. She fantasized about his death screams and wondered what she would say if he begged for mercy. The sun had long since gone down, but Valentine wasn't worried. If she found the cabin empty, she would simply wait inside until sunrise.

When she was within bowshot of the cabin, her ears detected something during a lull in the wind. It sounded like a snap from inside the cabin, though Valentine couldn't be sure. She paused a moment, her tail beating a constant rhythm against her legs, and then moved ahead again.

She had taken only a few steps when she saw the snow part in front of her like the trail of an outboard motor. The disturbance bored toward her from a cabin window and slammed into her midsection like a locomotive. She hit the ground hard and realized that she couldn't feel her hind legs — which lay where she once stood. She could not even raise a howl of agony or defeat as the night sky slowly grew ominously darker.



Chill of the Windsaber is perhaps the most controlled of the *antitribu* rituals, and for good reason. A Tremere that possesses this ritual has the ability to destroy an opponent from a distance without leaving a trace of the attacker.

This ritual is very tightly regulated by the Tremere, to the extent that most of the clan still do not know that it exists. For a Tremere to be taught this ritual, he must spend at least three months in Vienna where his loyalty to house and clan is tested. If he is deemed worthy, the ritual is taught to him. The penalty for teaching this ritual to anyone who has not undergone this trial is Final Death for both teacher and student.

Requirement

Before the ritual can begin, the vampire must possess something that belongs to the intended victim, such as a piece of clothing, a lock of hair or a Blood Trait. Once this item has been obtained, the vampire must spend one hour using the item to create a doll that represents the intended victim.

The second item required is a small piece of glass. This glass is placed on the doll, and the caster must spend another hour chanting over the doll to complete the ritual.

The vampire must be totally alone and undisturbed while intoning this ritual. If his concentration is broken, he must begin again.

To activate the ritual, the vampire must have both doll and glass in his possession (both of which must be in the same condition they were in when the ritual was enacted in order to preserve their magical properties), and he must be within 50 feet of the intended victim. The vampire points at the victim and snaps the glass. The resulting telekinetic force inflicts damage — up to and including severing the target's head.

System

The player must present the Storyteller with an item card that represents a personal item of the victim's before the ritual can begin.

Due to the nature of this ritual, it should not be performed during downtime.

After the ritual is completed, the player must make a Static Mental Challenge against 12 Traits to see if his concentration is broken. If the player wins, the ritual is successful; if not, the ritual fails and the character must start all over with a new item from the victim.

To activate the ritual, the player must defeat the victim in a Mental Challenge. If the player wins the challenge, he decides how many Willpower to spend to fuel the effect. For each Willpower spent, the victim suffers one health level of damage. If the caster spends four Willpower, the full effect of the ritual is imposed and the victim's head is severed from her body.

THE GIFT

"The infiltration was successful?" the weathered old woman asked, peering into the recruit's soul (or so it felt).

"Yes, Excellency," the young Assamite nodded. "And I returned with the body of the one you asked for."

"Most amazing, Ramshi," the old woman said, as if she had said the same words to countless other recruits time and again. "You are to be rewarded most handsomely. I regret that I cannot offer you your target's blood—"

"By your grace, Excellency," Ramshi murmured.

"—but I can make your night-hunting easier." Turning to a door recessed in the adobe wall behind her, the old woman called out, "Malakai!"



Moments later, a dark-skinned man dressed in scholarly robes that had gone out of fashion centuries ago appeared through the door. "Yes, Excellency," he said quietly. "My studies proceed slowly now that Brother Raintree has disappeared."

"You will take Ramshi to your chamber and bestow upon him the benefit of your supernatural senses," the old woman said, ignoring Malakai's quiet protest. Ramshi tried not to break out in a proud smile.

Malakai's shoulders slumped in a gesture that would have been a sigh if Malakai still breathed. "By your command, Excellency."

This ritual allows the thaumaturge to transfer his Disciplines to another, through a laying on of hands. The exact Disciplines and number are up to the thaumaturge. This ritual was often used as a form of reward for service among the *antitribu*.

Requirements

The material component of this ritual is a silver mirror, a Trait of the caster's blood and one Trait of the recipient's blood.

The caster mixes the blood Traits together and writes the name of the Disciplines she wishes to transfer onto the surface of the mirror. Once this is completed, both parties touch the mirror for the prescribed time.

System

The ritual requires 15 minutes of contact per Discipline transferred.

The Tremere player must succeed in a Mental Challenge versus 12 Traits. If she wins, the character transfers exactly the amount of the Discipline she intended. If the player ties, the caster transfers less than intended; if the player fails, the caster transfers more than intended. In either case, it is up to the Storyteller to be the final arbiter of exactly how much of the intended Discipline is transferred.

You may not use this ritual to give a character a level of a Discipline that he could not normally achieve. In other words, you cannot use the ritual to give a 13th-generation vampire a Master-Level Discipline.

The transfer of Disciplines affects the donor and recipient in the following way: The donor loses Disciplines from the highest level down, and the recipient gains Disciplines from the lowest level up.

Example: Cassiodorus, an aged Tremere, uses The Gift on Bobby, a Brujah in his service, to give Bobby *Heightened Senses*. Cassiodorus loses his highest level of the *Auspex* Discipline — in this case *Psychic Projection* — at the end of the ritual.

Transferred Disciplines can be bought back by the donor at the normal Experience Trait costs. (See *Laws of the Night*, page 61.)

IRON MIND

Ian looked down at the sobbing woman at his feet, then glanced around quickly to see if anyone could hear her cries for help. He had always had a taste for blondes, but they could never seem to keep their mouths shut when he tried to feed from him. It was really annoying.

"You bit me," the woman sobbed, covering her neck and sliding back up against the steps of her apartment building. "Why did you bite me?"

Concentrating just as his sire had taught him, Ian reached into the woman's eyes with his own and said, "I never bit you, woman. You were mugged by two men." The woman grew quiet instantly as her mind processed the information Ian had planted there. However, he still had not had a chance to feed....



"Now close your eyes," he said. The woman obeyed. "Tilt back your head." The woman did as Ian commanded. "Now relax." The woman's shoulder slumped.

Convinced that his victim would give him no more problems, Ian closed his eyes and leaned close to the woman's cold neck like a lover with— cold neck?

Something struck Ian in the chest and he flew backward through the air. A moment later, his back connected with a fire-escape ladder and he crumpled to the ground, unable to move. Something was stuck through his chest. It felt like his veins were tied to a rock that was sinking in quicksand. The petite blonde stared down at him with glowing red eyes, silhouetted against the flickering streetlights.

"For a Keeper of Elysium, you're pretty dense," she mocked, all traces of fear and submission gone. She hoisted him painfully onto her shoulder with one hand and leaped up to catch the fire escape with the other. "At least it'll make you easy to control. Bishop Mark likes them easy."

This ritual is very useful when you do not wish to be spied upon through use of Auspex. Of the *antitribu* rituals, this one is used most frequently. However, use of this ritual when dealing with others in the Tremere hierarchy is not looked upon kindly.

Requirements

This ritual requires an object, such as a hatpin or earring, that is made entirely of iron, and a lodestone that has been soaked in the blood of the caster for three nights prior to the ritual. On the third night, the caster must spend an hour speaking an incantation while rubbing the lodestone over the surface of the iron object. At the end of the hour, the object takes on a reddish color and is ready to use. The object must then be worn on the head in some fashion — as a hairpin, an earring, a tiara or whatever.

While the ritual is in effect, the caster is virtually immune to Auspex. Anyone attempting to use this Discipline on the caster notices that something is wrong, but not what. The effect of the ritual lasts until the next sunrise or until the object is removed from the caster's head.

System

The player must win a Static Mental Challenge versus 12 Traits. If the player wins, the ritual is a success; if not, the ritual fails.

While under the effects of this ritual, the character receives the Mental Traits: *Disciplined* x5, which can only be used to defend against Auspex-related challenges. Additionally, the character receives a free retest on each Auspex-related challenge he loses.

While under the effects of this ritual, a character may not relent to any Auspex challenge. Thus, you cannot choose to let an ally communicate with you via Telepathy; you would have to lose both the initial challenge and the free retest to communicate telepathically.

SHADOW OF THE WOLF

"Bretheren," the ancient-looking Silver Fang called Knows-His-Words, said wearily as dawn neared, "you have defended this place well against our enemies, the vampires. Many of our kin have fallen this night, but their stories will be told throughout the ages."

Some of the others growled their agreement, but most just sat still in exhaustion and listened.

"Though the leeches' treachery was most foul," the Fang continued, "though they tried to betray me under a flag of truce two nights ago, we have yet prevailed. Your honor will be sung by the tale-keepers for ages hence."



Again, the remaining Garou could raise only weary enthusiasm over the Fang's words. Many had died in the night, and those left had suffered grievously.

"I want you to know," the Fang continued, seeming to sag a bit where he stood, though his voice picked up speed, "that you have done me a service as well. You have taken care of those who would have been my greatest rivals. For that I will sing your praises."

The others raised confused eyebrows at that, but the Silver Fang only smiled and took an illustrious bow. The sky lightened in the east. When the Fang turned, his skin was lined with even more wrinkles than it had been a moment ago. His brow was heavy with concern, or so it seemed.

"And now I go to rest," he said, suddenly full of life despite his appearance.

He raised his arms in a fluid motion and shrugged mightily. With a sound like a sheet tearing, he stepped back and sloughed off the outer layer of his skin. Now, standing before the remaining Garou was a thin, pale man with a long black ponytail and a vicious smile. He bowed again, stepped back into the shadow of the trees and disappeared with the skin of Knows-His-Words dangling ragged from his hand. Before the Garou could rouse themselves to give chase, they heard a sound like laughter in the forest surrounding the caern. All around them, vague, twisted shapes clawed and squirmed out of the Umbra and crept closer....

This potent ritual allows a vampire to actually become a Lupine for one evening. The material component is a cloak made from the skin of a werewolf. The tribe to which the vampire "belongs" depends upon the type of skin used in the ritual; Auspice is always Theurge.

While the ritual imparts the form of a Lupine, it does not bestow the vampire any Gifts, Rites or knowledge of how to act like a Garou. It behooves the vampire to have at least one level of Garou Lore before attempting this ritual.

Requirements

The vampire must chant over the ill-gotten Lupine skin for an hour-and-a-half while sprinkling his own blood around it. At the end of that time, the vampire dons the cloak, which fuses to his own skin for the remainder of the evening. Once this process is complete, the vampire becomes (for all intents and purposes) a Lupine. The cloak separates from the vampire at sunrise, and may be reused, although the ritual must be repeated each time the vampire wishes to become a werewolf thereafter.

System

Upon completion of the ritual, the player engages in a Static Mental Challenge versus 14 Traits to determine if the ritual is successful.

The player needs to create a werewolf character and identity using his vampire as a basis. The Lupine is subject to all the advantages and limitations of a normal Garou. It may change forms and it is vulnerable to silver.

The werewolf begins with two Rage for each Beast Trait that the caster possesses, and one Gnosis. The player may attempt to raise these ratings as a normal Lupine would.

If the caster reuses the cloak, the player must engage in a Simple Test to see if the skin is still viable for the ritual.

The Garou Gift: *Scent of True Form* detects that there is something amiss about the "werewolf," but it gives no specifics.

The Garou Gift: *Sense Wyrms* detects Wyrms-taint if the vampire possess more than two Beast Traits.

Unless the character has some level of the Ability: *Garou Lore*, he finds it nigh impossible to interact with Garou society.



SPIDER'S WEB

Marcel sliced the window pane away with his glass-cutter and jimmied the lock open. The place didn't even have an alarm system, which was odd, considering how adamant the man who'd hired him — a creepy old fart named Reginald — had been about not getting caught. Marcel tried to tell the guy that nobody would go to so much trouble to protect a book, but the old dude didn't listen. It seemed Marcel was right, after all. As usual.

With barely a sound, he pushed open the window sash, pushed back the heavy black curtain and slipped quietly inside. He seemed to be in some sort of drawing room, but that was all he could tell. Several dusty chairs cluttered the floor. The door to the hallway (which would hopefully lead to the basement where Reginald said the book would be) hung open. Keeping close to the walls to avoid squeaky floorboards, Marcel made his way into the hallway.

The corridor was pitch-dark. The intruder went no more than a few steps when his leg tangled in something and he had to stop. He tried to brace himself to pull himself free — it felt like he'd stepped onto a huge flystrip — but he only managed to get his arm entangled as well. After a few moments of squirming, Marcel realized that he was completely trapped by what felt like grasping liquid hands. He desperately decided to use his glass-cutter when the lights in the hallway snapped on almost audibly.

When the spots stopped dancing in front of his eyes, Marcel could see what had entangled him: webs. Either hundreds of them or one mother-lovin' huge one. He started to struggle frantically — what kind of spider makes webbing like this? — but he only succeeded in miring himself further.

From behind, Marcel heard footsteps followed by cold laughter. He could not even turn his head to look by that point.

"Order-in dining' indeed," an old woman mused seemingly to herself. "Quite entertaining, Reginald. Quite entertaining."

This ritual allows a vampire to create a web that resembles an actual spider's web in all respects. The difference is that the webbing can fill an entire room and is strong enough to capture and hold victims immobile. The webbing lasts until it is torn down, making it an excellent defense for a haven.

Requirements

Before enacting this ritual, the vampire must obtain a black widow spider and feed it vitae on seven consecutive evenings. On the final evening, the vampire crushes the spider in a marble container and consumes it. While invoking a chant, the vampire begins to exude webbing from her hands. This webbing can be shaped into any form and can cover up to 400 square feet.

System

The player must win a Static Mental Challenge versus 12 Traits to complete this ritual successfully.

The character is immune to any webbing he creates; he can move freely throughout it. This does not mean, however, that the character can climb on the strands. He simply does not get stuck as others do.

If a different character contacts the web, he is stuck. A victim may attempt to tear or cut himself free by winning three Static Physical Challenges versus eight Traits. Potence retests are allowed.

If a character wishes to enter the web and avoid getting stuck, a test is required using a dexterity-based Physical Trait (*Nimble, Athletic*) versus 12 Traits.



COMBINED DISCIPLINES FOR THE LONG NIGHT

by Shane De Freest

Fans of **Vampire: The Dark Ages** are privy to several special powers that result from combining Disciplines. Experienced vampires, those who have had numerous decades (even centuries) to explore and experiment with their unique powers, meld these supernatural capabilities to discover hidden skills. Of course, it's only fair that **Mind's Eye Theatre** characters in **The Long Night** have an opportunity to get in on the action!

Presented here are several Discipline-combination powers that can be found in **Vampire: The Dark Ages**, built for use in **The Long Night**. As future **Libellus Sanguinis** releases showcase the unique capabilities of the clans, expect more combination Disciplines to rise under the light of the moon.


Learning a combination Discipline requires a great deal of effort. In addition to requiring certain levels of proficiency in various Disciplines, combination Disciplines have their own Experience Trait costs. Furthermore, many of these powers are known to only a few scattered members of specific clans; such esoterica requires unusual dedication and study. A Storyteller is well within rights to limit the selection of available combination Disciplines, requiring characters to seek out elder mentors and to undertake harrowing training and quests in pursuit of these unusual capabilities.

ARMOR OF DARKNESS

(Basic Fortitude, Intermediate Obtenebration)

We lured the damned thing that used to be wise Lord Albert into the stables. The brave lads who muck the stalls barred the doors, locking the monster inside. Archibald, the former squire to the unliving knight, ordered torches lighted and flame-arrows notched. At his order, we rained our fire on the stables, turning the dry tinder to a beacon that pushed back the night. We laughed in contempt at Lord Albert's unholy screams for mercy and absolution. Then, suddenly, the screams turned to mocking laughter, and the burning stable door flew apart like match sticks. Archibald froze: There in the doorway, silhouetted by hungry flame and crashing ruin, stood Lord Albert in armor darker than nighted shadow. Albert advanced on his erstwhile squire, but I learned not the fate of either. Devil hound us all, the others and I fled, leaving Archibald to his fate.

Combining a vampire's preternatural resilience with the inky shadowstuff of **Obtenebration**, some Magisters are able to cloak themselves in a darkness that resists the pall of fire and sunlight. So armored, these fearsome **Lasombra** venture into even daylight to further their schemes.



Armor of Darkness shields you from the effects of fire and sunlight, as a mantle of blackness wraps about your body. You should wear a special card prominently to indicate your use of this Discipline, as the forbidding black shielding is quite noticeable. Normally, the darkness simply forms like a shadowy cloak, but with the expenditure of a Social Trait, you may choose to shape it into the guises of various forms of night-black clothing or armor.

Activating *Armor of Darkness* requires the expenditure of a Willpower Trait, and the further expenditure of three Mental Traits for each level of protection. Maintaining the armor then requires concentration; all actions undertaken while garbed increase in difficulty by one Trait. The armor lasts until destroyed by fire or sunlight; each level of protection absorbs one level of damage from such sources, until the shadows are burned away.

Learning this power requires commerce with one of the few and secretive Magisters who practices it, and it costs eight Experience Traits.

AURA OF INESCAPABLE TRUTH

(Intermediate Dominate, Intermediate Presence)

"Who invited you to my court?" the Ventrue Prince Valmont asked, peering lazily from his oaken throne. The assassin thought furiously, silently recounting the details of the story he'd practiced time and again, and thanking the Maker that he could no longer sweat. The prince's harpies and his wizened, scrawny seneschal leaned closer. They eyed the assassin like circling vultures—merely interested at present, but in striking distance should things turn to their favor.

"I..." the assassin stammered, his fingers twitching toward the poisoned knife in his sleeve-sheathe. Why couldn't he just use his story? He could remember it; why couldn't he just say it?

"Tell me why you have come to my domain!"

"I... the seneschal hired me to kill you," the assassin gasped.

"I see," Valmont said, leaning back, glancing at his second as his harpies and guards closed ranks. "How interesting..."

A favorite of Ventrue courts, this formidable power combines direct mental control with subtle influence to force subjects to speak only the truth. Though taxing, this power is unquestionably vital to the political battlefields of elder Cainites.

When establishing the *Aura of Inescapable Truth*, you must expend a Willpower Trait, and then engage in a mass Social Challenge against everyone who can see your face (risking one Social Trait for each target). If you win the challenge, nobody under the influence of the power may deliberately speak untruthfully; those who attempt to do so simply find themselves unable to speak at all, though a target may still speak an untruth if he believes it to be true.

The *Aura of Inescapable Truth* does not force victims to remain within your presence, nor does it continue to function if they leave. The power's activation and influence are automatically noticeable to anyone affected. As with all *Dominate* powers, vampires of lower generation than yourself are unhindered by this power, although this may not be immediately apparent.

This power costs 11 Experience Traits to develop.

BLESSED RESILIENCE

(Master Fortitude, Intermediate Mortis)

I saw it all, beginning to end. I was there when my master fell to the brigands' swords. They encircled him like a pack of dogs, then fell on him like starved ravens. He met them

bravely, his own sword biting deep, but the brigands were too many. My heart broke to merely watch — without giving aid — but I had my orders. "Those of my blood have made dire enemies," my master said. "Should I fall to treachery, you must deliver my body to my sanctum and wait with it there."

I protested when he told me, but tonight I saw him fall, and I have done as I was bid. I have loved and served my master well, but I fear that even his studies of death and the soul are no match for — But lo, he stirs! God be praised for returning my master to me from beyond the very grave! Let his enemies tremble! Yes, come, master. Take my hand....

With command of incredible resilience and unmatched insight into the secrets of death, the Cappadocians are the undisputed masters of death during the Long Night. For the truly dedicated Cappadocian, even the grave itself may be overcome.

When extinguished — beaten, burned, cut or otherwise driven to Final Death — you may draw upon your monumental reserves to pull yourself back across the threshold of destruction. You immediately expend all of your remaining Blood Traits and two Willpower Traits (plus one additional Willpower Trait for each severed limb that must re-attach to your body). If you do not have sufficient Willpower, you fail to rise. Otherwise, your body parts crawl back together and re-knit (as long as they are nearby — within about 10 paces or so). You then return to the Incapacitated health level.

When you exercise *Blessed Resilience*, you tax your supernatural reserves to their absolute limits. Effectively, your generation rises by one — a seventh-generation Cappadocian using this power is considered eighth-generation afterward, with all of the concomitant losses to Blood Traits, Willpower Traits, Attribute Traits and high-level Disciplines. This weakening is permanent, though you may still lower your generation later through diablerie.

Unearthing the masterful Blessed Resilience costs 18 Experience Traits.

BLOOD PEARL OF THE ZOMBU

(Basic *Mortis*, Basic *Necromancy*, Basic *Thaumaturgy*, and at least two Intermediate levels or one Advanced level in these Disciplines)


I wasn't good enough, they said. They told me I didn't have the power and discipline to control the dead. Officious bastards. Augustus wouldn't have put up with that garbage if they'd said it to him. I studied the dead, magic and the occult — the modern theories — for years before these "scholars" came along. I know what I'm doing. The dead can dance on my strings just as easily as theirs. I uncovered this body myself. I preserved it. I even infused my blood into the pearl completely on my own.

And the corpse rises, just like I said it would. It rises! Now I'll show those bastards who's "not good enough"!

The *zombu*, more commonly called "zombies," are unfailing servants of the Clan of Death. For young members of the clan, the necessary expertise in the *Mortis* Discipline is impossible to achieve due to the simple impediment of generation. However, by combining research of the recently inducted Giovanni with more general magical knowledge, it is possible for even novices to develop a means to create unliving servants.

By distilling two Blood Traits into a special magical pearl-like sphere (a process requiring eight hours of work, and thus generally performed outside the confines of game time), you may enchant your blood to animate a corpse. Success





is uncertain; you must place the blood pearl in the mouth of the corpse and make a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty 6). If you succeed, the formerly inert corpse rises as a *zombu* under your direct control for the remainder of the evening, collapsing into dust at sunrise.

The *zombu* has the Attribute Traits it possessed in life, although *Dextrous*, *Nimble* and *Quick* are replaced with *Tenacious*, *Tireless* or *Tough*. The creation also retains the health levels it possessed in life, but does not suffer wound penalties.

The blood pearl created by this ritual works on only true corpses — vampires are not affected by it.

As a ritual, this power does not cost Experience Traits, but it must be studied from a library or mentor after achieving the requisite levels of skill in Disciplines.

BODY ARMORY

(Intermediate Protean, Intermediate Vicissitude)

Reinhart clutched the ruby tight in one fist and crouched in the moonshadow of the baron's castle. A few quick seconds would put him in the woods and near enough to the river where he'd hidden his rowboat. He heard that the baron was no man to make an enemy of — some rumors even suggested that the lord devoured those who crossed him — but Reinhart cared only for the ruby. It had belonged to his family before the baron had established his "domain" here. Let the peasants whisper about the "hellspawn" that guarded the baron's gates; Reinhart had seen none when he sneaked in. Let the ignorant farmers believe that the nobleman drank blood and tortured his enemies for amusement; all Reinhart knew was that in another few moments he would reach his boat and be safely away with the means to restore his family's fortune.

"Ah, Herr Reinhart," a thickly accented voice said as a hand fell heavily on his shoulder. Reinhart turned to see the baron himself, dressed in all his lordly finery, peering down at him. Reinhart had not even heard him approach. "I believe you are trespassing."

Reinhart made as if to say something, but an object in the baron's hand gave him pause. It appeared to be a spade, but it seemed to grow and elongate, like watching an icicle melt, until the baron appeared to be holding a wickedly long spearhead. Reinhart quailed as the lord spoke again, raising the weapon into the moonlight. When the baron did so, Reinhart could see that he held no object in his hand at all; the instrument held aloft was the man's hand.

"And my dear Reinhart, there is nothing worse than an uninvited guest...."

By reshaping flesh and bone, you can form distinctive and dangerous weapons. These items have all of the Traits associated with normal weapons of their type, and they inflict aggravated damage. As these tools are still part of you, they cannot be given to others — you literally reshape your limbs into the likenesses of various sorts of hand-held weapons.

Turning a limb into a weapon with this power costs one Blood Trait, two Traits for two-handed weapons. Only hand weapons may be imitated — you cannot fashion a bow and arrows out of your body.

This power costs nine Experience Traits.

DARK STEEL

(Intermediate Obtenebration, Intermediate Potence)

"You hide from me in darkness," Adrienne sighed, her lilting voice carrying into the rocky niche where Michael hid, halfway up the cold mountainside. "How quaint."

Michael drew his knees tight to his chest and tried not to let his billowing breath-clouds reveal his hiding place. In blind panic, he had fled up the mountain outside his village when Adrienne came for him, and now he was trapped. A fearful tear traced an icy line down his face. Adrienne was beautiful, but deadly, damned and completely insane.

"I would have made you my husband, Michael," Adrienne taunted, her voice closer. "We could have been together the rest of our lives."

Michael almost shot back that he would sooner be wed to a fishmonger's spotty daughter than to the blasphemous parody of a woman Adrienne had become, but a sound outside his hiding place stopped him. Something long and heavy slid along the ground outside. It sounded like someone dragging a tree.

"But you denied me, Michael," Adrienne went on. "You should have run sooner and farther." As she spoke, a column of ebon smoke (or so it seemed to Michael) snaked into his shelter and coiled around his ankle like an iron manacle. He shrieked, and the black tentacle hoisted him roughly out of the hole and into the air. He dangled upside down like an animal caught in a snare, blubbering in terror as Adrienne — beautiful, damned Adrienne — emerged from the shadows. The tentacle around Michael's foot carried him closer to her.

"Now, Michael, let us talk of Hell and the fury that only it can covet."

Perhaps one of the most fearsome combination powers known, Dark Steel imbues the shades of *Obtenebration* with the unnatural might of *Potence*. Shade tentacles conjured with the *Arms of Ahriman* become frighteningly strong.

Should you choose to use *Dark Steel*, you must expend a *Blood Trait* upon activating *Arms of Ahriman*. Summoning the tentacles themselves proceeds as usual, but the tentacles have six *Physical Traits*, plus two more *Physical Traits* for each additional *Blood Trait* expended.

Learning this power requires the expenditure of nine *Experience Traits*.

HATCH THE VIPER

(Basic *Protean*, Intermediate *Serpentis*)

"Bring him before me," Gillem proclaimed, motioning the guards to stand back and let the visitor step forward. "I will hear this blackguard's message in the prince's absence. It is better than he deserves, certainly."

The visitor, a suspected *Follower of Set*, strode forward, smiling audaciously at the prince's *seneschal*, even winking at Gillem! The prince's courtiers tittered at that, but none of them showed the proper decorum by deigning to scoff. Gillem made a note to himself that it was time for new attendants. The prince would have to be made aware of that when he returned.


"You have a message?" the *seneschal* asked, when the alleged *Setite* stopped boldly in front of him. He was, admittedly, rather handsome up close, if a bit aloof.

The *Setite* only nodded a little stiffly, but said nothing. Gillem leaned closer, towering over the slim Egyptian man. "Then speak."

The Egyptian's throat pulsed and he opened his mouth with a reptilian hiss. Gillem tried to scream, but it was too late. Something grabbed his throat in an iron grip and began to coil about his neck and shoulders. The *Setite* only smiled and vanished before Gillem's bulging eyes.

A disturbing power known to only *Setites*, this combination of *Disciplines* allows a *Serpent* to disgorge a living viper from his very mouth. The *Follower of Set* concentrates his *vitae* and forms it into a serpentine ghoul, which he vomits forth in a horrifying gout of scaly flesh.





A full turn of concentration must precede the birth of a serpent, and you must expend two Blood Traits. The serpent is considered a ghoul and exhibits the *Fortitude* Discipline at the level of *Endurance*. With a poisonous bite, the viper can be deadly to mortals; it is considered to possess the Physical Traits: *Lithe* x2 and *Quick* x2. If the serpent is not fed one Blood Trait every week, it dissolves into poisonous blood-like bile that causes two health levels of damage to anyone foolish enough to drink it.

You may sustain more than one serpent, but each must be fed blood if it is to survive. Serpents created with this power typically display distinctive patterns and personalities that may be traced to their creator. Your Storyteller can issue a card representing your ghoulish serpents.

This power costs nine Experience Traits.

THE ILLNESS UNVEILED

(Basic Auspex, Master Fortitude)

"He is most grievously ill," the hermit said, leaning over the sick child's body to speak to his mother. "You are wise to have brought him to me."

"I thank you, but they say you serve the Devil," Magda stammered, unsettled by the hermit's gaze. "In the town, that is, sir. But not I." The hermit only laughed at Magda's discomfort and laid his withered hands on her son's forehead. He said no prayers; he used no herbs; he did not even light the fire beneath the iron pot in the corner of his cabin. The apothecary in town said that this man could heal her son, but Magda grew more and more uneasy by the moment.

The boy suddenly broke out in a cold sweat, his legs twitching and kicking. His lips bared back from his teeth in a snarl, and his back arched. Still, the hermit said nothing; he only stood with his gnarled, rootlike hands on the boy's face.

Magda's eyes grew wide — surely this was not natural! The townsfolk were right; this hermit was in league with Satan. She wavered, then reached a tentative hand toward her son, the other making a crude warding gesture. The hermit's wiry hands tightened on her son, and in one final gasp the boy lay silent.

"The worst is passing," the hermit said at last. The old man looked like he had exerted himself a great deal, but did not seem to be breathing hard. "The boy will recover in time." The hermit stood silent for a moment, then glanced up at Magda. As the woman put a hand on her son's brow, the hermit grabbed her wrist.

"And now," he whispered, "let us discuss my payment."

By diagnosing a victim through the use of supernatural senses, and then sharing vampiric preternatural resilience, it is possible to help mortals through the throes of dangerous diseases. In an age rife with plagues and sickness, this is a very useful ability for keeping one's retainers alive (especially for the Cappadocians, whose Lamia servitors have an unfortunate tendency to pass on rather hideous and fatal infections).

You must make a Static Mental Challenge (difficulty eight Traits) in order to diagnose a disease successfully; this diagnosis is subject to the limitations of your *Medicine* knowledge. Once you diagnose a disease, you may bolster the victim's resistance with your own. Make a Static Physical Challenge with a difficulty determined by the nature of the disease: five Traits for a common cold, up to nine for typhoid and 12, 15 or more for particularly nasty afflictions such as Black Plague (the Lamia disease rates 18 Traits). A successful challenge allows the victim to begin recovering, although the process may still take days or weeks.

This power costs 10 Experience Traits to learn.



RETAIN THE QUICK BLOOD

(Intermediate Celerity, Intermediate Quietus)

Right now, I am "feeding." I appeared in silence and scythed through the guards and retainers of this city's prince one hour ago, only to use up the last of my vitae before laying into my "true" quarry. I barely escaped the prince's chambers before he called for reinforcements; the fact that I had to leave clues as to my destination only made matters doubly difficult. Now the city's "sheriff" — one Eric Fitz-Walter — comes for me, confident in the assumption that I stalk the streets for kine blood before I can make good my escape. He has been stomping around just out of sight since his shocked prince ordered me apprehended. I have had no chance to stop and feed, and this sheriff doubtlessly believes I am at the end of my reserves. He is so confident. Wouldn't he be surprised to know that even as I slow to wait for him, my strength returns of its own accord? Wouldn't he be surprised to learn that his very prince hired me to "get the bothersome Mister Fitz-Walter out of the way"? I think he would. Ah, he approaches. Perhaps I will ask him.

The fearsome Assamites are capable of maintaining the power of their vitae, even after calling upon their blood for the preternatural speed of Celerity. An Assamite can cause the blood that energizes his limbs to trickle slowly back into his system to be spent again.

When using this power, all Blood Traits expended for Celerity in a given conflict return after an hour. Should you ingest additional blood during this period, any returning blood that would exceed your normal Blood Trait limit is lost. Thus, if a vampire with a full blood pool expends two Traits of blood for Celerity, then drinks a single Blood Trait, the returning vitae simply grants one Blood Trait — the second returning Trait is lost because the vampire is already at the limit of his blood capacity. Returning blood "wasted" in this fashion literally seeps out of the vampire's pores and tear ducts — a disturbing sight indeed.

Mastery of this power requires the expenditure of eight Experience Traits.

SHADOWED EYES

(Intermediate Auspex, Intermediate Obtenebration)


Rudolph and Gerald studied the body that lay by the crossroads. It was Lord Albert's, for certain. They had been given the "demon's" description in painstaking detail by the bishop. But rather than find the rampaging terror of the nighted countryside (as they'd been told), they found this lifeless, unmoving corpse. Apparently, either the rumors were all false or the villagers had dealt with their own problem. Quite a bother, actually.

"Dead as they get," Gerald said, spitting on the cold body's lifeless face. "Dead and dumped." His saliva ran into the black pools where ravens had already been at Lord Albert's eyes.

"Don't make sense," Rudolph observed, turning away from the discomfiting body and looking into the surrounding woods, as if expecting an attack. "Too simple. And why didn't anybody tell us when we got in? And why ha'en't wolves been at the body if he's been dead a while?"

Gerald stood next to his longtime partner. As they talked, neither noticed Lord Albert's "corpse" stir. The vampire sat up silently. The pools of blackness fell away from his eyes like water draining from a bath. Outraged by Gerald's insult, Albert wiped the spit from his face and stood to his full height, a blood-song singing in his ears.

"Mighty hunters," he sneered. "Here is your prey."



Though any Magister can see through the blackness created with his own use of *Obtenebration*, the blinding and smothering effects of the darkness disorient foes. When a Lasombra needs to discomfit an opponent without relying upon blatant displays of shadow-shaping, precise control is required, as evidenced by this power.

When you invoke *Shadowed Eyes* (at the cost of one Physical Trait), you generate small patches of blackness that surround the eyes of your target. Obviously, this blackness blinds your foe (see **Laws of the Hunt** for rules on darkness, page 147) and renders his appearance most unsettling (bestowing the Negative Social Trait: *Bestial*). Alternately, you may use this power on yourself, enabling you to intimidate your adversaries while retaining the ability to sense your surroundings. Doing so grants you the additional Social Trait: *Intimidating*. *Shadowed Eyes* remain for the duration of the conflict or for 10 minutes.

Learning Shadowed Eyes costs six Experience Traits.

S M O T H E R I N G D A R K N E S S

(Basic *Obfuscate*, Basic *Obtenebration*)

I chant and cry along with the others in the mob, though I feel a different fervor than they do. They are filled with faith in their only-god, and they believe that they will rout this vampire with nothing more than piety and torches. They are fools.

We crest the hill — the mob and I — and the vampire greets us from the battlements of his stronghold. He has the gall to wave as we come boiling over the crest like fire-bearing ants; he has even left his gate open in mocking invitation. Were I like the others in this mob, I might be afraid at his cavalier fearlessness, but I am not like the others. I understand my enemy. I alone have any power over him.

As the mob comes within bowshot of the stronghold, the vampire suddenly stands up straight and lifts his arms, as if to welcome us. Many within the mob shout insults or condemnations, and most gesture angrily with their torches. I do not. I carry no torch. Moments later, a mass of black shapes erupts from just behind the vampire and streams toward us. One among the mob shouts, “Bats,” but I know better. The black shapes arrow straight for the torches, extinguishing the flames like vile black rain.

Instantly, the night closes in on us and the mob erupts into chaos. Not I. I lift my head and shout defiance. I needed the others to lead me here. Now I shift down to four clawed feet and dart through the mass of terrified humans to the open gate. The blood-drinker will be mine.

Mobile, “living” shadows are the hallmark of the *Obtenebration* Discipline, but with this power, you can send batlike shades to extinguish offending light sources — torches, lamps, candles and such. The shadows flit about, surrounding and smothering the brightest lights in the area, plunging the place into darkness.

You must see (or otherwise sense) the light source that you wish to extinguish with this power. Each Mental Trait expended causes a shadow to seek out and extinguish one flame or light, up to the size of a torch. Particularly large flames may be susceptible to multiple shadows, at the Storyteller’s discretion. These shadows have actual physical substance. Though they cannot injure, they can certainly startle and confuse; shadows summoned without a target flap about, causing noise and bumping into things for the duration of the conflict (or 10 minutes).

This power costs five Experience Traits to learn.

Laws
of the
Night
1999





ANY MOTHER'S CHILD

by Carl Bowen

Inspired by a Vampire character created by Hannah Curry

We intend to include a piece of World of Darkness fiction in every issue of the Journal. We hope to showcase talented new writers (one of whom I am not — new, that is) who might not have a chance to appear elsewhere. Plus, fiction dealing with the World of Darkness offers insights into the lives and times of the people (i.e., the characters) who inhabit it, and such insights offer you (as players and storytellers) flavor and spice to make your Mind's Eye Theatre games all the more attractive. Mind's Eye Theatre releases should be simultaneously entertaining and useful. This piece, in particular, serves as a look at how derangements drive characters to dangerous, thoughtless deeds, yet can sometimes serve to make them all too human.

The mother grabbed her daughter by the collar a bit too roughly and pulled her close. People pressed in on all sides, crowding to get on the trains that would take them away from the war-blighted countryside to one of the ghetto-towns. The mother feared losing her daughter in the crowd. They had been marched to the train yard days away from their home, and not once had the woman let her daughter out of her sight. The girl told her mother that she was supposed to get on a different train, but the mother didn't listen. She stoically led her daughter to her own train — the train she should be boarding with her husband and son — determined that she would keep the girl with her.

Dmitri, the father, had to fight. He had to demand that the soldiers leave them alone. The soldiers took the boy first; a soldier shot him through the head as Dmitri stared in mute horror. Dmitri fell next as his wife and daughter looked on. It all happened so fast that the mother had no chance to do anything before the soldiers restrained her. They would probably have killed Dmitri anyway, but if he hadn't tried to fight them, perhaps...

Now, the mother would not be left alone. She clamped a vise-like hand on her daughter's shoulder and moved toward her own train. She would not raise her coming unborn child alone. The soldiers would not tell them why they were being herded and prodded. They were not even Jewish as many of the shouting, jeering soldiers seemed to think, but there seemed to be no reason other than random chance why she and her daughter should be split up. Perhaps if she got her daughter onto the train with her before the soldiers noticed...

A sharp blow to the back sent the mother sprawling, dragging her daughter to the ground with her. She turned to see a soldier towering over her with his rifle upraised, his body silhouetted in the last red rays of sunset. He shouted at her in his language that sounded like barking dogs, then pointed at the girl. The mother clutched her daughter tighter with one hand and put the other to her stomach.

The soldier brought the rifle stock down on her again, sending screaming white non-images through her brain. He shouted and pointed again, looking even more like a barking dog, his billowing winter-breath like an enraged canine's froth. Others of his pack gathered around, pushing back people who tried to see what was going on. One of the soldiers grabbed the woman's daughter and tried to pull her to her feet. The girl clutched more tightly to her mother.



The screaming soldier brought the rifle down again, still shouting his unintelligible language, and the world went dark. Or perhaps the sun finally set. The mother could not tell.



The woman almost catches the lone girl, but the orphan is clever and eludes capture. The woman looks in trash dumpsters and glances occasionally at creaking fire escapes, but the girl is nowhere to be found. Surely she does not think that the woman would hurt her? She only wants to take care of the child. To give her a home and family again. To protect her. This is no place to be alone.



The mother awoke in a cold tent with a bandage above her left eye and a frightening soreness beneath her stomach. She heard the muted sound of the soldiers' barking outside, and she could see that the sun had long since set. The air still smelled like crowds and machine oil, so she knew she was in the train yard, but she wondered why she had not been packed unconscious onto one of the trains.

The woman lifted her head stiffly and looked around for her daughter. The girl was not in the tent. Perhaps that was why the woman had not been moved. Maybe her daughter had been sent on ahead. Alarmed, the woman called out the girl's name.

"She has not been harmed," a voice assured her in broken Polish. "She is waiting. Calm yourself."

The woman turned, sore muscles protesting, to find a tall soldier slouching just inside the tent flap. He wore a long leather coat, belted at the waist, with a bent-edged cross on a red arm band below his left shoulder. He removed his hat, smoothed his close-cut blond hair and crouched down beside her. Reluctantly, she calmed down.

"You put up fight," the man said, his sparkling blue eyes boring into her with an unsettling fascination. "Why?"

Certainly, she hadn't been the only one to do so. Why had this soldier singled her out?

"Where is my daughter?"

"Yes, I see," the man nodded, apparently understanding only the last two words of the woman's answer. "Loyalty is most noble, no?"

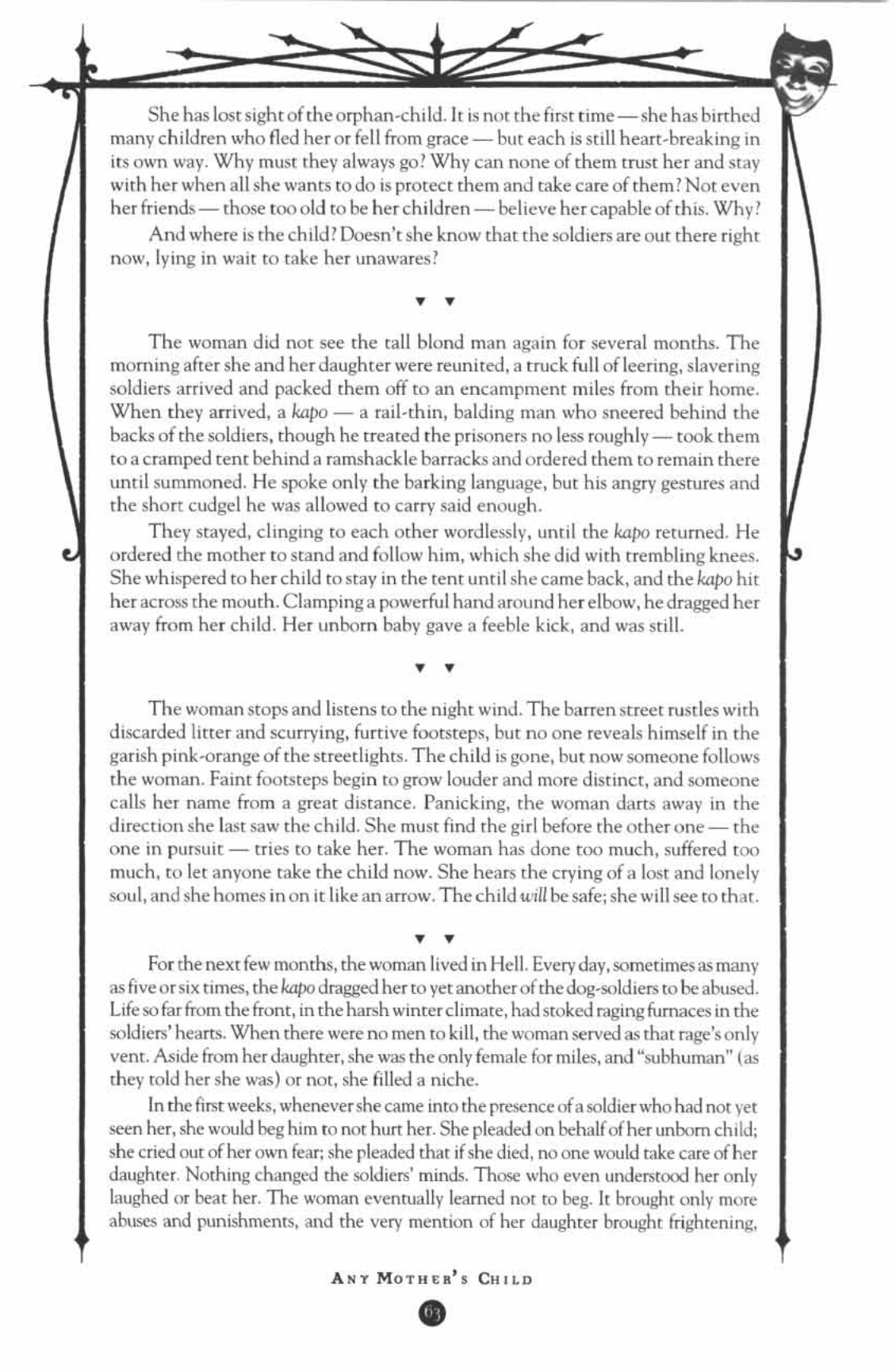
"My daughter..."

"Yes, yes," the man said. He lay a hand absently on the woman's leg, where it showed through a rip in her skirt. "I keep you together somewhere else. You will not go the bad towns with the cattles."

The woman said nothing; she only shivered in dread. Her daughter would be returned to her and they would be spared whatever fate awaited those who rode the trains, but they would survive on the mercy of this man. This man with his unsettling eyes. The woman squirmed in the grasp he had on her leg. His hand was unnaturally cold, even in the winter air. What was more, his breath did not make white clouds when he spoke.



The old woman stops her search and stands alone in the middle of the street. Young people on either side pause to look at her (this strange, frantic creature wearing outdated, shapeless homespun). They move on without interest when she fails to amuse them.



She has lost sight of the orphan-child. It is not the first time — she has birthed many children who fled her or fell from grace — but each is still heart-breaking in its own way. Why must they always go? Why can none of them trust her and stay with her when all she wants to do is protect them and take care of them? Not even her friends — those too old to be her children — believe her capable of this. Why?

And where is the child? Doesn't she know that the soldiers are out there right now, lying in wait to take her unawares?



The woman did not see the tall blond man again for several months. The morning after she and her daughter were reunited, a truck full of leering, slaving soldiers arrived and packed them off to an encampment miles from their home. When they arrived, a *kapo* — a rail-thin, balding man who sneered behind the backs of the soldiers, though he treated the prisoners no less roughly — took them to a cramped tent behind a ramshackle barracks and ordered them to remain there until summoned. He spoke only the barking language, but his angry gestures and the short cudgel he was allowed to carry said enough.

They stayed, clinging to each other wordlessly, until the *kapo* returned. He ordered the mother to stand and follow him, which she did with trembling knees. She whispered to her child to stay in the tent until she came back, and the *kapo* hit her across the mouth. Clamping a powerful hand around her elbow, he dragged her away from her child. Her unborn baby gave a feeble kick, and was still.

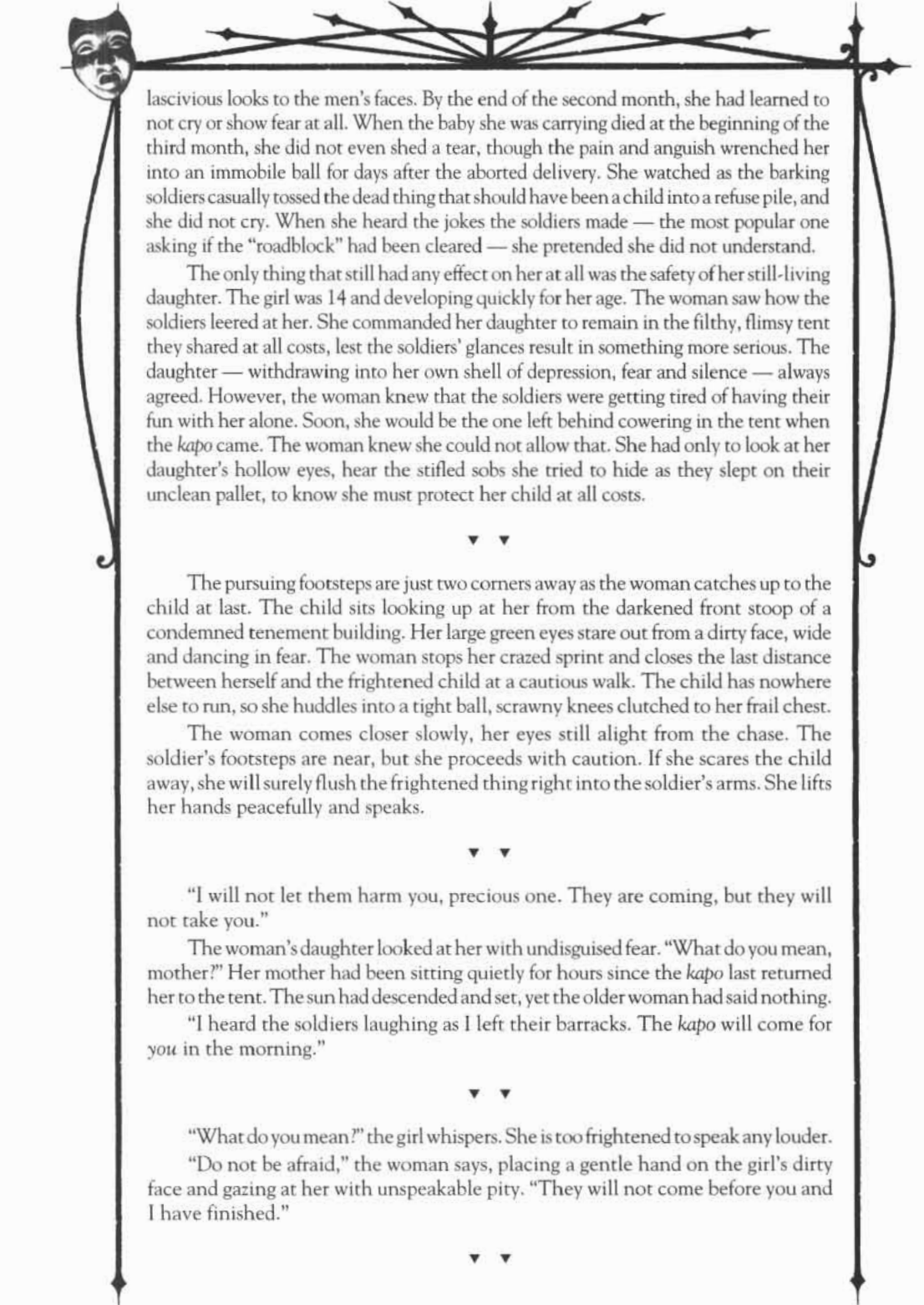


The woman stops and listens to the night wind. The barren street rustles with discarded litter and scurrying, furtive footsteps, but no one reveals himself in the garish pink-orange of the streetlights. The child is gone, but now someone follows the woman. Faint footsteps begin to grow louder and more distinct, and someone calls her name from a great distance. Panicking, the woman darts away in the direction she last saw the child. She must find the girl before the other one — the one in pursuit — tries to take her. The woman has done too much, suffered too much, to let anyone take the child now. She hears the crying of a lost and lonely soul, and she homes in on it like an arrow. The child *will* be safe; she will see to that.



For the next few months, the woman lived in Hell. Every day, sometimes as many as five or six times, the *kapo* dragged her to yet another of the dog-soldiers to be abused. Life so far from the front, in the harsh winter climate, had stoked raging furnaces in the soldiers' hearts. When there were no men to kill, the woman served as that rage's only vent. Aside from her daughter, she was the only female for miles, and "subhuman" (as they told her she was) or not, she filled a niche.

In the first weeks, whenever she came into the presence of a soldier who had not yet seen her, she would beg him to not hurt her. She pleaded on behalf of her unborn child; she cried out of her own fear; she pleaded that if she died, no one would take care of her daughter. Nothing changed the soldiers' minds. Those who even understood her only laughed or beat her. The woman eventually learned not to beg. It brought only more abuses and punishments, and the very mention of her daughter brought frightening,



lascivious looks to the men's faces. By the end of the second month, she had learned to not cry or show fear at all. When the baby she was carrying died at the beginning of the third month, she did not even shed a tear, though the pain and anguish wrenched her into an immobile ball for days after the aborted delivery. She watched as the barking soldiers casually tossed the dead thing that should have been a child into a refuse pile, and she did not cry. When she heard the jokes the soldiers made — the most popular one asking if the "roadblock" had been cleared — she pretended she did not understand.

The only thing that still had any effect on her at all was the safety of her still-living daughter. The girl was 14 and developing quickly for her age. The woman saw how the soldiers leered at her. She commanded her daughter to remain in the filthy, flimsy tent they shared at all costs, lest the soldiers' glances result in something more serious. The daughter — withdrawing into her own shell of depression, fear and silence — always agreed. However, the woman knew that the soldiers were getting tired of having their fun with her alone. Soon, she would be the one left behind cowering in the tent when the *kapo* came. The woman knew she could not allow that. She had only to look at her daughter's hollow eyes, hear the stifled sobs she tried to hide as they slept on their unclean pallet, to know she must protect her child at all costs.



The pursuing footsteps are just two corners away as the woman catches up to the child at last. The child sits looking up at her from the darkened front stoop of a condemned tenement building. Her large green eyes stare out from a dirty face, wide and dancing in fear. The woman stops her crazed sprint and closes the last distance between herself and the frightened child at a cautious walk. The child has nowhere else to run, so she huddles into a tight ball, scrawny knees clutched to her frail chest.

The woman comes closer slowly, her eyes still alight from the chase. The soldier's footsteps are near, but she proceeds with caution. If she scares the child away, she will surely flush the frightened thing right into the soldier's arms. She lifts her hands peacefully and speaks.



"I will not let them harm you, precious one. They are coming, but they will not take you."

The woman's daughter looked at her with undisguised fear. "What do you mean, mother?" Her mother had been sitting quietly for hours since the *kapo* last returned her to the tent. The sun had descended and set, yet the older woman had said nothing.


"I heard the soldiers laughing as I left their barracks. The *kapo* will come for you in the morning."



"What do you mean?" the girl whispers. She is too frightened to speak any louder.

"Do not be afraid," the woman says, placing a gentle hand on the girl's dirty face and gazing at her with unspeakable pity. "They will not come before you and I have finished."





"Finished with what?" her daughter asked, shaken by the strange look in her mother's eyes. She did not know exactly *where* the *kapo* takes her mother each day, but she knew why. Over the months, she had seen the toll such treatment had taken on the older woman. The life had long since vanished from her mother's eyes. The girl shivered and huddled against the thin fabric of the tent.

"Don't be afraid," her mother said, taking off her dirty, threadbare scarf. "Put this on."



The orphan recoils as the strange woman takes the ancient shawl from around her shoulders and places it around the girl's, but she cannot move away. The intensity of the woman's brown eyes pins her.

"What's this for? I don't know you."



The woman flinched at that, but she did not back away. "It will be cold," she said. "They're coming for you. *Put this on.*"

Her daughter obeyed meekly, and the woman slipped the scarf around her neck and under her dark-brown hair. She wrapped it twice and laid the ends between the vague curves of the girl's budding breasts. As her daughter sat uncomfortably looking at her, the woman held the ends lightly between her fingers.



"You're scaring me," the girl says, swallowing and stretching her slender neck uncomfortably. She looks past the woman's shoulder and sees someone come into view down the alley. The woman doesn't seem to notice.

"They're coming," the woman says again. "They don't want me this time. They want you."

"Who?" the girl says. "Who are they?"

"They're devils," the woman tells her, her hands closing over the ends of the scarf. "They're through with me, and now they want to take you. They can't terrorize me any more, but they know you're still afraid of them."



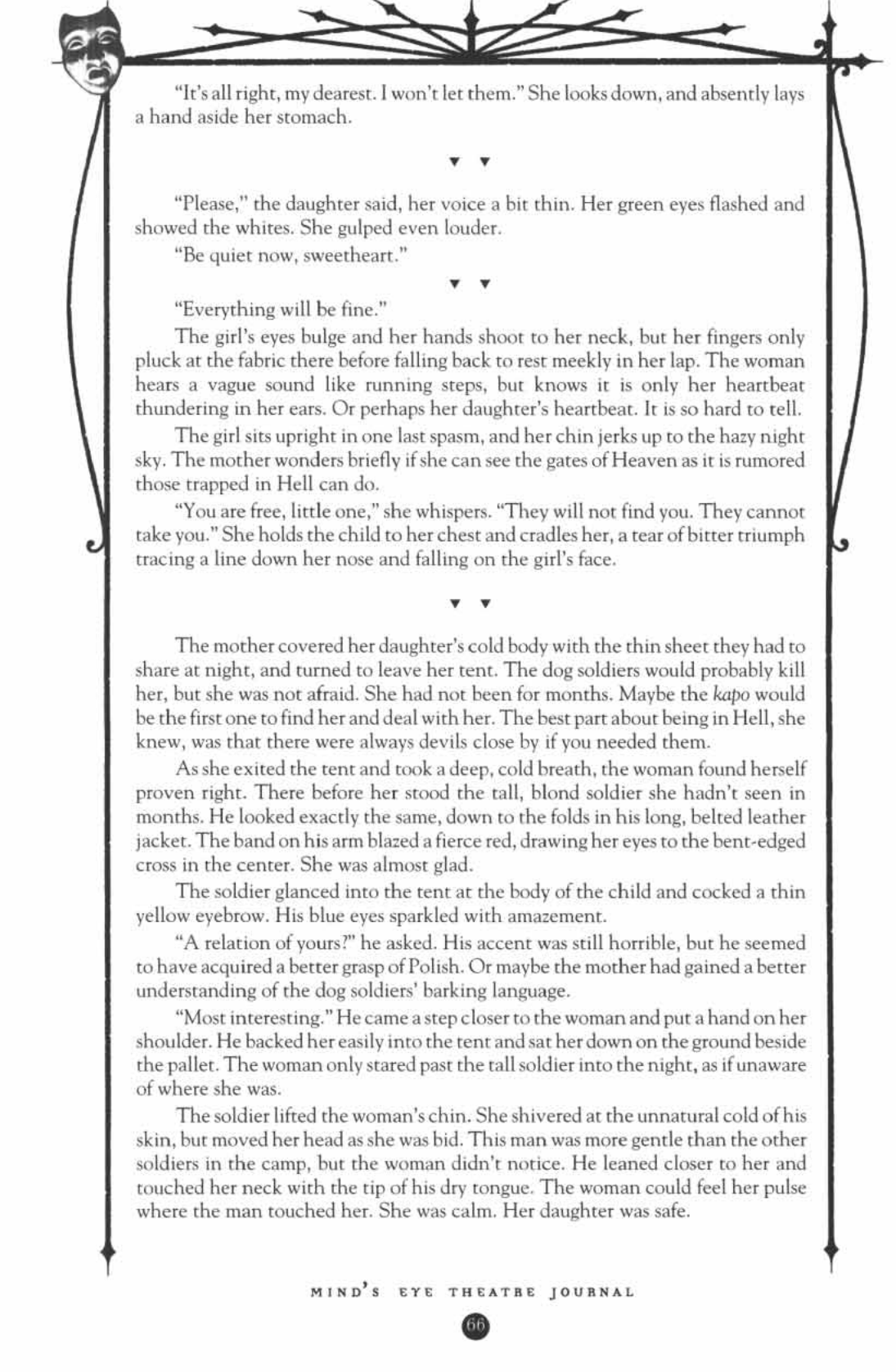
At that moment, the girl was more afraid of her mother than any soldier, and she leaned back, trying to put distance between the two of them. Her mother only bent closer, pulling uncomfortably on the ends of the scarf.

"They cannot take you."



"No one's coming," the girl says, gulping audibly under the edge of the woman's shawl. "I don't know what you're talking about. No one's trying to take me anywhere."

The strange woman with the flying, wild brown hair and the intense brown eyes only sighs.



"It's all right, my dearest. I won't let them." She looks down, and absently lays a hand aside her stomach.

▼ ▼

"Please," the daughter said, her voice a bit thin. Her green eyes flashed and showed the whites. She gulped even louder.

"Be quiet now, sweetheart."

▼ ▼

"Everything will be fine."

The girl's eyes bulge and her hands shoot to her neck, but her fingers only pluck at the fabric there before falling back to rest meekly in her lap. The woman hears a vague sound like running steps, but knows it is only her heartbeat thundering in her ears. Or perhaps her daughter's heartbeat. It is so hard to tell.

The girl sits upright in one last spasm, and her chin jerks up to the hazy night sky. The mother wonders briefly if she can see the gates of Heaven as it is rumored those trapped in Hell can do.

"You are free, little one," she whispers. "They will not find you. They cannot take you." She holds the child to her chest and cradles her, a tear of bitter triumph tracing a line down her nose and falling on the girl's face.

▼ ▼

The mother covered her daughter's cold body with the thin sheet they had to share at night, and turned to leave her tent. The dog soldiers would probably kill her, but she was not afraid. She had not been for months. Maybe the *kapo* would be the first one to find her and deal with her. The best part about being in Hell, she knew, was that there were always devils close by if you needed them.

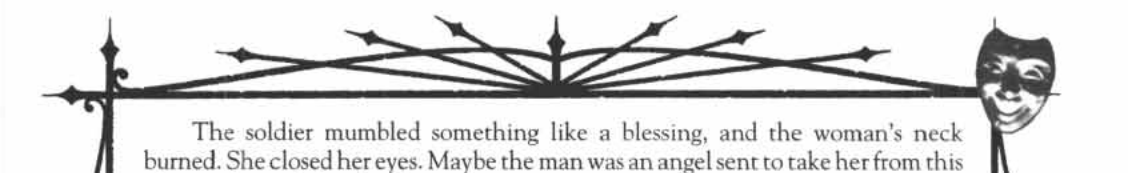
As she exited the tent and took a deep, cold breath, the woman found herself proven right. There before her stood the tall, blond soldier she hadn't seen in months. He looked exactly the same, down to the folds in his long, belted leather jacket. The band on his arm blazed a fierce red, drawing her eyes to the bent-edged cross in the center. She was almost glad.

The soldier glanced into the tent at the body of the child and cocked a thin yellow eyebrow. His blue eyes sparkled with amazement.

"A relation of yours?" he asked. His accent was still horrible, but he seemed to have acquired a better grasp of Polish. Or maybe the mother had gained a better understanding of the dog soldiers' barking language.

"Most interesting." He came a step closer to the woman and put a hand on her shoulder. He backed her easily into the tent and sat her down on the ground beside the pallet. The woman only stared past the tall soldier into the night, as if unaware of where she was.

The soldier lifted the woman's chin. She shivered at the unnatural cold of his skin, but moved her head as she was bid. This man was more gentle than the other soldiers in the camp, but the woman didn't notice. He leaned closer to her and touched her neck with the tip of his dry tongue. The woman could feel her pulse where the man touched her. She was calm. Her daughter was safe.



The soldier mumbled something like a blessing, and the woman's neck burned. She closed her eyes. Maybe the man was an angel sent to take her from this place to be with her family again.



Someone shakes the woman roughly from behind, and she opens her eyes. She turns to see a familiar man looking at her with anxiety. White clouds huff from his mouth as his breath freezes in the chill air.

"I've been trying to find you for hours," the man says. He runs his hand unconsciously through his long black hair and nervously tucks it into the collar of his stylish overcoat. His cheeks flush red from exertion and the cold, and he looks over his shoulder continuously. "What are you doing in this part of town?"

"She is safe," the woman answers dreamily. "I had to protect her from the soldiers. They would have come for her in the morning."

The man stares at her in confusion, his eyebrows drawn down into one black line. He shakes her shoulders roughly and says, "English. Speak English."

The woman blinks and tries to concentrate. Her friend hates it when she slips into her native tongue. She glances over her shoulder at the heap sprawled in the tenement doorway. "I was making sure—"

The man, her friend Alex, the one who takes care of her as she sleeps, looks past her at the body. His brown eyes widen and his jaw goes slack.

"Who is this child?"

"My daughter," the woman says, smiling with remembered pride. "She is so beautiful and pure. She is safe now."

Alex only gulps audibly and shakes his head. "We have to leave before someone finds us. Or *her*."

"It doesn't matter," the woman says, focusing on Alex for the first time. "She is safe. That is all I care about."

"Come on," Alex says, pulling the woman forward into a stumbling walk. "We may have to leave the city for good this time. Drake is tired of cleaning up after your messes. Did I tell you he ordered me to put you to Final Death if you did something like this again?"

"If it is what you want, Alex," the woman says, still looking back at the body. "I haven't seen Dmitri for a while. It would be nice to talk to him again."

Sighing, Alex pulls the woman deeper into the city, toward the nearest subway entrance. He could no more kill her than he could kill himself. He would sooner face the wrath of all the city's elders than live with the shame of causing the woman any harm.

Hopefully Drake will be able to cover this up, he thinks. He has done so before in worse situations. I doubt he'll even miss the two of us.

The woman shambles off after Alex dreamily. Alex will take care of her. He always has. And she has taken care of him. She would never let anything happen to him. No matter what dangers may come, she will make sure he stays safe with her.





MAYDAY!

AN OBLIVION STORY IN THREE PARTS

by Lindsay Woodcock

*What good would a magazine devoted to **Mind's Eye Theatre** be without a nod here or there to actual plot? Storytelling is, after all, what these games are all about, and you can't tell a good, evocative, interesting story without a winning plot. So, to that end, and in an attempt to help you keep your live-action chronicles current with **World of Darkness** continuity, we present a three-part story that will have direct ties to major events in the **World of Darkness** in 1999.*

History, whether in the real world or in the world of your game, so often happens without anyone noticing æ people and characters are so busy dealing with the minutia of day-to-day crises that they don't realize they're right in the middle of something of epic, sweeping proportions. Occasionally, though, something so momentous happens that those same people walk away, wide-eyed and speechless, with no doubt that they have just been part of history in all its grandeur. In a live-action game, this effect is priceless. You know you've put together a truly amazing game when your players and Narrators end the session stunned at the scope and drama of the evening's events.

Mayday! allows your **Oblivion** troupe to participate in such a momentous event. No ruining the surprise yet æ it's in three parts, so you have to wait until the end to see what happens æ but your Circle will participate in the biggest thing to happen in **Wraith** history since Charon's fateful battle with Gorool.

First, though, some technical notes. No ready-made story could possibly account for player creativity, Narrator preference or even pure chance. There are just too many variables at work in a live-action context to make for a single story that will work for everyone. Flexibility is essential. With that in mind, each installment is broken into individual scenes. The scene descriptions are then divided into two sections: **Hard Info** and **Choices**.



Hard Info presents facts, events and details that must somehow occur or be revealed for the chronicle to run as planned. How you work this pertinent information into the story is largely up to you, as Storyteller, but it *needs* to be included. Feel free to use existing social structures, Narrator characters or your favorite plot devices. The *how* is not important, as long as the *what* comes across.

Choices is just what it seems. We anticipate some of the things a Circle might do in the situations posed by **Hard Info**. Story flexibility is encouraged in these sections, as both Narrator and characters develop the plot. As long as the skeleton of the story æ the **Hard Info** æ is intact, don't worry about forcing its flesh into any particular shape.

While the adventure is designed for a small- to medium-sized Circle of wraiths, it can easily accommodate a larger troupe. Narrator characters, Spectres and all manner of other characters show up, and all of them need players to make the experience meet its potential. Again, feel free to use existing characters outside

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of the central Circle; having familiar elements introduce or elaborate on new plot threads increases the drama and believability of the game. Plus, employing existing characters to drive this plot offers direct motivation for the players' characters to get involved, and it makes the players feel like active participants in the development of events. Still, we include profiles for significant participants at the end of each installment in case you need to fill any holes.

A final note: The three parts of *Mayday!* mix and match with your existing game. You could wait until all three parts are released, then play them all together as a series, or you could play each part as it comes out in the **Journal**, separating episodes with events from your own chronicle.

Players, everything past this point is Storyteller material. If you don't want to spoil the surprise or clue yourself in before you actually play the game, read no further.

PART ONE: AMBASSADOR

SUGGESTIONS

Running this installment of *Mayday!* in your live-action chronicle requires only one Storyteller character who does not already exist in your game: Tadashi Nakagawa. Other useful characters for this plot include an “acquaintance” — be he a diplomatic envoy to the Jade Kingdom or simply the first Necropolis guard to spot Nakagawa — who introduces Nakagawa to the Circle; a secretive Heretic, should the Circle be able to locate the wraith from the “list” they find in the course of action; various members of officious Hierarchy bureaucracy; and even a Renegade or two.

Props for this installment of *Mayday!* include representations of the box Tadashi Nakagawa carries, as well as of the items in the box.

SCENE ONE

HARD INFO

- The Circle is introduced to (or comes across, if there are no existing allies or acquaintances to make introductions) Tadashi Nakagawa, a Jade wraith who claims to be on an ambassadorial trip to the higher-ups of the Necropolis. Nakagawa appears young, and is unfailingly polite. He carries a relic box about the size of a department-store gift box. He does not open the box and does not give any information about its contents.

- After approximately 10 minutes of play (or if the characters become inexcusably rude), Nakagawa bows and walks away, leaving the characters alone.

- The acquaintance (should there be one) leaves with Nakagawa.

CHOICES

- The Circle might be polite and friendly; any courtesy or goodwill the wraiths show Nakagawa is reciprocated.

- Depending on the individual characters, they might offer to take Nakagawa to the Hierarchy. Nakagawa declines such help.

- If the Circle is belligerent or antagonistic, the Jade wraith simply makes graceful excuses and leaves quickly. No matter how rude the Circle wraiths become, their attempts to bully or intimidate Nakagawa are unproductive.



SCENE TWO

HARD INFO

- Shortly after leaving the Circle, the Jade wraith drops into a Harrowing as one of his Fetters is destroyed suddenly (by an unknown attacker, as revealed in part three of this chronicle). The box does not go with him into the Harrowing.

- The box comes into the possession of the Circle, either delivered or found. It contains a relic *wakizashi* (Japanese short sword) with a foreign sigil carved into the hilt, a page of jotted notes and a list of names and locations.

- The notes read: "Find optimal points; solidify alliances; look for the unblinking."

- The list of names and locations refers to local Heretics and their Haunts. Most of the Heretics on the list are both high-Status and high-secrecy. The revelation that the names on the list are those of Heretics should come as something of a surprise to the wraiths, especially if the names are those of covert Heretics who already exist in your game.

- If a character takes the *wakizashi* out of the box and keeps it on his person for more than 10 minutes of game time, he begins to accumulate Temporary Angst due to a strong taint on the weapon. This effect should not be immediately obvious to the character, since the taint is subtle and seductive. The character is eventually subject to Catharsis.

CHOICES

- The characters may choose to not open the box, taking it directly to the authorities instead.

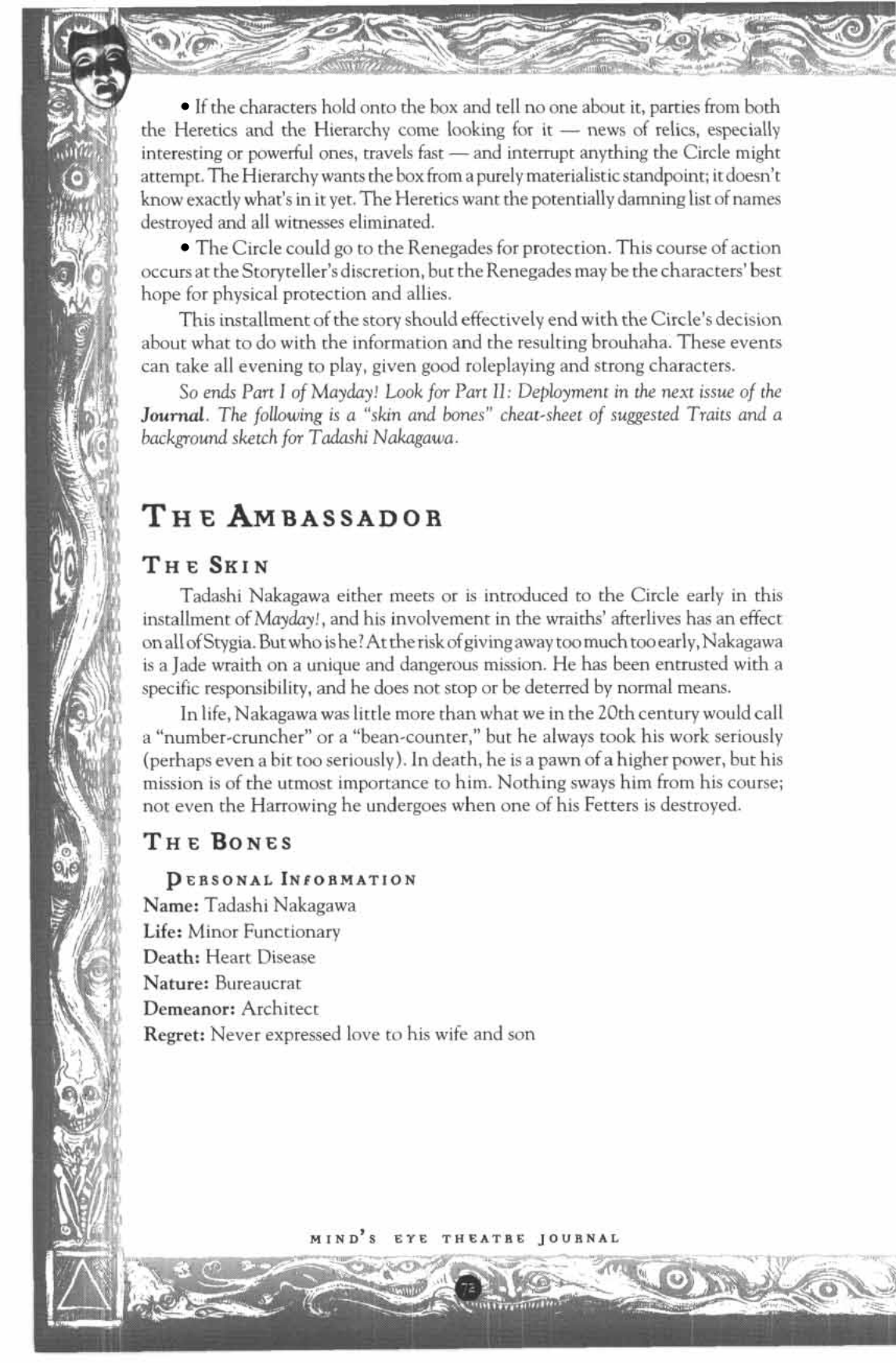
- The Circle might wait until Nakagawa comes back from his Harrowing and makes his way back to the Necropolis, and then try to interrogate him. This is somewhat problematic, since Nakagawa's Fetters are far away, and who knows what kind of red tape he'll run into when he appears back in the Jade Empire?

- They open the box. If any of the characters have Heretic status, they may make Static Mental Challenges to see if they recognize any of the names. A few names might be known to characters with high Hierarchy status. Again, not all of the names should be those of *recognized* Heretics. However, the names are *all* those of Heretics.

- If the Circle decides to investigate the names itself, trying to find out what's going on, the Heretics should be difficult to find. Should the Circle find any of them, the Heretics attempt to take the box and might well try to send the characters into Oblivion for "knowing too much."

- Should the group decide to head to the Hierarchy for help, it's in for a rough time. Unless one or more of the wraiths has at least two, if not three, Hierarchy Status Traits, the entire group is given the run-around until members explicitly refer to the Heretics by name or show someone the list. The Hierarchy is extremely suspicious: The functionary who sees the Circle takes the box and interrogates the characters intensely. If the characters play their cards right, the Hierarchy lets them go æ but not without setting a nigh-constant watch on them. Clumsy or belligerent roleplaying gets the wraiths in serious trouble: a fight, perhaps, or attempts to imprison, enslave or even soulforge them. The trouble should be escapable, though, to keep the story moving.

MAYDAY!



• If the characters hold onto the box and tell no one about it, parties from both the Heretics and the Hierarchy come looking for it — news of relics, especially interesting or powerful ones, travels fast — and interrupt anything the Circle might attempt. The Hierarchy wants the box from a purely materialistic standpoint; it doesn't know exactly what's in it yet. The Heretics want the potentially damning list of names destroyed and all witnesses eliminated.

• The Circle could go to the Renegades for protection. This course of action occurs at the Storyteller's discretion, but the Renegades may be the characters' best hope for physical protection and allies.

This installment of the story should effectively end with the Circle's decision about what to do with the information and the resulting brouhaha. These events can take all evening to play, given good roleplaying and strong characters.

So ends Part I of Mayday! Look for Part II: Deployment in the next issue of the Journal. The following is a "skin and bones" cheat-sheet of suggested Traits and a background sketch for Tadashi Nakagawa.

THE AMBASSADOR

THE SKIN

Tadashi Nakagawa either meets or is introduced to the Circle early in this installment of *Mayday!*, and his involvement in the wraiths' afterlives has an effect on all of Stygia. But who is he? At the risk of giving away too much too early, Nakagawa is a Jade wraith on a unique and dangerous mission. He has been entrusted with a specific responsibility, and he does not stop or be deterred by normal means.

In life, Nakagawa was little more than what we in the 20th century would call a "number-cruncher" or a "bean-counter," but he always took his work seriously (perhaps even a bit too seriously). In death, he is a pawn of a higher power, but his mission is of the utmost importance to him. Nothing sways him from his course; not even the Harrowing he undergoes when one of his Fetters is destroyed.

THE BONES

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Name: Tadashi Nakagawa

Life: Minor Functionary

Death: Heart Disease

Nature: Bureaucrat

Demeanor: Architect

Regret: Never expressed love to his wife and son



STATISTICS

Mental Traits: Alert, Calm, Cunning, Determined, Disciplined, Patient, Rational, Shrewd

Social Traits: Charming, Dignified, Diplomatic, Persuasive, Persuasive

Physical Traits: Athletic, Dextrous, Nimble, Resilient, Wiry

Abilities: Bureaucracy, Enigmas, Etiquette, Law, Martial Arts, Stealth, Subterfuge

ARCANOI

Intimation (all innates): The Gleaming, Deep Desiring, The Craving

Moliate (all innates): Sculpt, Martialry

Outrage (all innates): Wraithgrasp

Usury (all innates): Transfer, Charitable Trust, Exchange Rate

PASSIONS

Protect the Empire (Duty)

Advise Wife and Extended Family (Love)

Keep Records of Court History (Duty)

Gain Power (Greed)

FETTERS

[**Note:** One Fetter, the teacup, is destroyed during the course of the game.]

Brush with which he wrote at work

Ancestor shrine in his home

Teacup given by his great-grandfather

BACKGROUNDS

Jade Court Status 2

Living Family 1

Wraith Family 2

NAKAGAWA'S P'O (SHADOW)

The Perfectionist

DARK PASSIONS

Destroy Family (Hate)

Undermine Empire (Spite)

THORNS

Spectre Prestige

Shadow Trait: Brutal

MAYDAY!





FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

*The constant evolution of **Mind's Eye Theatre** brings new and different questions to the game. This month, we tackle questions and comments about **Laws of Elysium** and the elder game, as well as a couple of general Trait questions.*

Send your **Mind's Eye Theatre** questions to:

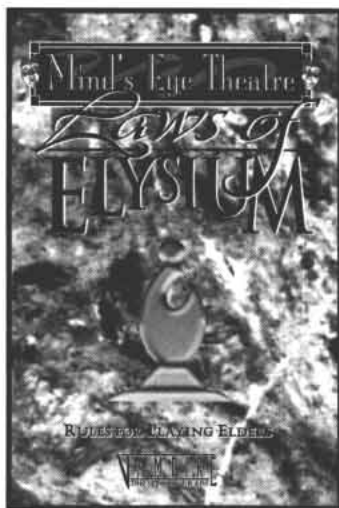
White Wolf

Attn: *Mind's Eye Theatre Journal*, *Frequently Asked Questions*

735 Park North Blvd.

Clarkston, GA 30021

carl@white-wolf.com



Q: In *Laws of Elysium*, Master-Level Disciplines are available to eighth or lower generation characters. In the tabletop game, vampires get the really powerful Disciplines only if they're seventh generation or lower. What gives?

A: Some troupes may wish to experiment with the new Master-Level Disciplines without adding elder powerhouses to the game — for them, eighth- (or even ninth-) generation Kindred are good candidates for these powers. However, if a large game hosts a few true elders (seventh or lower generation), it's generally a good idea to keep the Master Disciplines in the hands of those puissant characters. These powers are supposed to be rare and forbidding, after all! The key is to make sure that the Disciplines are available if you want to use them, without making them commonly available to everyone.

Q: The Thaumaturgy Path of Conjuring says that the vampire can't summon anything larger or heavier than himself, including a LAW rocket, but LAW rockets aren't that big. Also, the Permanency power says that Conjured items must be returned physically to their place of origin, when those items are really just created from nothing.

A: The note about LAW rockets is pertinent to game balance. A conjurer can generate a stake, a sword or a vial of blood, but some things should be too difficult to make (like high explosives or nuclear weapons). A good rule of thumb is to require the conjurer to have enough Abilities to actually build the item in question. Thus, the thaumaturge can't conjure a pistol without a few levels of Repair and Firearms; he needs a lot of Demolitions and Science to make explosives. Of course, simple items (like wooden stakes, metal bars and rocks) can be conjured without any special Abilities.



Permanently conjured items are fully real and solid. The confusion here comes from the fact that mortal *Conjuring* (see *Laws of the Hunt*) simply moves objects without creating things. An object moved with mortal *Conjuring* must be taken back to its place of origin if the conjurer intends to return it. Conversely, an object created with the Thaumaturgy Path of *Conjuring* has no "place of origin" since it was created from nothing.

Q: How come the new Discipline level for Chimerstry looks suspiciously like one of the old ones in *Laws of the Night*?

A: Because the minor difference is in motion. Illusions created with *Fata Morgana* (second Basic Chimerstry) cannot move; they are wholly static, though they can affect all of the senses. Illusions made with higher levels of Chimerstry can appear to move and interact with their surroundings.

Q: How come modern gargoyles can't fly while Dark Ages ones can?

A: Did we leave that line out? Silly us. Modern gargoyles do have wings, and they can fly. The gargoyle's flight speed depends on his level of the Visceratika Discipline; each level of the Discipline allows the gargoyle to fly 5 mph.

Q: Can an Assamite with high levels of Occult Influence use that capacity to learn other sects' rituals to get Thaumaturgy rituals using his Quietus Discipline?

A: What a strange and convoluted path. No, Quietus is not sufficient to learn rituals aside from the special Assamite ones. Thaumaturgy does not allow someone to learn Assamite rituals without Quietus, for that matter.

Q: Are *Bladed Hands* (from the ritual of the same name) visible?

A: No. When you invoke *Bladed Hands*, you become capable of cutting through things with your hands, but your limbs do not appear to change at all. Don't pick your nose.

Q: So what's the real skinny on *Spirit Thaumaturgy*? According to some sources, it works on wraiths. According to others, it's Umbral spirits. Which one is it?

A: *Spirit Thaumaturgy* is designed to contact and control Umbral spirits. Of course, only tainted spirits would ever deal willingly with a vampire. For the sake of expanding possibilities, Storytellers may allow *Spirit Thaumaturgy* to function against wraiths, but in general that's the purview of the Necromancy Discipline.

Q: How come there's no Master-Level Thaumaturgy in *Laws of Elysium*?

A: Well, technically, there is no Master Level in the Discipline of Thaumaturgy. "What, then—" you may ask, "—is the meaning of the article on page 41?" In that article, we use the term Master-Level more as a representative stroke than as a technical term. A master thaumaturge (like a pontifex, for instance) is more likely to have branched out into several different Thaumaturgical paths (or even created his own) rather than perfected one to a higher level. However, there are some rituals that are available to only the most trusted, the most wise and the most respected scholars of the clan, and those scholars can be considered thaumaturges of the Master Level.



Q: OK, so if there are Lasombra *antitribu*, how come there are no Tzimisce *antitribu* in *Laws of Elysium*, just Old Clan Tzimisce?

A: Because there's maybe something like one Tzimisce in the Camarilla. Tzimisce *antitribu* are about as common as Salubri, and as such their differences from the main clan can't be covered by generalities — they are unique and extremely bizarre individuals.

Q: Why didn't the Ogham Discipline from *The Long Night* get an extra level in *Laws of Elysium*?

A: Because Ogham is already a dying Discipline in 1198, and its powers are limited. If you are absolutely fired up to have an additional level (perhaps for balance purposes), try this:

INSCRIBE THE CURSE (SECOND INTERMEDIATE)

The Lhiannan traces runic glyphs of a foe's true name on her body, thus gaining power over that enemy. You must know your foe's true name, and you must expend two Blood Traits to trace the unusual runes. The runes must be visible to the enemy in order to function, and you must make a Mental Challenge when you first engage your opponent. The effects of the runes last until the runes are removed or until you suffer two health levels of damage (thus obscuring them).

You may choose one of four effects for the runes: affecting the body renders the victim impotent and unable to use Blood Traits; the mind causes the foe to suffer from the Negative Traits: *Oblivious* x2; the voice makes the target mute; and affecting the soul makes the opponent lose all ties in tests against frenzy. You may use only one rune at a time, so you can choose only one effect and impose it against one person.

(Note: This power causes Ogham to have more Intermediate levels than Basic levels. Such is the curse of trying to learn a dying Discipline — it's hard!)

Q: What are the Attribute Trait maximums for changelings and wraiths in *The Shining Host* and *Oblivion*?

A: In both cases, a character's effective age comes into play. Obviously, most wraiths and changelings won't beat up on elder vampires, so their Traits are not always as high... but an old and experienced character always has other tricks.

For changelings, the character's seeming determines Trait maximums. Childlings are limited to 10 Traits in each category except Physical, for which they can have no more than six Traits. Wilders can have up to 12 Traits in each category, and grumps may have up to 14 Traits in each category. A childling redcap won't bite any vampires in half, but watch out for elder trolls.

Wraiths are products of self-image. A wraith's personal characteristics are a reflection of the individual's internalized self-perceptions. As a result, old wraiths often surpass the limits of their meat-bodies, taking themselves to new levels of ability. Enfants (newly dead wraiths) are limited to 10 (just dead) or 11 (dead for a few years) Traits in each category. Lemures (fairly old wraiths, maybe a few decades in age) can have up to 12 or 13 Traits, while Gaunts (centuries-old wraiths) can have 14 or sometimes even more Traits. Players are unlikely to play wraiths older than young Lemures, though. A fair compromise is to allow a wraith character to start with a limit of 10 Traits, but to improve to 11 and 12 after six months and one year of play, respectively.

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OKAY, KIDS. SMALL CONFESSION TO MAKE: THIS EVENT REPORT ISN'T THE FRUIT OF MY OWN RESEARCH, OR EVEN A BUNCH OF STUFF I TOOK THE TIME TO GATHER MYSELF. TO BE HONEST, I LIFTED IT RIGHT OUT OF THE SUMMER 1998 ISSUE OF THE REQUIEM — I'M TALKING FORMAT AND EVERYTHING. TO PREVENT FURTHER PILFERING OF THIS NATURE (AND TO GIVE ME YET MORE REAL WORK TO DO), SEND ME UPDATED INFORMATION PERSONALLY SO I CAN SPREAD THE WORD ABOUT YOUR CONVENTIONS, GAMES AND UPCOMING EVENTS. JUST REMEMBER, THIS PUBLICATION IS QUARTERLY, SO THE NEXT ISSUE IS GOING TO COVER JUNE THROUGH AUGUST. SUBMIT ACCORDINGLY. THANKS, KIDS.

VAMPIRE EVENTS

NORTHWESTERN US

Dark Necropolis; Kitsap WA
Every Saturday
hatchet@cutter.sincom.com
(360) 874-9195

Tacoma; Tacoma, WA
Second, third, fourth & fifth Sunday of
each month
sheperd@darkdestiny.com
(253) 581-8728

Of No Concern; Eugene, OR
First Saturday of each month
Jmcloud@gladstone.uoregon.edu

Theatre of Roses; Portland, OR
Every Saturday
Kewi-Cee Chu, kc@csua.berkeley.edu

Seattle; Seattle, WA
Second and third Sunday of each month
seattledomain@usa.net

Outlands; South King County, WA
Second Sunday of each month
tsigane@wizards.com

Nox ad Infinitum; Fairbanks, AK
Every Saturday
fsdck@aurora.alaska.edu

Ivory Masque; Anchorage, AK
Every Monday
glitter_boy@hotmail.com

SOUTHWESTERN US

Domain of Mountain Shadows; Provo, UT
Every Tuesday
Nikki McCoriston,
N.Burton@m.cc.utah.edu
(801) 363-3959

Moonlight Masquerade; Marysville, CA
Every Saturday (8 pm)
Jennifer Young, kaidin@syix.com

Labyrinth of Crying Shadows (Sabbat
Game); Sacramento, CA
Every Friday
Adam Abramson,
vallombrosa@hotmail.com

EVENT HORIZON: UPCOMING LARP EVENTS

NORTHCENTRAL US

Dominion of Solitude; Topeka, KS
Second Saturday of each month
Jeffery P. Harrington,
harri999@geocities.com

Ground Zero; Colorado Springs, CO
Every other Thursday
Neil Parry, cyricp@aol.com
(719) 687-2946

SOUTHCENTRAL US

Crimson Tear Society; Jonesboro, AR
First and third Saturday of each month
Tom McFarland,
thomasmc@fastdata.net
(870) 931-0959

Kentucky Fried; Dallas, TX
Fourth Saturday of each month
Lance Gillson,
nooneofconsequence@usa.net
(972) 788-1895

Fourth Tower Falling; Dallas, TX
First Saturday of each month
David Doub, Brujah@gte.net
(972) 788-1895

Eighth Legion; Dallas, TX
Fifth Saturday of each month
James Potter, kingsnight@hotmail.com
(972) 788-1895

Legio Noctem; Dallas, TX
Third Saturday of every month
Billy Lucas, williamlucas@juno.com
(972) 788-1895

Bryan/College Station; B/CS, TX
Second and fourth Saturday every month
Ken Reinertson, khr7057@unix.tamu.edu

THE GREAT LAKES

Shadowgate Society; St. Louis, MO
Third Saturday of each month
Jamie Schneider, jackon@juno.com
(314) 837-3640

NORTHEAST US

Boston, MA
First and third Saturday of each month
Sean Donnelly
(617) 656-2891

SOUTHEAST US

House of the Sanguine Moon; Tampa, FL
First and third Saturday of every month
Hope Summerall, zandria@hotmail.com

Charlestonus Ab Noctum; Charleston, SC
First two Fridays of every month
Ian Betts, alistergarle@hotmail.com

Athens by Night; Athens, GA
Alternating Saturdays beginning March 13th
Storyteller List abn-st@math.gatech.edu

Eclipsed Moon; Charleston, SC
Third Friday of every month
Ian Betts, alistergarle@hotmail.com

Blood Moon; Charleston, SC
Fourth Saturday of every month
Ian Betts, alisterlegare@hotmail.com

GAROU

NORTHWEST US

Tacoma; Tacoma, WA
 First, third and fifth Saturday of each month
 sheperd@darkdestiny.com
 (253) 581-8728

Of No Concern; Eugene, OR
 Second and fourth Saturday of every month
 Jmcloud@gladstone.uoregon.edu

Seattle; Seattle, WA
 Second and fourth Saturday of every month
 seattledomain@usa.net

Olde Guard; Anchorage, AK
 Every Sunday
 Tom Alexander,
 nightstalker@customcpu.com

NORTHCENTRAL US

Knights of Rage; Colorado Springs, CO
 Every other Thursday
 Travis Page, AllmityBob@aol.com
 (719) 447-0399

SOUTHCENTRAL US

Crimson Tear Society; Jonesboro, AR
 First and third Saturday of every month
 Tom McFarland, thomasmc@fastdata.net
 (870) 931-0959

Fourth Tower Falling; Dallas, TX
 First Saturday of each month
 Matt Ragan, matt_ragan@hotmail.com
 (972) 788-1895

Bryan/College Station; B/CS, TX
 Second and fourth Saturday of each month
 Ken Reinertson, khr7057@unix.tamu.edu

SOUTHEAST US

House of the Sanguine Moon; Tampa, FL
 Second and fourth Saturday of each month
 Hope Summerall, zandria@hotmail.com

Onyx Illuminatus; Charleston, SC
 First and third Sunday of each month
 Ian Betts, alisterlegare@hotmail.com

OTHERS (UNSPECIFIED AND MIXED GAMES)

Nox Imperium; Longview, WA
 Every Monday of each month
 katzmeow@kalama.com

Trails End Troupe; Salem, OR
 Second and fourth Saturday of every
 month
 Coordinatrix@hotmail.com

Outlands; South King County, WA
 Fourth Saturday of each month
 tsigane@wizards.com