

IMMORTALS™

the World of Darkness



IMMORTALS™



BY

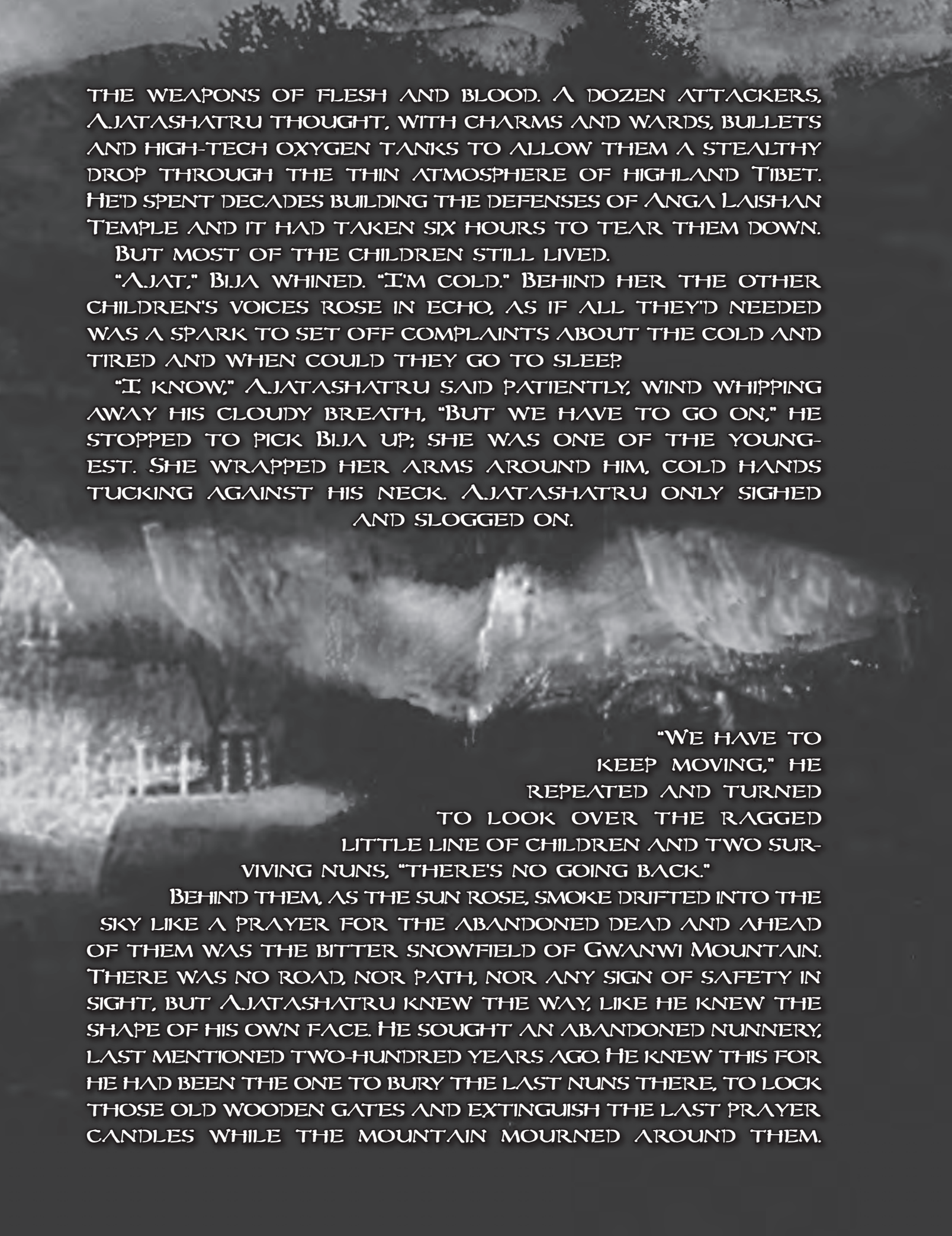
DAIRE ELLIOTT | FILOMENA HILL | MATTHEW MCFARLAND |

JOHN SNEAD

PRICE OF COMPASSION

ON
THE
GREAT MOUNTAINTOPS,
THE AIR BRAVED ONLY BY GEESE, HOW COULD
ANYONE EXPECT THE ENEMY TO COME? AJATASHATRU HAD
WARDED THE GATES, SET GUARDIANS BOTH MYSTICAL AND
TECHNOLOGICAL ON THE WINDING PATHS, PREPARED THE SIN-
GLE BRIDGE, DESIGNED THE TEMPLE TO REPEL INVADERS, LAID
TRAPS, AND SCATTERED THE WINKING RED EYES OF WIRELESS
CAMERAS ACROSS COURTYARDS AND DOWN CRAMPED HALL-
WAYS. WHEN THE ENEMY CAME, THEY CAME FROM THE STAR-
SCATTERED SKY.

THEY WEREN'T GHOSTS OR DAEMONS - NO MATTER HOW
FRIGHTENED THE CHILDREN WERE - BUT MEN, CREATURES OF
FLESH AND BLOOD AND THE WORLD. THEY DROPPED OUT OF
THE DARKNESS ABOVE THE HIGH MORTARLESS WALLS, PASSING
THE PRAYER FLAGS - AND THEIR MYSTICAL WARDS - WITH-
OUT LEAVING A TRACE OR SETTING OFF ALARMS. SO,
AJATASHATRU MIGHT SUSPECT VAMPIRES, OR
MAGICIANS. WHEN THEY HIT THE GROUND
IT WAS WITH KALASHNIKOVS
AND TEAR GAS;



THE WEAPONS OF FLESH AND BLOOD. A DOZEN ATTACKERS, AJATASHATRU THOUGHT, WITH CHARMS AND WARDS, BULLETS AND HIGH-TECH OXYGEN TANKS TO ALLOW THEM A STEALTHY DROP THROUGH THE THIN ATMOSPHERE OF HIGHLAND TIBET. HE'D SPENT DECADES BUILDING THE DEFENSES OF ANGA LAISHAN TEMPLE AND IT HAD TAKEN SIX HOURS TO TEAR THEM DOWN.

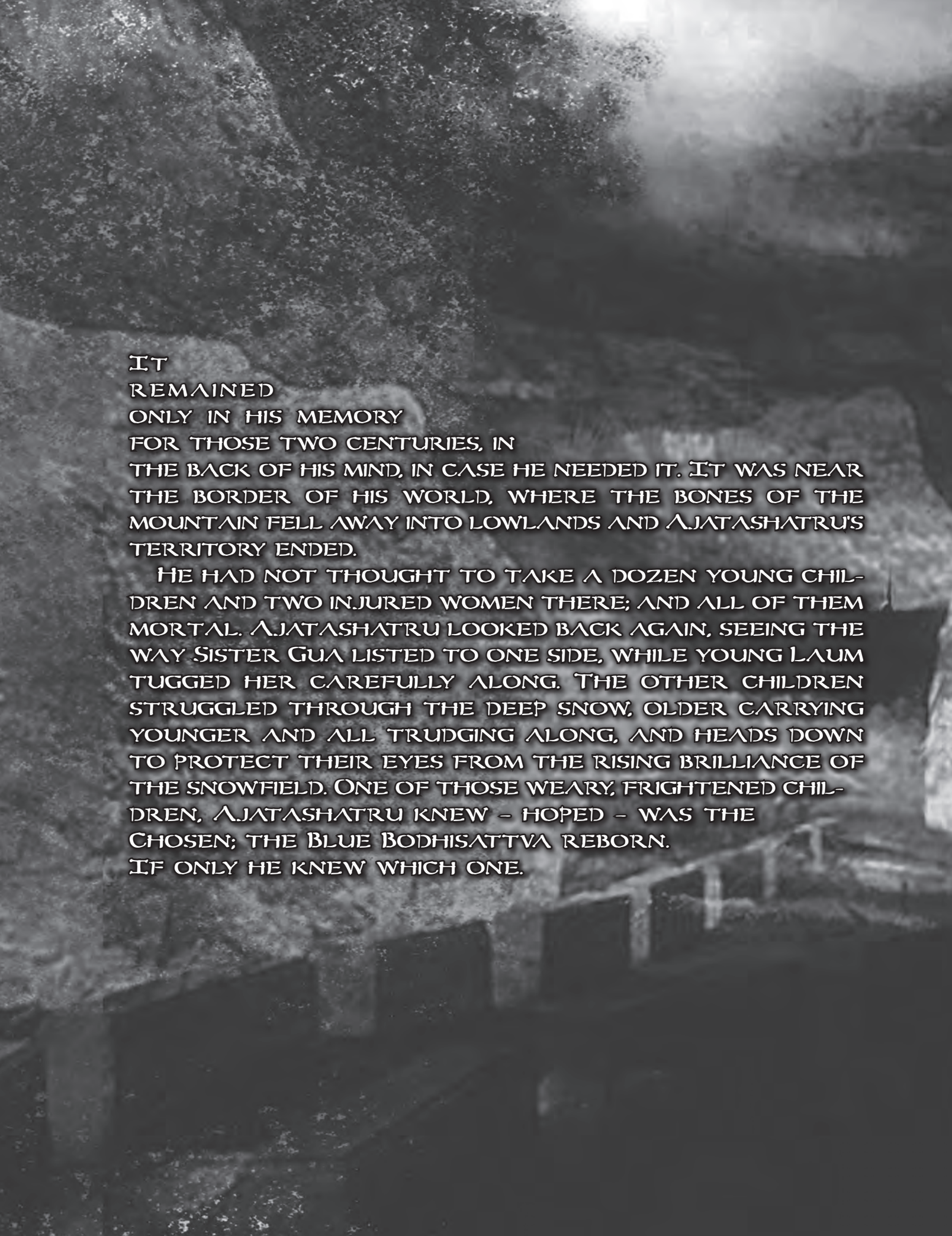
BUT MOST OF THE CHILDREN STILL LIVED.

"AJAT," BIJA WHINED. "I'M COLD." BEHIND HER THE OTHER CHILDREN'S VOICES ROSE IN ECHO, AS IF ALL THEY'D NEEDED WAS A SPARK TO SET OFF COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE COLD AND TIRED AND WHEN COULD THEY GO TO SLEEP?

"I KNOW," AJATASHATRU SAID PATIENTLY, WIND WHIPPING AWAY HIS CLOUDY BREATH, "BUT WE HAVE TO GO ON," HE STOPPED TO PICK BIJA UP; SHE WAS ONE OF THE YOUNGEST. SHE WRAPPED HER ARMS AROUND HIM, COLD HANDS TUCKING AGAINST HIS NECK. AJATASHATRU ONLY SIGHED AND SLOGGED ON.

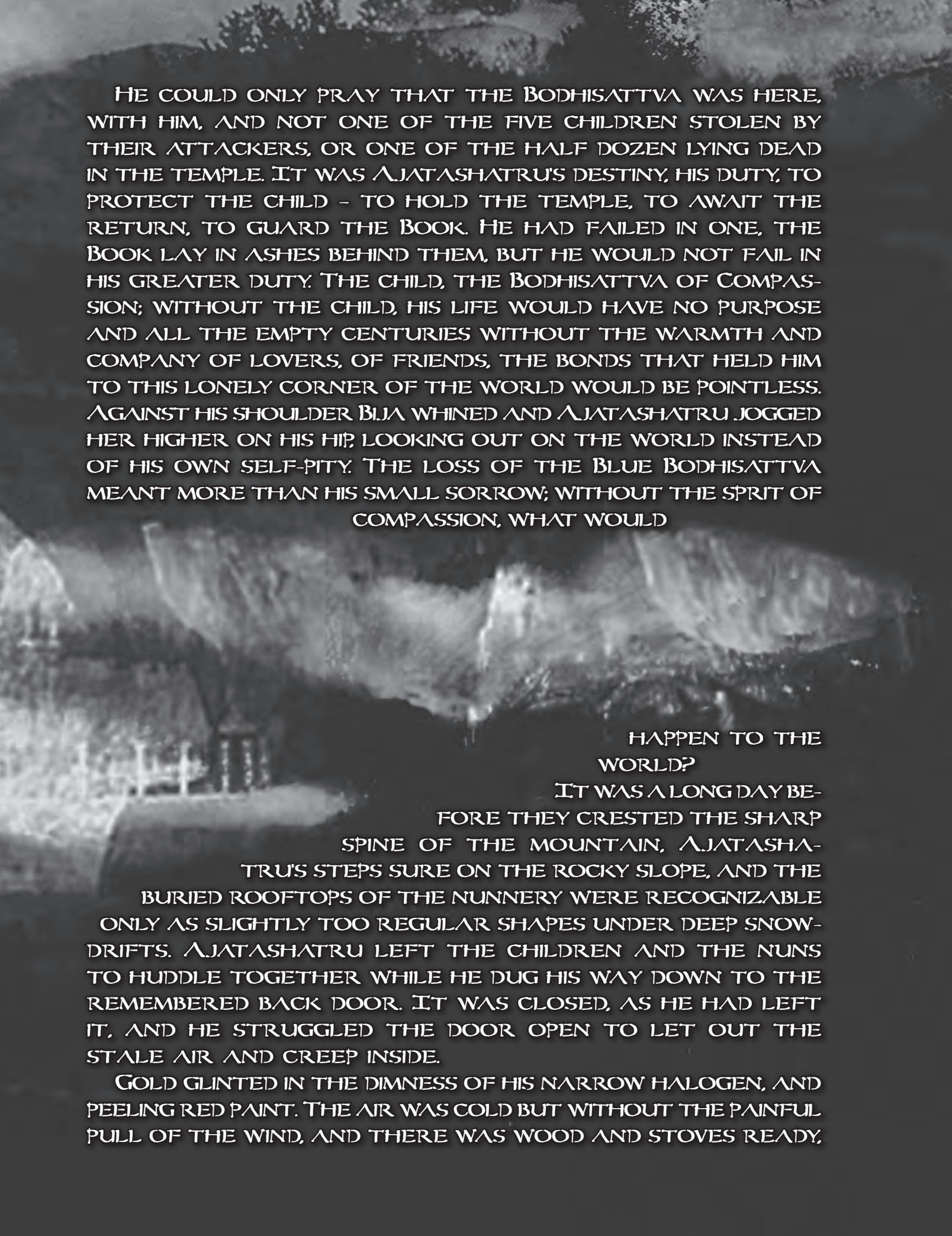
"WE HAVE TO
KEEP MOVING," HE
REPEATED AND TURNED
TO LOOK OVER THE RAGGED
LITTLE LINE OF CHILDREN AND TWO SUR-
VIVING NUNS, "THERE'S NO GOING BACK."

BEHIND THEM, AS THE SUN ROSE, SMOKE DRIFTED INTO THE SKY LIKE A PRAYER FOR THE ABANDONED DEAD AND AHEAD OF THEM WAS THE BITTER SNOWFIELD OF GWANWI MOUNTAIN. THERE WAS NO ROAD, NOR PATH, NOR ANY SIGN OF SAFETY IN SIGHT, BUT AJATASHATRU KNEW THE WAY, LIKE HE KNEW THE SHAPE OF HIS OWN FACE. HE SOUGHT AN ABANDONED NUNNERY, LAST MENTIONED TWO-HUNDRED YEARS AGO. HE KNEW THIS FOR HE HAD BEEN THE ONE TO BURY THE LAST NUNS THERE, TO LOCK THOSE OLD WOODEN GATES AND EXTINGUISH THE LAST PRAYER CANDLES WHILE THE MOUNTAIN MOURNED AROUND THEM.



IT
REMAINED
ONLY IN HIS MEMORY
FOR THOSE TWO CENTURIES, IN
THE BACK OF HIS MIND, IN CASE HE NEEDED IT. IT WAS NEAR
THE BORDER OF HIS WORLD, WHERE THE BONES OF THE
MOUNTAIN FELL AWAY INTO LOWLANDS AND AJATASHATRU'S
TERRITORY ENDED.

HE HAD NOT THOUGHT TO TAKE A DOZEN YOUNG CHILDREN AND TWO INJURED WOMEN THERE; AND ALL OF THEM MORTAL. AJATASHATRU LOOKED BACK AGAIN, SEEING THE WAY SISTER GUA LISTED TO ONE SIDE, WHILE YOUNG LAUM TUGGED HER CAREFULLY ALONG. THE OTHER CHILDREN STRUGGLED THROUGH THE DEEP SNOW, OLDER CARRYING YOUNGER AND ALL TRUDGING ALONG, AND HEADS DOWN TO PROTECT THEIR EYES FROM THE RISING BRILLIANCE OF THE SNOWFIELD. ONE OF THOSE WEARY, FRIGHTENED CHILDREN, AJATASHATRU KNEW – HOPED – WAS THE CHOSEN; THE BLUE BODHISATTVA REBORN. IF ONLY HE KNEW WHICH ONE.

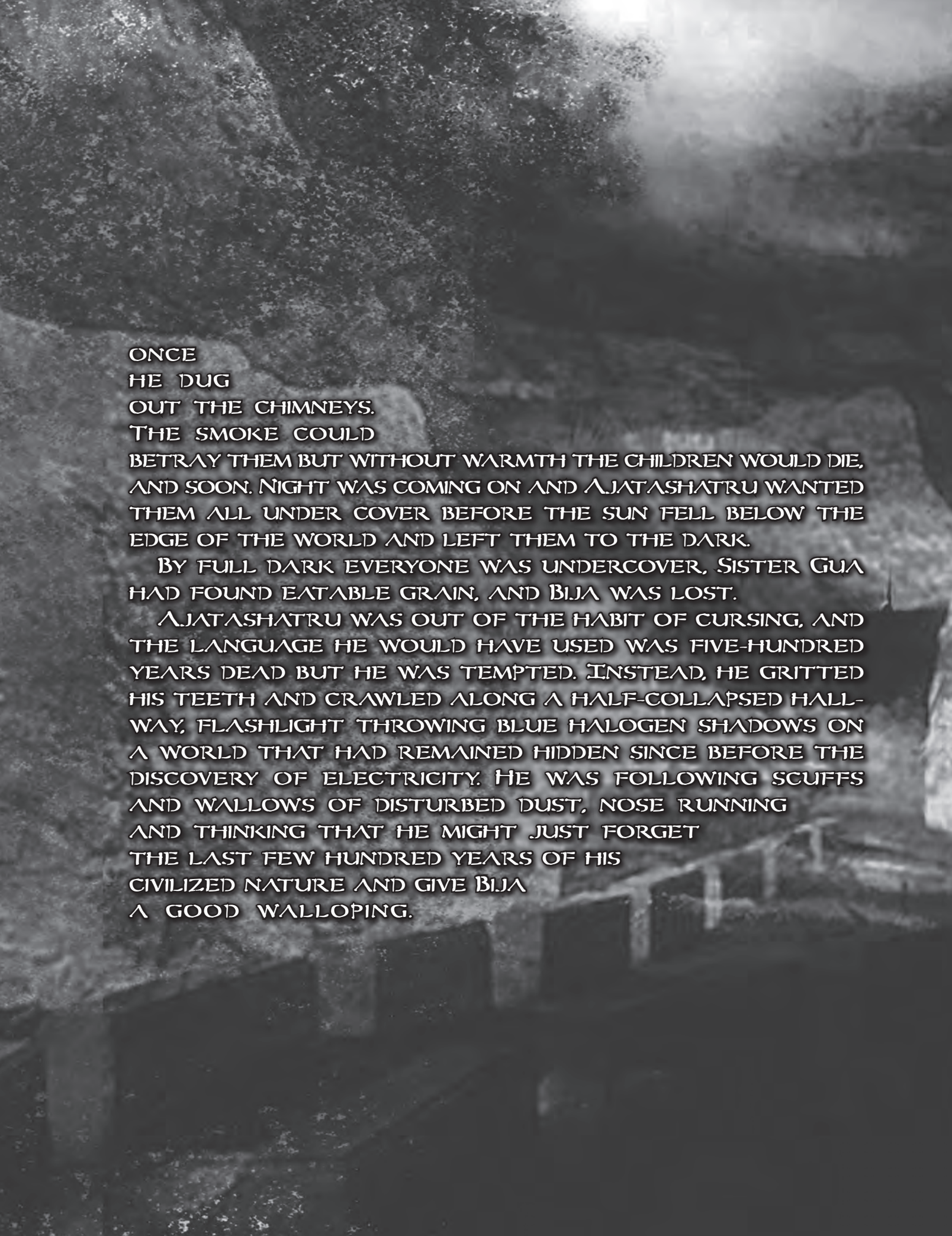


HE COULD ONLY PRAY THAT THE BODHISATTVA WAS HERE, WITH HIM, AND NOT ONE OF THE FIVE CHILDREN STOLEN BY THEIR ATTACKERS, OR ONE OF THE HALF DOZEN LYING DEAD IN THE TEMPLE. IT WAS AJATASHATRU'S DESTINY, HIS DUTY, TO PROTECT THE CHILD - TO HOLD THE TEMPLE, TO AWAIT THE RETURN, TO GUARD THE BOOK. HE HAD FAILED IN ONE, THE BOOK LAY IN ASHES BEHIND THEM, BUT HE WOULD NOT FAIL IN HIS GREATER DUTY. THE CHILD, THE BODHISATTVA OF COMPASSION; WITHOUT THE CHILD, HIS LIFE WOULD HAVE NO PURPOSE AND ALL THE EMPTY CENTURIES WITHOUT THE WARMTH AND COMPANY OF LOVERS, OF FRIENDS, THE BONDS THAT HELD HIM TO THIS LONELY CORNER OF THE WORLD WOULD BE POINTLESS. AGAINST HIS SHOULDER BIJA WHINED AND AJATASHATRU JOGGED HER HIGHER ON HIS HIP, LOOKING OUT ON THE WORLD INSTEAD OF HIS OWN SELF-PITY. THE LOSS OF THE BLUE BODHISATTVA MEANT MORE THAN HIS SMALL SORROW; WITHOUT THE SPRIT OF COMPASSION, WHAT WOULD

HAPPEN TO THE
WORLD?

IT WAS A LONG DAY BEFORE THEY CRESTED THE SHARP SPINE OF THE MOUNTAIN, AJATASHATRU'S STEPS SURE ON THE ROCKY SLOPE, AND THE BURIED ROOFTOPS OF THE NUNNERY WERE RECOGNIZABLE ONLY AS SLIGHTLY TOO REGULAR SHAPES UNDER DEEP SNOW-DRIFTS. AJATASHATRU LEFT THE CHILDREN AND THE NUNS TO HUDDLE TOGETHER WHILE HE DUG HIS WAY DOWN TO THE REMEMBERED BACK DOOR. IT WAS CLOSED, AS HE HAD LEFT IT, AND HE STRUGGLED THE DOOR OPEN TO LET OUT THE STALE AIR AND CREEP INSIDE.

GOLD GLINTED IN THE DIMNESS OF HIS NARROW HALOGEN, AND PEELING RED PAINT. THE AIR WAS COLD BUT WITHOUT THE PAINFUL PULL OF THE WIND, AND THERE WAS WOOD AND STOVES READY,



ONCE
HE DUG
OUT THE CHIMNEYS.
THE SMOKE COULD
BETRAY THEM BUT WITHOUT WARMTH THE CHILDREN WOULD DIE,
AND SOON. NIGHT WAS COMING ON AND AJATASHATRU WANTED
THEM ALL UNDER COVER BEFORE THE SUN FELL BELOW THE
EDGE OF THE WORLD AND LEFT THEM TO THE DARK.

BY FULL DARK EVERYONE WAS UNDERCOVER, SISTER GUA
HAD FOUND EATABLE GRAIN, AND BIJA WAS LOST.

AJATASHATRU WAS OUT OF THE HABIT OF CURSING, AND
THE LANGUAGE HE WOULD HAVE USED WAS FIVE-HUNDRED
YEARS DEAD BUT HE WAS TEMPTED. INSTEAD, HE GRITTED
HIS TEETH AND CRAWLED ALONG A HALF-COLLAPSED HALL-
WAY, FLASHLIGHT THROWING BLUE HALOGEN SHADOWS ON
A WORLD THAT HAD REMAINED HIDDEN SINCE BEFORE THE
DISCOVERY OF ELECTRICITY. HE WAS FOLLOWING SCUFFS
AND WALLOWS OF DISTURBED DUST, NOSE RUNNING
AND THINKING THAT HE MIGHT JUST FORGET
THE LAST FEW HUNDRED YEARS OF HIS
CIVILIZED NATURE AND GIVE BIJA
A GOOD WALLOPING.



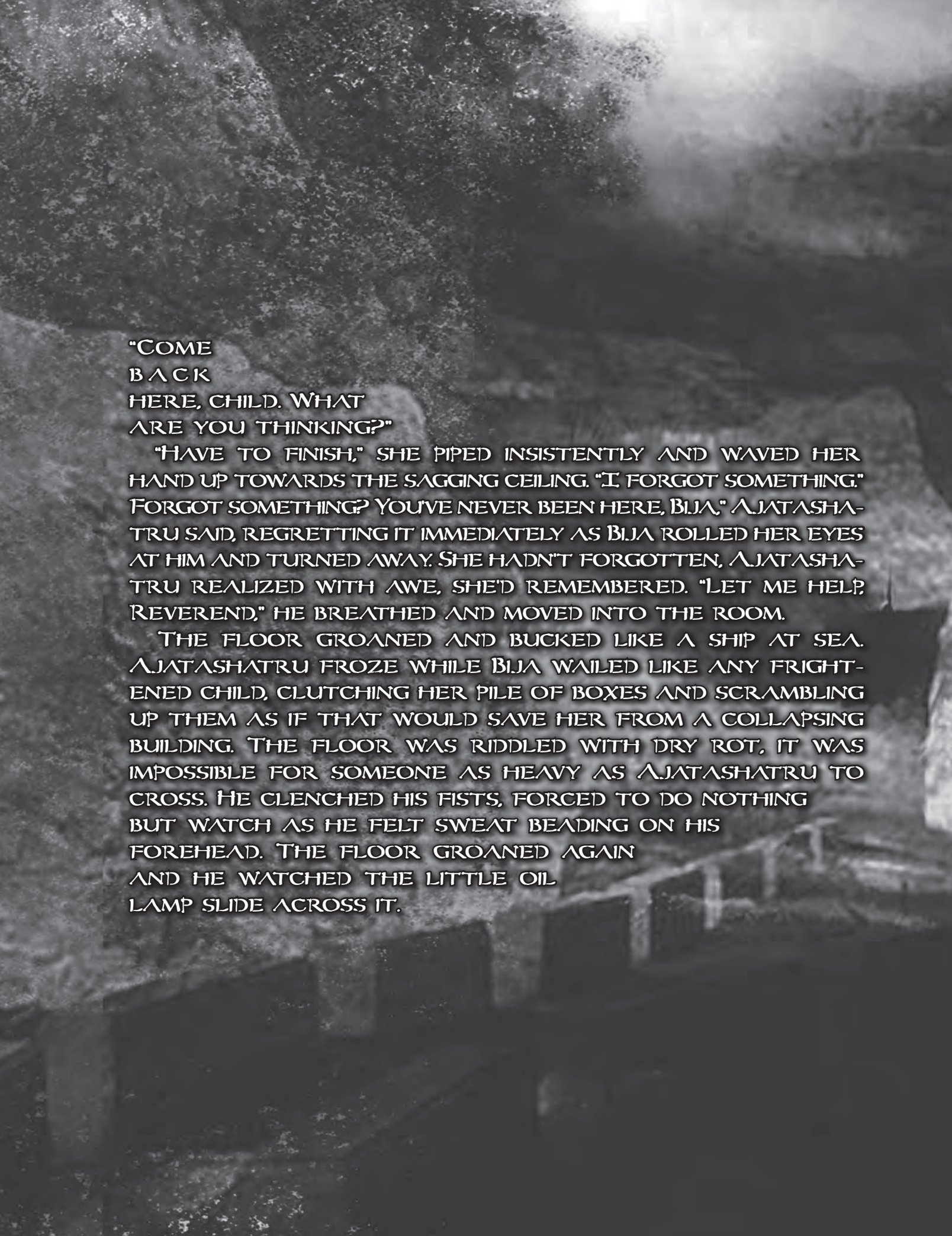
"OF ALL THE TIMES TO WANDER," HE GROANED.

DUTY TORE HIM BETWEEN THE CHILD - ALONE IN A RUINED BUILDING - AND THE CHILDREN DEFENSELESS BEHIND HIM. AJATASHATRU STOPPED, CROUCHING BACK ON HIS HEELS AND PEERING INTO THE DARKNESS. THE HALLWAYS OF THE OLD NUNNERY WERE DANGEROUS, THE FLOORS WEAK, THE WALLS READY TO FALL AT A BREATH. BEHIND HIM, THE SURVIVING CHILDREN WERE HUDDLED AROUND A PALTRY FIRE WHILE ENEMIES PROWLED ABOUT, SEARCHING WITH ALL THE RESOURCES OF ANCIENT MAGIC AND MODERN TECHNOLOGY. AJATASHATRU WAS THEIR DEFENDER, SWORN TO LIVE - FOREVER - AND DIE IN THE SERVICE OF THESE TEMPLES AND MONASTERIES. EVERY MOMENT HE LEFT THEM ALONE WAS ONE WHERE THEY WERE MORE VULNERABLE TO ATTACK. WAS ONE WORTH RISKING ALL?

AHEAD, HE HEARD SCRAPING AND HE CRAWLED ON, HEAD BOWED AGAINST THE TOO CLOSE CEILING.

BIJA WAS IN ONE OF THE TINY STUDY ROOMS, WHERE ROTTING PRAYER FLAGS LITTERED THE FLOOR AND THE PAINTED FACES OF GUARDIAN DAEMONS WERE DEFACED BY AGE AND WEAR. A TALL LAMP FLICKERED, TURNING THE WHOLE ROOM INTO A FIRE HAZARD AS WELL AS ONE IMMINENTLY CLOSE TO COLLAPSE. STRUGGLING, STILL BUNDLED IN HER QUILTED JACKET, THE FLAPS OF HER YELLOW HAT JINGLING WITH BELLS, BIJA WAS DRAGGING A RICKETY STEPSTOOL ACROSS THE WARPED FLOOR TO PILE ON TOP OF A PRECARIOUS COLLECTION OF SCROLL CASES.

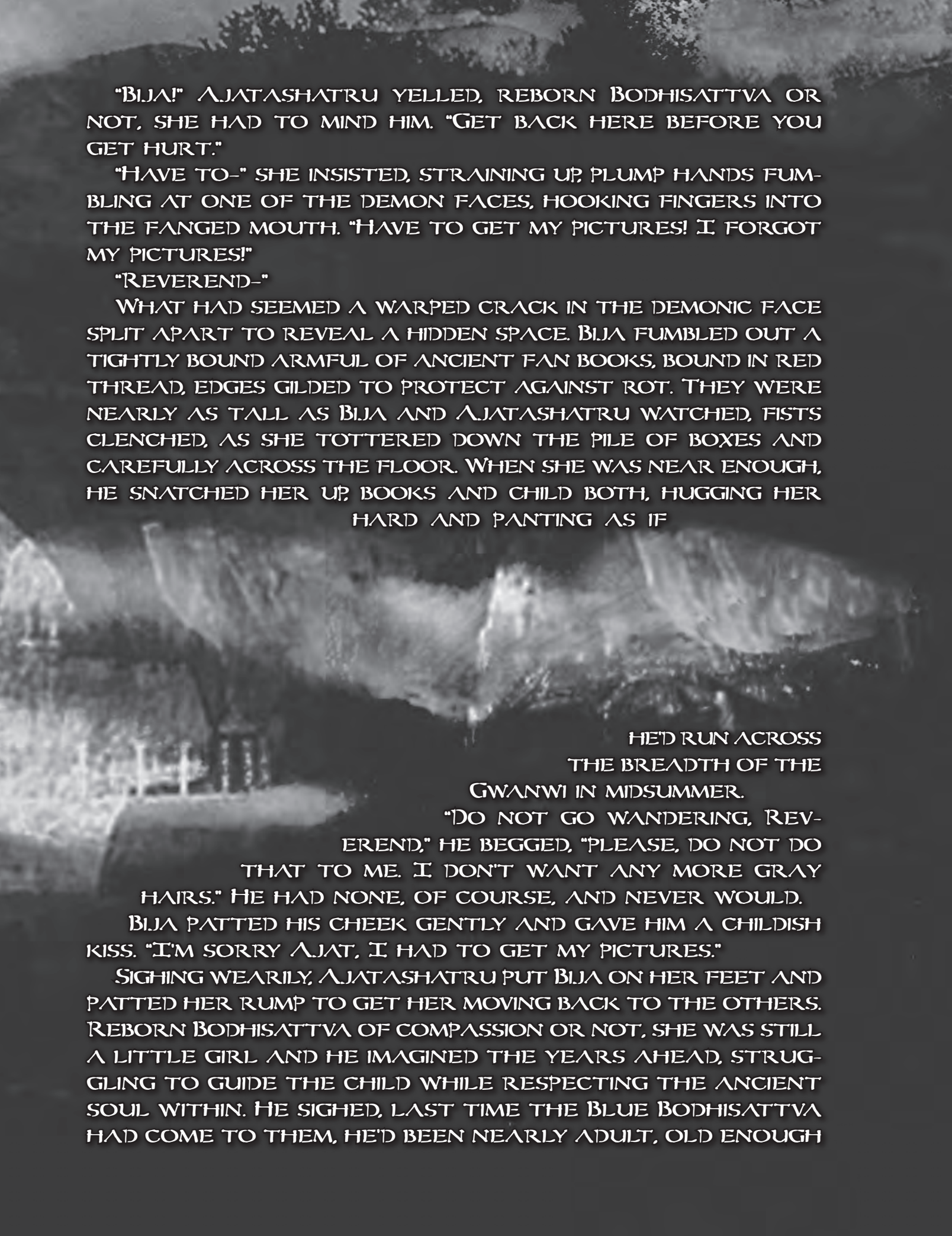
"BIJA," AJATASHATRU CALLED SHARPLY AND SHE GLANCED AROUND ALL BRIGHT DARK EYES AND SCRAGGLY HAIR. SHE GAVE HIM A SHY WAVE BUT DIDN'T HALT HER WORK.



"COME
BACK
HERE, CHILD. WHAT
ARE YOU THINKING?"

"HAVE TO FINISH," SHE PIPED INSISTENTLY AND WAVED HER HAND UP TOWARDS THE SAGGING CEILING. "I FORGOT SOMETHING. FORGOT SOMETHING? YOU'VE NEVER BEEN HERE, BIJA," AJATASHATRU SAID, REGRETTING IT IMMEDIATELY AS BIJA ROLLED HER EYES AT HIM AND TURNED AWAY. SHE HADN'T FORGOTTEN, AJATASHATRU REALIZED WITH AWE, SHE'D REMEMBERED. "LET ME HELP, REVEREND," HE BREATHED AND MOVED INTO THE ROOM.

THE FLOOR GROANED AND BUCKED LIKE A SHIP AT SEA. AJATASHATRU FROZE WHILE BIJA WAILED LIKE ANY FRIGHTENED CHILD, CLUTCHING HER PILE OF BOXES AND SCRAMBLING UP THEM AS IF THAT WOULD SAVE HER FROM A COLLAPSING BUILDING. THE FLOOR WAS RIDDLED WITH DRY ROT, IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE AS HEAVY AS AJATASHATRU TO CROSS. HE CLENCHED HIS FISTS, FORCED TO DO NOTHING BUT WATCH AS HE FELT SWEAT BEADING ON HIS FOREHEAD. THE FLOOR GROANED AGAIN AND HE WATCHED THE LITTLE OIL LAMP SLIDE ACROSS IT.



"BIJA!" AJATASHATRU YELLED, REBORN BODHISATTVA OR NOT, SHE HAD TO MIND HIM. "GET BACK HERE BEFORE YOU GET HURT."

"HAVE TO—" SHE INSISTED, STRAINING UP, PLUMP HANDS FUMBLING AT ONE OF THE DEMON FACES, HOOKING FINGERS INTO THE FANGED MOUTH. "HAVE TO GET MY PICTURES! I FORGOT MY PICTURES!"

"REVEREND—"

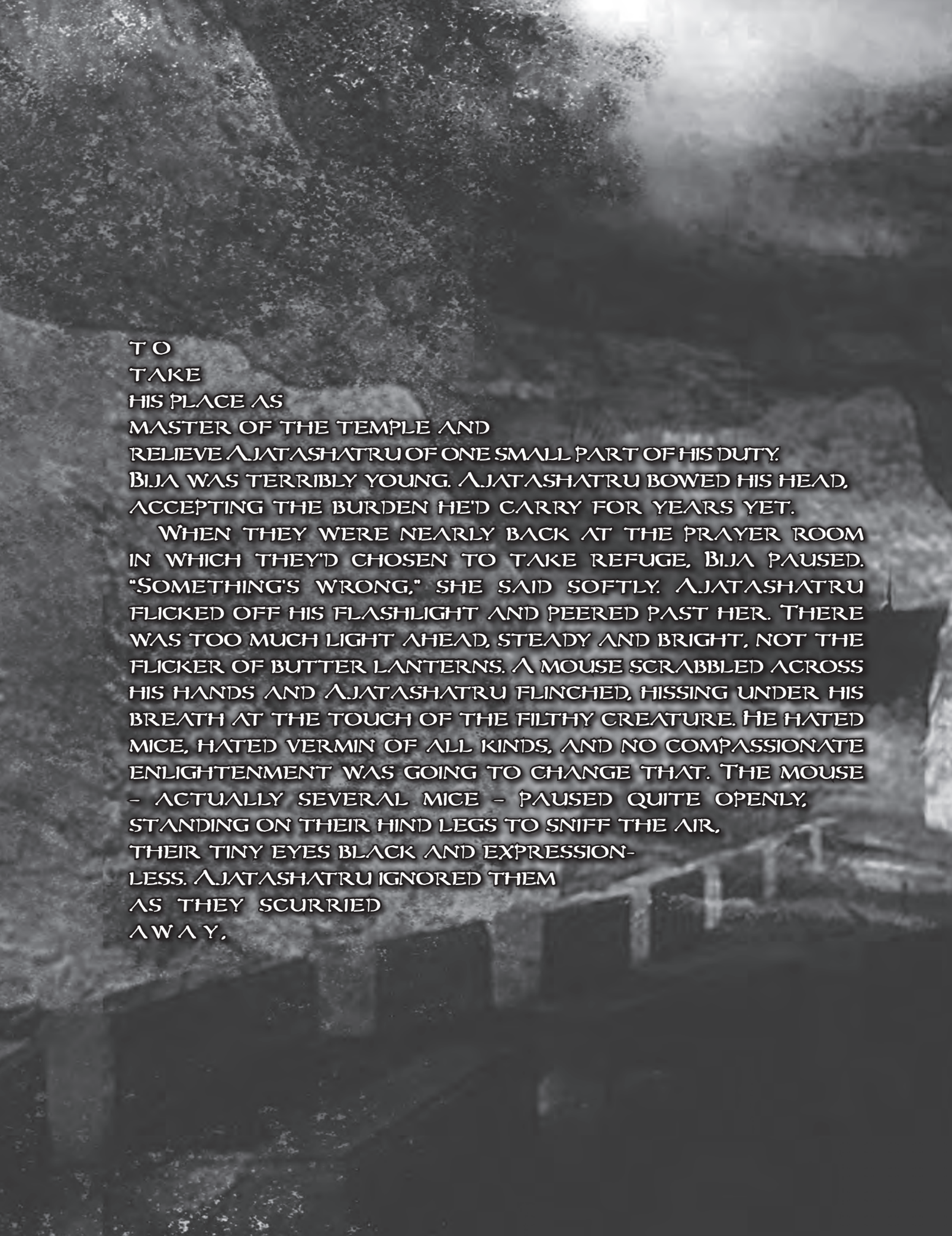
WHAT HAD SEEMED A WARPED CRACK IN THE DEMONIC FACE SPLIT APART TO REVEAL A HIDDEN SPACE. BIJA FUMBLING OUT A TIGHTLY BOUND ARMFUL OF ANCIENT FAN BOOKS, BOUND IN RED THREAD, EDGES GILDED TO PROTECT AGAINST ROT. THEY WERE NEARLY AS TALL AS BIJA AND AJATASHATRU WATCHED, FISTS CLENCHED, AS SHE TOTTERED DOWN THE PILE OF BOXES AND CAREFULLY ACROSS THE FLOOR. WHEN SHE WAS NEAR ENOUGH, HE SNATCHED HER UP, BOOKS AND CHILD BOTH, HUGGING HER HARD AND PANTING AS IF

HE'D RUN ACROSS
THE BREADTH OF THE
GWANWI IN MIDSUMMER.

"DO NOT GO WANDERING, REVEREND," HE BEGGED, "PLEASE, DO NOT DO THAT TO ME. I DON'T WANT ANY MORE GRAY HAIRS." HE HAD NONE, OF COURSE, AND NEVER WOULD.

BIJA PATTED HIS CHEEK GENTLY AND GAVE HIM A CHILDISH KISS. "I'M SORRY AJAT, I HAD TO GET MY PICTURES."

SIGHING WEARILY, AJATASHATRU PUT BIJA ON HER FEET AND PATTED HER RUMP TO GET HER MOVING BACK TO THE OTHERS. REBORN BODHISATTVA OF COMPASSION OR NOT, SHE WAS STILL A LITTLE GIRL AND HE IMAGINED THE YEARS AHEAD, STRUGGLING TO GUIDE THE CHILD WHILE RESPECTING THE ANCIENT SOUL WITHIN. HE SIGHED, LAST TIME THE BLUE BODHISATTVA HAD COME TO THEM, HE'D BEEN NEARLY ADULT, OLD ENOUGH



TO
TAKE
HIS PLACE AS
MASTER OF THE TEMPLE AND
RELIEVE AJATASHATRU OF ONE SMALL PART OF HIS DUTY.
BIJA WAS TERRIBLY YOUNG. AJATASHATRU BOWED HIS HEAD,
ACCEPTING THE BURDEN HE'D CARRY FOR YEARS YET.

WHEN THEY WERE NEARLY BACK AT THE PRAYER ROOM
IN WHICH THEY'D CHOSEN TO TAKE REFUGE, BIJA PAUSED.
"SOMETHING'S WRONG," SHE SAID SOFTLY. AJATASHATRU
FLICKED OFF HIS FLASHLIGHT AND PEERED PAST HER. THERE
WAS TOO MUCH LIGHT AHEAD, STEADY AND BRIGHT, NOT THE
FLICKER OF BUTTER LANTERNS. A MOUSE SCRABBLED ACROSS
HIS HANDS AND AJATASHATRU FLINCHED, HISSING UNDER HIS
BREATH AT THE TOUCH OF THE FILTHY CREATURE. HE HATED
MICE, HATED VERMIN OF ALL KINDS, AND NO COMPASSIONATE
ENLIGHTENMENT WAS GOING TO CHANGE THAT. THE MOUSE
- ACTUALLY SEVERAL MICE - PAUSED QUITE OPENLY,
STANDING ON THEIR HIND LEGS TO SNIFF THE AIR,
THEIR TINY EYES BLACK AND EXPRESSION-
LESS. AJATASHATRU IGNORED THEM
AS THEY SCURRIED
AWAY.



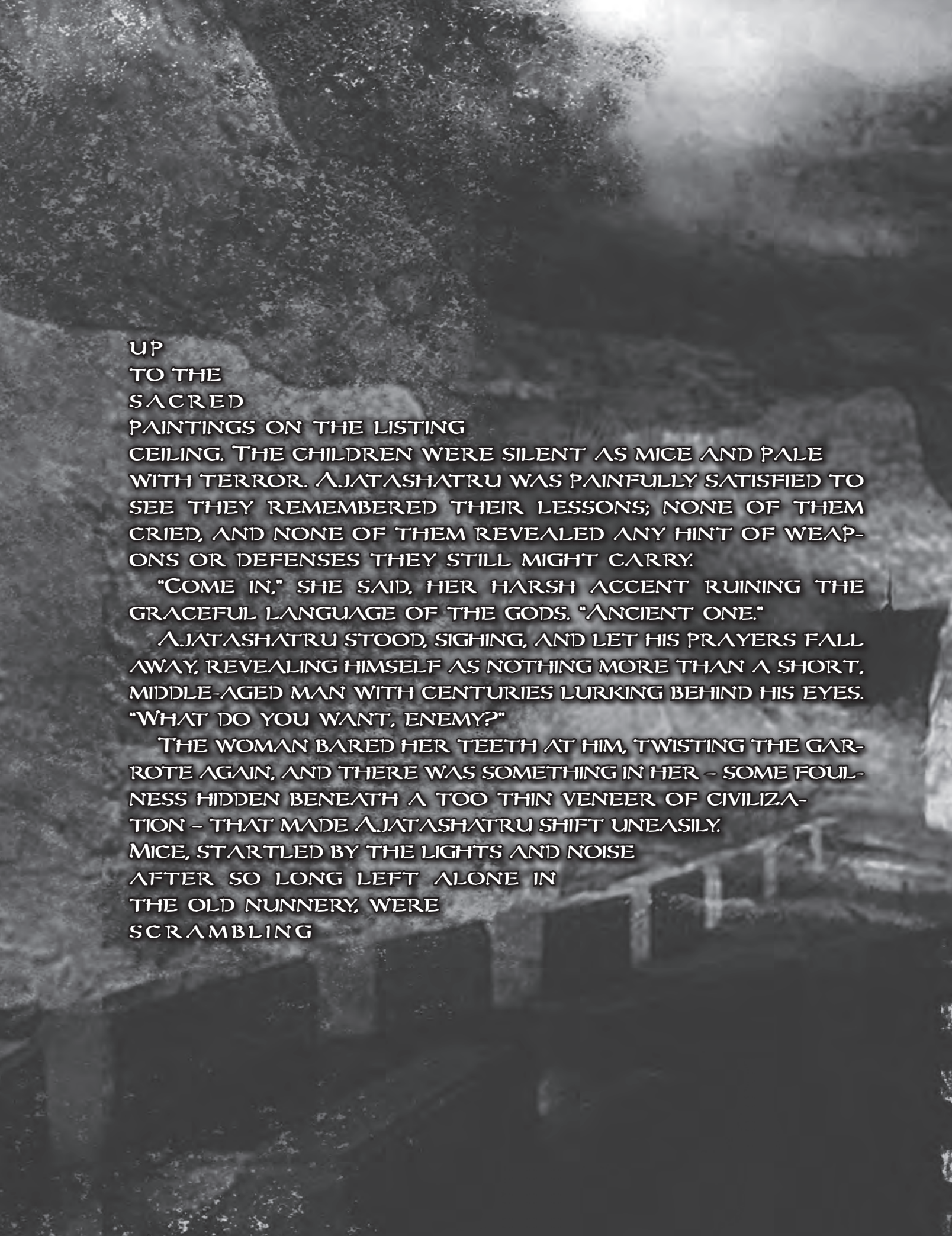
BUT BIJA WATCHED THEM WITH WIDE EYES.

"STAY HERE," HE WHISPERED, DRAWING HIS WARDED GUN. GOLD WIRE GLEAMED ON IT; THE BARREL SPRANG FROM THE MOUTH OF A GUARDIAN DAEMON AND THE BULLETS WITHIN COULD HARM ANYTHING FROM A GHOST OF THE DEAD TO ONE OF THE FEY CREATURES FROM BEYOND THE WORLD TO SIMPLE FLESH AND BLOOD. WHISPERING PROTECTIVE CHARMS UNDER HIS BREATH, AJATASHATRU SLIPPED PAST BIJA, MOVING AS SILENTLY AS THE FALLING SNOW OUTSIDE AND PRAYED FOR THE LIVES OF THE CHILDREN HE'D LEFT BEHIND.

THE PRAYERS AJATASHATRU MURMURED HAD BEEN TAUGHT HIM IN AN ANCIENT ERA, WHEN THE GODS WERE CLOSE TO MEN AND THE SPIRIT OF THE MOUNTAIN RANGE GRANTED HIM STRENGTH, POWER, SPEED AND ENDURANCE. THIS TIME, HE SOUGHT THE FAVOR OF THE SHADOWS, THE DEMONS OF SILENCE AND DARKNESS THAT HE MIGHT PASS UNSEEN LIKE A GHOST.

WHEN HE
CREPT TO THE EDGE
OF THE ROOM, HE MET THE UGLY
PALE GAZE OF A FOREIGNER. DESPITE THE
SHADOWS AJATASHATRU HAD DRAWN ACROSS HIM-
SELF AND THE SILENCE HE'D CALLED DOWN, THE WOMAN
SAW HIM AS CLEARLY AS IF IT WERE MID-DAY. SHE TWISTED
HER HAND AND THE CHILD KNEELING AT HER FEET MADE A
GAGGING SOUND, CLAWING WILDLY AT HIS NECK. LUAM, ONE EYE
SWELLING SHUT AND HIS KNUCKLES SCRAPPED, WAS BATTERED
FROM A BATTLE HE SHOULD NEVER HAVE HAD TO FIGHT.

THE OTHERS WERE HUDDLED AGAINST ONE WALL, UNDER
THE HARD GAZE OF MEN IN BLACK MILITARY PARKAS CARRYING
MACHINE GUNS. EVERYONE EXCEPT SISTER GUA, WHO LAY IN A
POOL OF HER OWN BLOOD, DARK EYES STARING SIGHTLESSLY



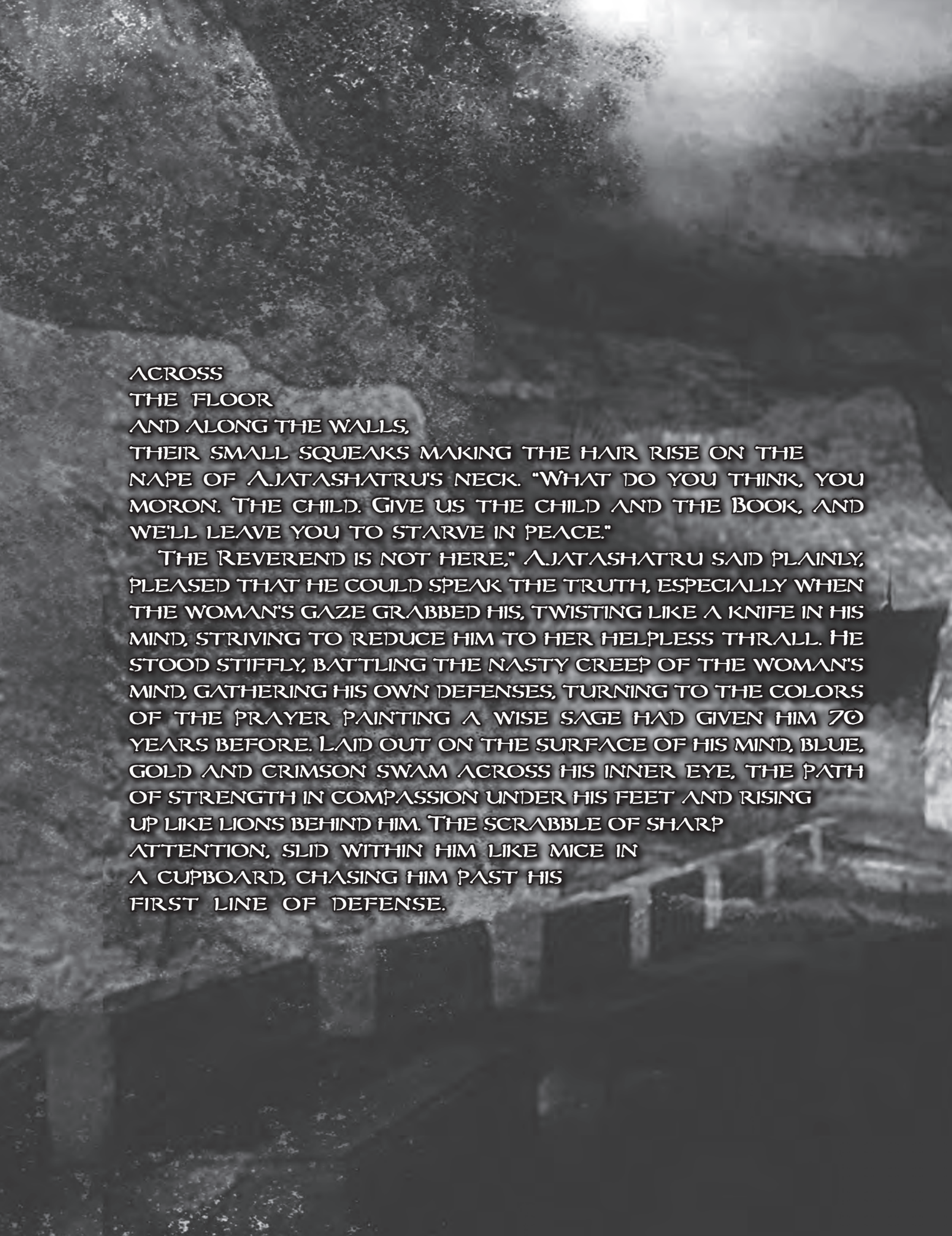
UP
TO THE
SACRED
PAINTINGS ON THE LISTING
CEILING. THE CHILDREN WERE SILENT AS MICE AND PALE
WITH TERROR. AJATASHATRU WAS PAINFULLY SATISFIED TO
SEE THEY REMEMBERED THEIR LESSONS; NONE OF THEM
CRIED, AND NONE OF THEM REVEALED ANY HINT OF WEAP-
ONS OR DEFENSES THEY STILL MIGHT CARRY.

"COME IN," SHE SAID, HER HARSH ACCENT RUINING THE
GRACEFUL LANGUAGE OF THE GODS. "ANCIENT ONE."

AJATASHATRU STOOD, SIGHING, AND LET HIS PRAYERS FALL
AWAY, REVEALING HIMSELF AS NOTHING MORE THAN A SHORT,
MIDDLE-AGED MAN WITH CENTURIES LURKING BEHIND HIS EYES.
"WHAT DO YOU WANT, ENEMY?"

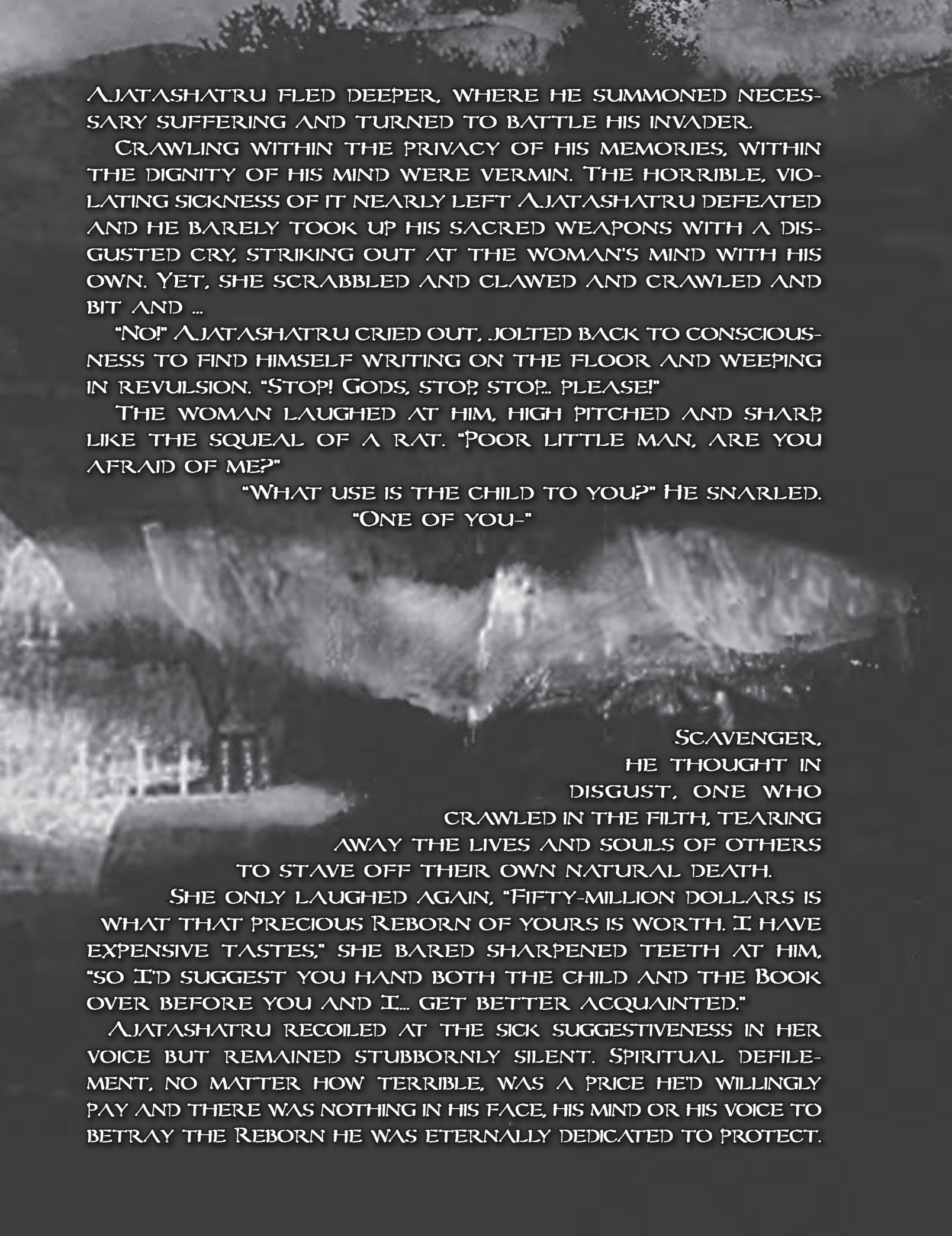
THE WOMAN BARED HER TEETH AT HIM, TWISTING THE GAR-
ROTE AGAIN, AND THERE WAS SOMETHING IN HER - SOME FOUL-
NESS HIDDEN BENEATH A TOO THIN VENEER OF CIVILIZA-
TION - THAT MADE AJATASHATRU SHIFT UNEASILY.
MICE, STARTLED BY THE LIGHTS AND NOISE
AFTER SO LONG LEFT ALONE IN
THE OLD NUNNERY, WERE
SCRAMBLING





ACROSS
THE FLOOR
AND ALONG THE WALLS,
THEIR SMALL SQUEAKS MAKING THE HAIR RISE ON THE
NAPE OF AJATASHATRU'S NECK. "WHAT DO YOU THINK, YOU
MORON. THE CHILD. GIVE US THE CHILD AND THE BOOK, AND
WE'LL LEAVE YOU TO STARVE IN PEACE."

"THE REVEREND IS NOT HERE," AJATASHATRU SAID PLAINLY,
PLEASED THAT HE COULD SPEAK THE TRUTH, ESPECIALLY WHEN
THE WOMAN'S GAZE GRABBED HIS, TWISTING LIKE A KNIFE IN HIS
MIND, STRIVING TO REDUCE HIM TO HER HELPLESS THRALL. HE
STOOD STIFFLY, BATTLING THE NASTY CREEP OF THE WOMAN'S
MIND, GATHERING HIS OWN DEFENSES, TURNING TO THE COLORS
OF THE PRAYER PAINTING A WISE SAGE HAD GIVEN HIM 70
YEARS BEFORE. LAID OUT ON THE SURFACE OF HIS MIND, BLUE,
GOLD AND CRIMSON SWAM ACROSS HIS INNER EYE, THE PATH
OF STRENGTH IN COMPASSION UNDER HIS FEET AND RISING
UP LIKE LIONS BEHIND HIM. THE SCRABBLE OF SHARP
ATTENTION, SLID WITHIN HIM LIKE MICE IN
A CUPBOARD, CHASING HIM PAST HIS
FIRST LINE OF DEFENSE.



AJATASHATRU FLED DEEPER, WHERE HE SUMMONED NECESSARY SUFFERING AND TURNED TO BATTLE HIS INVADER.

CRAWLING WITHIN THE PRIVACY OF HIS MEMORIES, WITHIN THE DIGNITY OF HIS MIND WERE VERMIN. THE HORRIBLE, VIOLATING SICKNESS OF IT NEARLY LEFT AJATASHATRU DEFEATED AND HE BARELY TOOK UP HIS SACRED WEAPONS WITH A DISGUSTED CRY, STRIKING OUT AT THE WOMAN'S MIND WITH HIS OWN. YET, SHE SCRABBLED AND CLAWED AND CRAWLED AND BIT AND ...

"NO!" AJATASHATRU CRIED OUT, JOLTED BACK TO CONSCIOUSNESS TO FIND HIMSELF WRITING ON THE FLOOR AND WEEPING IN REVULSION. "STOP! GODS, STOP, STOP... PLEASE!"

THE WOMAN LAUGHED AT HIM, HIGH PITCHED AND SHARP, LIKE THE SQUEAL OF A RAT. "POOR LITTLE MAN, ARE YOU AFRAID OF ME?"

"WHAT USE IS THE CHILD TO YOU?" HE SNARLED.
"ONE OF YOU-"

SCAVENGER,
HE THOUGHT IN
DISGUST, ONE WHO
CRAWLED IN THE FILTH, TEARING
AWAY THE LIVES AND SOULS OF OTHERS
TO STAVE OFF THEIR OWN NATURAL DEATH.

SHE ONLY LAUGHED AGAIN, "FIFTY-MILLION DOLLARS IS WHAT THAT PRECIOUS REBORN OF YOURS IS WORTH. I HAVE EXPENSIVE TASTES," SHE BARED SHARPENED TEETH AT HIM, "SO I'D SUGGEST YOU HAND BOTH THE CHILD AND THE BOOK OVER BEFORE YOU AND I... GET BETTER ACQUAINTED."

AJATASHATRU RECOILED AT THE SICK SUGGESTIVENESS IN HER VOICE BUT REMAINED STUBBORNLY SILENT. SPIRITUAL DEFILEMENT, NO MATTER HOW TERRIBLE, WAS A PRICE HE'D WILLINGLY PAY AND THERE WAS NOTHING IN HIS FACE, HIS MIND OR HIS VOICE TO BETRAY THE REBORN HE WAS ETERNALLY DEDICATED TO PROTECT.

YET,
BIJA HAD
IDEAS OF HER OWN.

"YOU BURNED THE BOOK," SHE SAID, WALKING INTO THE ROOM, A WIDE-EYED LITTLE GIRL DRESSED IN A WORN QUILTED COAT AND A CAT-EARED YELLOW HAT. SHE CROUCHED DOWN BESIDE AJATASHATRU AND PATTED HIS SHOULDER WITH MITTENED HANDS. "IT'S ALRIGHT, AJAT."


"NO," HE GROANED IN DESPAIR. "IT'S NOT."

BIJA STRAIGHTENED UP. "I AM THE REBORN BLUE BODHISAT-TVA," SHE SAID FIRMLY. SATISFACTION GLEAMED IN THE WOMAN'S PALE EYES.

BUT—

"NO," GUTJA STOOD, BLOOD FROM A CUT ON HIS TEMPLE TURNING HIS FACE INTO A DEMON'S MASK. "I AM THE REBORN." VASHRA STOOD BESIDE HIM AND SHOOK HIS HEAD. "NO —"

THE CHILDREN STOOD, EACH OF THEM, AND CLAIMED THE REVEREND TITLE AND NOTHING BUT TRUTH SHONE IN THEIR EYES, EVEN AS THEIR ENEMY SNARLED, BRUTALLY SEARCHING THEIR MINDS FOR DECEPTION.

A dark, atmospheric landscape with a body of water in the foreground. In the distance, there are silhouettes of buildings or structures on a hillside, partially obscured by mist or smoke. The overall tone is somber and mysterious.

FOR EACH OF THE CHILDREN SPOKE THE TRUTH; ALL THE CHILDREN OF ANGA LASHAN WERE CHOSEN TO BE REBORN, RAISED TO TAKE THAT MANTLE. THAT NONE OF THEM KNEW, ULTIMATELY, WHO WOULD TAKE THE REBORN TITLE, WAS A SMALL DETAIL IN A GREATER TRUTH. AJATASHATRU CLOSED HIS EYES AGAINST THE SWELLING GRIEF AND PRIDE. HE COULD HIDE BEHIND MYSTIC DEFENSES, AND DEFY THEIR ENEMIES WITH CURSES AND PRAYER, BUT THERE WOULD ALWAYS BE SOMEONE STRONGER IN VIOLENCE, SOMEONE WHO COULD EVENTUALLY DEFEAT HIM. NOTHING COULD DEFEAT THE SIMPLEST AND GREATEST TRUTH OF ANGA LASHAN; ALL CHILDREN WERE THE CHILDREN OF COMPASSION.

Credits

Written by: Daire Elliott, Filomena Hill, Matthew McFarland, John Snead

Developer: John Snead

Editor: Scribendi.com

Creative Director: Richard Thomas

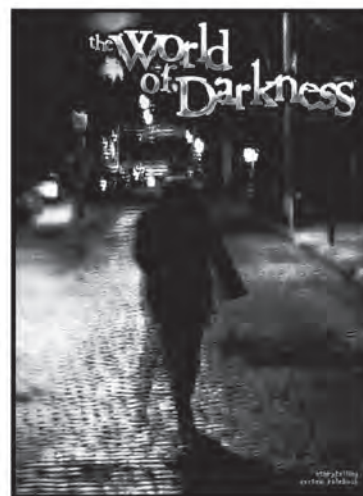
Production Manager: matt milberger

Art Director: Mike Chaney

Layout: Jessica Mullins

Interior Art: Joel Biske, Avery Butterworth, Erica Danell, Andrea Sorrentino and Nick Stakal

Front Cover Art: Efrem Palacios



For Use with
the World of
Darkness® Rulebook



WHITE WOLF PUBLISHING
2075 WEST PARK PLACE BOULEVARD
SUITE G
STONE MOUNTAIN, GA 30087

© 2009 CCP hf. All rights reserved. Reproduction without the written permission of the publisher is expressly forbidden, except for the purposes of reviews, and for blank character sheets, which may be reproduced for personal use only. White Wolf, Vampire, Promethean and Werewolf The Forsaken are registered trademarks of CCP hf. All rights reserved. Mage The Awakening, Vampire The Requiem, Hunter The Vigil, Promethean The Created, Blasphemies, Inferno, Book of Spirits and Second Sight are trademarks of CCP hf.

All rights reserved. All characters, names, places and text herein are copyrighted by CCP hf.

This book uses the supernatural for settings, characters and themes. All mystical and supernatural elements are fiction and intended for entertainment purposes only. Reader discretion is advised.

Check out White Wolf online at <http://www.white-wolf.com>

PRINTED IN CANADA.



IMMORTALS

Prologue: Price of Compassion	2
Introduction	20
Chapter One: Blood Bathers	24
Chapter Two: Body Thieves	56
Chapter Three: The Purified	90
Chapter Four: Immortal Lives	124

Introduction:

Few people look forward to the infirmities of old age and fewer still to death. For ordinary humans, life has an inevitable end. Today, a few lucky individuals live to be 90 or even potentially a decade longer than that. However, even the healthiest and the luckiest realize they have little chance of seeing their hundredth birthday. No amount of effort, money, prayer or dedication can alter the inevitability of death. Worse yet, the dubious reward for reaching an advanced age is age itself, which strips even the keenest minds and the finest bodies of their prowess well before death finishes the job.

Dreading this inevitable decline and end, people have for many thousands of years dreamed of extending their lives and eliminating the inevitability of aging and death. Throughout history we have many examples of people who attempted to obtain some form of physical immortality, from kings and sages in ancient China who drank exotic potions containing mercury, to wealthy residents of the modern first world who freeze themselves in the hope of future resurrection. The quest for immortality is ultimately the quest for life itself.

Some dream of being able to evade death's cold grip forever. The most obvious way to obtain more life is to take it from others. All of us kill to live; our survival depends upon the deaths of countless plants and animals. However, in legends and stories, gaining a longer lifespan often requires the death of other humans. There are many ways to achieve this, but the end result is the same: bodies in shallow graves or souls consigned to whatever afterlife might exist, their lives taken and used by another.

Others sought to transcend mortality by transcending their humanity or by making deals with inhuman powers. There are many tales of immortality and most are cautionary. Of course, it's also easy to argue that these stories are only cautionary tales because most people would like to be immortal. In stories we envy those who have a chance at attaining this goal, and thus must demand from them some terrible price. When considering immortality, it's worth considering both how one might attain this state and also what a person might do if they became immortal. Immortality is not merely an end in and of itself; it's a new way of life — one potentially without end. What might that new way of life mean?

What could someone do with eternity? For those who must work to maintain their immortality, their long life might well be little more than a series of desperate attempts to remain immortal. Others could easily lose themselves in the daily distractions that life presents to us all. However, for some dedicated or obsessed individuals, immortality might allow them to focus their efforts and their being to a truly inhuman degree. What might pursuing a career or a consuming passion for a century or even a millennia do to someone? Would no longer facing the inevitable threat of mortality make someone pursue their goals with more or less drive and passion?

Now consider the life of immortals in a world of mortals. All around them, most people age and die while the immortals continue on living, potentially forever. After a few centuries of watching those around you age and die, would you value the precious few years of mortal life more or less? Consider how valuable and how potentially troubling the company of other immortals might be. An immortal could share the truths of her existence with other immortals, but she would also know that these same people would know and gossip about her secrets for centuries to come. For someone who has lived centuries and could reasonably expect many more, mortal friends and lovers could provide either a few decades of treasured closeness or unending sadness at the knowledge of their inevitable decline. Of course, immortals who must kill mortals to remain immortal might soon regard mortals as nothing more than prey.

World of Darkness: Immortals examines various paths to immortality, or at least longer lives, as well as the costs of attempting to become immortal. The unfortunate truth is that in the World of Darkness, achieving immortality or at least extended life

"Who wants to
live forever when
love must die?"
— Freddie Mercury

and youth is possible, but it is never easy and there is always a significant price attached. The easiest methods turn the individual using them into a murderous monster. Other, stranger methods exist, but all of them either involve stealing the lives of others or becoming something other than human.

In addition to the cost of becoming immortal, being an immortal in a mortal world is far from easy. Everyone around you eventually ages and dies, while you remain alive. Immortals live on a time scale different from those around them. While an hour is much like an hour for everyone else, someone who has lived for centuries could look back over this time and see the scope of history in a way that ordinary humans can only approximate by reading old books and otherwise immersing themselves in the minutiae of the past.

An immortal can see far more about the world around her than ordinary mortals ever will. However, she also sees a world of brief lives and endless deaths for the mortals around them. This knowledge removes the immortal from the concerns of those around her. Even immortals who are not forced to kill mortals to survive can come to regard them as fleeting beings. At this point, it becomes disturbingly easy to kill someone or even several hundred people, if their deaths could in some way prove useful to the immortal's plans.

However, immortals are not singular beings. They live in a world that not only contains other supernatural beings, but other immortals. The company of others of their kind can be very precious, but it can also be a risk. Immortals who need to hunt others to stave off age and death can easily turn on one another. Even if they don't, too many people disappearing or dying in one place can alert the authorities. Also, many immortals develop long-term agendas, and the presence of another immortal with a different, contradictory agenda can be very problematic.

How to Use This Book

The World of Darkness is home to a variety of rare individuals, lurking in the shadows or hiding in plain sight, who were born like any other mortal man or woman, but found the will and the means to transcend their mortality and live for centuries or longer.

Chapter One: Blood Bathers reveals the most visceral and direct method of immortality—stealing life from another person by bathing in their blood. These immortals range from serial mass murderers who bleed dozens of people dry every few months in order to extend their lives and health to desperate individuals who must occasionally commit a murder or two to stave off a swift and otherwise inevitable demise. This chapter contains a complete character generation system for creating these monstrous individuals.

Chapter Two: Body Thieves explores the lives of mortals who survive beyond their time by stealing other's bodies. There are mystics with innate talent for projecting their minds into another body and destroying the mind that initially inhabited it and magicians who learn the secret of exchanging bodies with a usually unwilling subject. This chapter offers character generation information for both types of body thieves as well as information about stranger and rarer forms of body stealing, including a drug that causes this to happen and a Web site that steals minds and souls.

Chapter Three: The Purified explains the mysterious lives and strange abilities of the purified. These once-mortal beings are humans who discover a ritual to allow them to return from death as fully deathless beings with a permanent tie to the inhuman Shadow Realm. They become truly immortal and can return from the death of their bodies or the destruction of their souls. This chapter contains a complete character generation system for creating purified. However, these characters and the rules to create them will be of most use to those who also own either *The Book of Spirits*, *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, or *Mage: the Awakening*.

Chapter Four: Immortal Lives provides insight into the variety of unique or exceedingly rare immortal beings, such as eternal guardians, serial reincarnations, and human predators who extend their lives by hunting other immortals. Some of these immortal beings buy their immortality with the lives of others; others are unwilling, finding their immortality as much of a curse as a blessing; and a few win their immortality through profound dedication and consummate skill. Designed for use by Storytellers, this chapter offers a wide and exotic selection of allies and antagonists suitable for almost any chronicle.

Inspirations

Stories of immortality are as old as humanity; even the ancient Epic of Gilgamesh contains one. While it's impossible to list them all, here are a few of the most useful. These works can provide inspiration for both Storytellers and players.

Nonfiction

The Bloody Countess by Valentine Penrose is a biography of real-life blood bather and would-be immortal Elizabeth Báthory.

Chinese Alchemy: The Taoist Quest for Immortality by J. C. Cooper is a fascinating and readable book on Chinese alchemy and the alchemists' quest for immortality.

In Search of the Immortals: Mummies, Death and the Afterlife by Howard Reid examines the human quest for immortality through mummification.

Fiction

Homunculous by James Blaylock features the villainous Doctor Narbondo's ongoing quest for immortality.

The Anubis Gates by Tim Powers abounds with body thieves.

Sir Gawain and the Green Knight is a classic Arthurian story featuring one of the most notable Eternals in fiction.

This Rough Magic by Mercedes Lackey, Eric Flint and Dave Freer features a version of Elizabeth Báthory as a major villain.

The Mummy by Anne Rice examines the wonders and perils of immortality

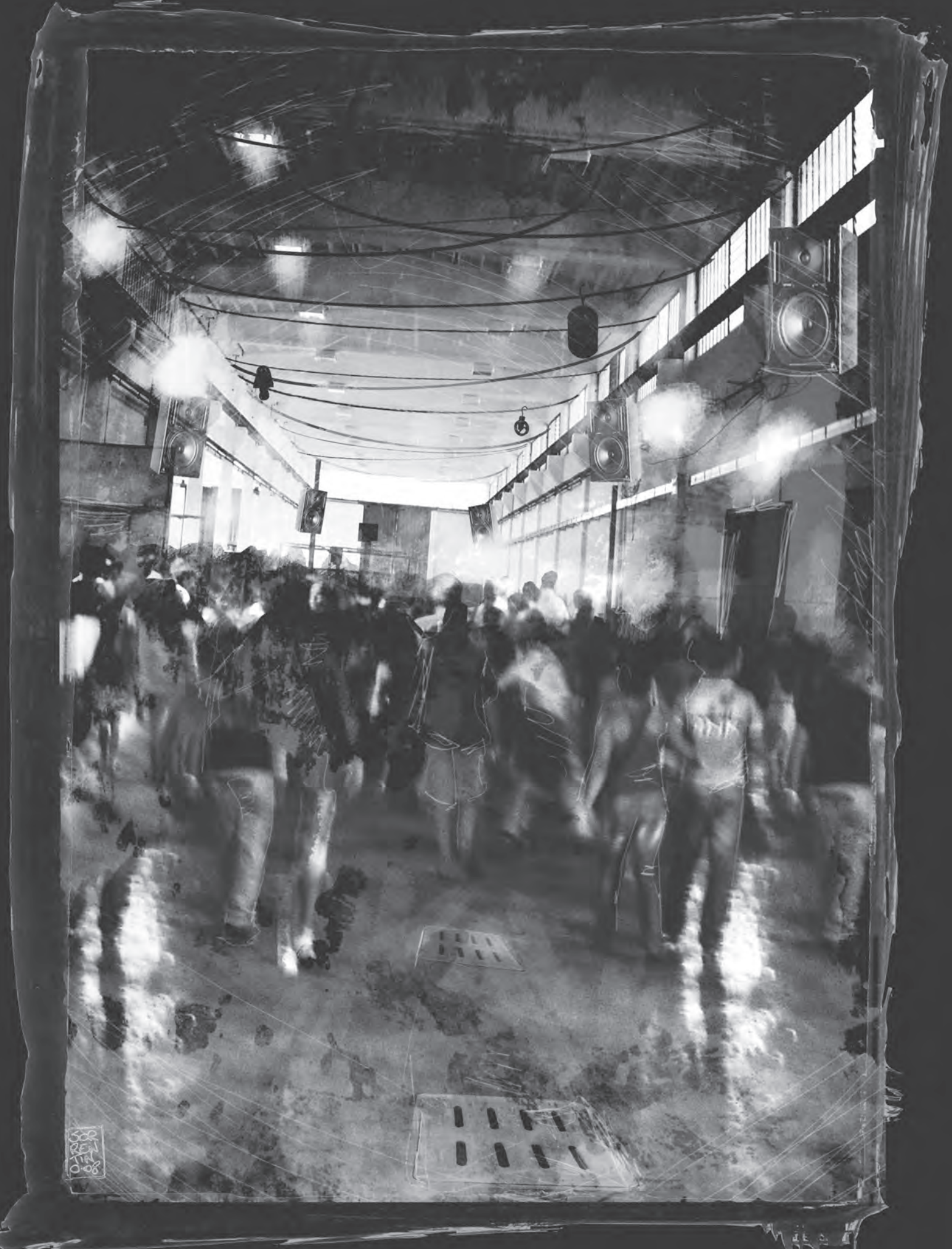
Movies & TV

Big Trouble in Little China (1986) provides a fun and action-packed look at a Chinese magician's quest for immortality

The Mephisto Waltz (1971) features Alan Alda playing the victim of an aging body thief's quest for immortality.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer: the episodes "This Year's Girl" & "Who Are You?" (2000) provide another look at a magical body thief.

Blood Ties: the episode "We'll Meet Again" (2007) deals with the challenges of serial reincarnation.



"THIS PLACE IS ALL YOURS?" STAN LOOKED AROUND AND MARVELED.
THERE WAS ENOUGH ROOM HERE FOR EVERYONE HE KNEW. "NO RENT OR ANYTHING?"

"NO RENT." SHE'D SAID HER NAME WAS TESS, AND SHE WAS SMOKING HOT. THE BLACK HAIR,
THE LIP PIERCING, AND THOSE CRAZY BLUE EYES. STAN FELT DRUNK JUST BEING AROUND HER.
NO TATS, WHICH WAS WEIRD, BUT MAYBE SHE HAD A THING ABOUT NEEDLES. "JUST MY STUFF."

STAN LOOKED UP AT THE CEILING. HE COULD HANG LIGHTS, NO PROBLEM.
GETTING THE SOUND SYSTEM MIGHT BE HARDER; THE ELECTRIC IN HERE WAS OLD,
BUT HE WAS PRETTY SURE HE COULD MAKE IT WORK.
HE WASN'T SURE WHAT THE WINCHES IN THE CORNERS WERE DESIGNED TO DO,
BUT HE COULD PROBABLY MOUNT SPEAKERS ON THEM.

"IF WE COULD USE THIS PLACE, TESS "
HE TRAILED OFF AND GESTURED TO THE IMMENSE ROOM. "WOW."

TESS GAVE HIM THAT TIGHT-LIPPED SMILE.
IT ALMOST REMINDED HIM OF HOW HIS MOTHER USED
TO LOOK WHEN HE'D CUSS AT THE DINNER TABLE.
SHE DIDN'T LIKE IT, BUT SHE COULDN'T STOP IT.
"HOW MANY PEOPLE?" SHE ASKED.

"I DON'T KNOW, MAYBE A HUNDRED?
MAYBE MORE."

TESS RAN HER FINGERS
ACROSS THE BACK
OF HER HAND.
"PERFECT,"
SHE WHISPERED.

"UM," SAID STAN,
"WHAT ARE THOSE THINGS
IN THE CORNERS?"

HE DIDN'T LIKE THE LOOK ON HER FACE.
THE QUESTION SEEMED TO SNAP HER OUT OF IT.

"MACHINERY. FROM WHEN THIS PLACE WAS A FACTORY.
THEY'D MOVE HEAVY CABLES ACROSS THE ROOM, ABOUT THIS HEIGHT." SHE PUT HER HAND UP TO HIS NECK.
HE SWALLOWED ONCE. "BASEMENT?"

"CAN'T GO DOWN THERE." SHE SMILED THAT WEIRD SMILE AGAIN.
STAN WASN'T ABOUT TO BLOW A CHANCE AT HOOKING UP WITH THIS GIRL TO PUSH THE ISSUE.

"OK, SO, WHEN DO YOU WANT TO DO THIS?"

TESS DIDN'T MISS A BEAT. "HAS TO BE THE 19TH. PEOPLE NEED TO GET HERE AT SEVEN OR SO."

STAN SUCKED AIR THROUGH HIS TEETH. "I DON'T KNOW. THAT'S KIND OF EARLY. MOSTLY THESE DON'T START UNTIL AFTER MIDNIGHT."

"NO. MIDNIGHT'S TOO LATE." SHE TOOK A STEP TOWARD HIM, AND STAN FELT, NOT FOR THE FIRST TIME,
JUST LIKE HE HAD IN HIGH SCHOOL WHEN GETTING SENT TO SEE THE DEAN OF STUDENTS.
"SEVEN. THEY NEED TO BE HERE BY NINE, SO THEY SHOULD TRY AND GET HERE BY SEVEN."

"OK." STAN WANTED TO STEP AWAY FROM HER, BUT HE ALSO FIGURED SHE MIGHT BE ON THE VERGE OF KISSING HIM. "BY SEVEN.
I CAN PROBABLY DO THAT." MAYBE, ANYWAY, IF HE TOLD PEOPLE THAT THERE WAS A LIMITED SUPPLY OF DRUGS....

SHE SMILED, A REAL, BRIGHT SMILE THIS TIME. "GROOVY," SHE SAID.

STAN LAUGHED. "DID YOU REALLY JUST SAY 'GROOVY?'"

TESS ROLLED HER EYES. "RADICAL. WHATEVER.
JUST TELL ME WHAT ELSE NEEDS TO HAPPEN BEFORE WE CAN HOLD THIS PARTY."

MAYBE THIS CHICK WAS NUTS. STAN FIGURED SHE WAS FUCKABLE EITHER WAY, BUT HE'D JUST HAVE TO WATCH HIMSELF.
"WELL, WE MIGHT WANT TO PUT SOMETHING DOWN ON THE FLOOR. ALL THESE DRAINS... YOU KNOW, PEOPLE MIGHT TRIP"

"NO." THERE WAS THAT "GO SEE THE DEAN" VOICE AGAIN. "THE DRAINS NEED TO STAY OPEN."

"HOW COME?"

TESS SMILED THE THIN SMILE AND SHOOK HER HEAD. "IT'LL MAKE SENSE ON THE NIGHT, I PROMISE."

Chapter One: Blood Bathers

"The countess turned around and dealt the girl such a blow in the face that

"The countess turned around and dealt the girl such a blow in the face that blood spurted all over her arms and hands...

Where the blood had fallen, her skin looked twenty years younger.

It was beautiful and soft once again. Blood! Blood was the answer to everlasting beauty."

— Olga Hoyt, Lust for Blood: The Consuming Story of Vampires

Olga Hoyt, Lust for Blood: The Consuming Story of Vampires

Time is terrifying. It grinds everything, living or otherwise, down into dust. It changes the strength, intelligence, wit and vigor of youth into frail, diseased decrepitude. People make up stories about happy afterlives in order to take some of the sting away, but the truth is this: we have gained the ability to outlive our bodies. We die incontinent, often demented, and bereft of dignity. In "civilized" countries, we are often unable to help our beloved elders choose to end their lives.

It's a bleak future. But other options exist.

An old woman slides into a marble tub and feels the liquid embrace her. The smell in the room is rich, metallic and thick. In another day, it will be rancid, but by then, she won't be an old woman anymore. She will be young and beautiful again, and in another decade, she will convince more young hunks to die under her knife.

A boy, barely a teenager, knocks on the door of a summer cottage. When a woman answers the door, he pounces on her, stabbing her over and over again with a hunting knife, until he is covered in her blood. As the light fades from her eyes, he gives a sigh of relief. If he hadn't found her, he might have grown up.

A couple opens the refrigerated compartment attached to their house. In it are dozens — maybe hundreds — of bottles of blood. Each has been meticulously labeled. Each has been prepared with chemicals and infusions to keep the contents fresh and usable. And tonight, the couple will select one, let it warm to room temperature, and then pour it on their naked bodies as they make love. Tomorrow morning, they will have the strength and energy of young newlyweds again, even though they have been married more than a century.

Blood bathers gain their immortality from the mystical power present in the blood of human beings. Using a ritual handed down through thousands of years of occult tradition, a blood bather can remain young, strong, healthy and beautiful, perhaps indefinitely. Of course, in order to gain this benefit, the blood bather needs the blood, and that blood has to come from somewhere — or, more specifically, someone. At least the vampire has the option to leave her victim's alive and many can use the blood of animals. For a blood bather to gain the benefit of immortality, the blood must be human and other lives must almost always be snuffed out.

Theory: Why Does It Work?

Why does the Bathing Ritual provide eternal life? Inherent in the blood of a living human being is a connection to that person's life. It's not quite the same thing as the soul, because the blood doesn't contain quite so much of the victim's personality, knowledge and unique perspective (if it did, vampires would take on their victim's traits after feeding). The Bathing Ritual drains a person's living essence, not just the combination of plasma, cells, sugar and nutrients that is blood. The bather then immerses herself in this essence, absorbing the life-giving properties. All that is left, then, is inert blood, useless for any medical or mystical purpose.

In order to take advantage of the Bathing Ritual, though, the bather must create or adopt the Ritual to suit her particular proclivities. Even if a Bathing Ritual were to be made widely available, only those truly desperate enough to gain immortality would benefit. Even if someone is knowledgeable enough to perform a ritual correctly and callous enough to murder other people for their blood, without the will to make the Ritual work, it won't.

This does mean, though, that theoretically any human being can take advantage of the Bathing Ritual.

The Bathing Ritual

The Bathing Ritual has its roots in every culture that espoused the mystical properties of blood — which is to say, almost of all of them. Almost every civilization in history had (or has) a legend about a blood-drinking creature or deity, and sacrifice and expiation invariably involves spilling blood. Some rituals involve spilling one's own blood, some involve taking it from another living being (human or animal), but the power of blood is undeniable.

So which culture was it, exactly, that discovered the Bathing Ritual? What civilization learned that by bathing in the blood of human beings, a skilled occultist could prolong his own life indefinitely? No one among modern blood bathers knows for certain. Any given blood bather usually believes that the culture that he has studied at length is the one responsible for ritual. A bather that rips out the heart of a victim to let the blood drain into a stone tub might state, if asked, that the Bathing Ritual is of Aztec descent. One that follows the example of the famed "Blood Countess," Elizabeth Báthory, might claim that the ritual is Hungarian or Ugric, or even Roman in origin. Since no worldwide community of blood bathers exists, they seldom realize that the ritual only appears in *all* of these cultures as a variant, a simplification (or perhaps an overcomplication?) of the original.

The original Bathing Ritual, referred to in the texts, pictographs and scrolls of ancient cultures, at least where it has been allowed to survive, apparently allowed true immortality. The bather would emerge from the bath a god, unable to be harmed by fire, metal or time. Any wound would close immediately, and hunger and thirst could not touch him. It is the hint of this kind of power that often entices a blood bather to attempt the ritual, leading to murder, power and ultimately addiction. But no blood bather has ever managed to truly achieve this success. The Bathing Rituals that blood bathers perform are all variants, because no complete version of the original ritual exists. Some key component is missing.

Blood bathers, and the few occultists who study the Bathing Ritual as a worldwide phenomenon (see Dr. Remy Darabont, p. 46), feel that the ritual works because of some intrinsic power of human blood, and that power can be expressed if prepared in the right way. Put another way, blood is easily available, and if it were as simple as taking a dip in a vat of blood, anyone could do it. But actually enact-



ing the Bathing Ritual requires that the occultist prepare the blood in a certain way, sometimes treat the blood with specific herbs and ingredients, and invest a portion of his own will into the ritual.

It would be tempting to say that the specifics of the ritual don't matter — all that matters is the blood and the will. But that isn't precisely true, because when a blood bather formulates the ritual that he will use to attain immortality, he commits to that ritual. As such, every blood bather is effectively creating a new Bathing Ritual when he chooses this route to power. Every Bathing Ritual thus created *might* work for another blood bather (indeed, cults built around a given ritual exist, including the one led by Mother Liesel; see p. 44). However, it's just as likely that if a would-be bather researches an existing ritual, she will wind up creating another variant, and making it work with her own expenditure of will, time, and probably sanity. The Bathing Ritual requires the occult trappings that bathers give it in order to function, but it requires those trappings *because* the bathers create them. In the end, it would require a blood bather with a superhuman command of magic to reduce the ritual down to a simple need for blood.

Stop Beating Around the Bush

A person who simply takes blood and lives forever is called a *vampire*, and there are rules for those already. So is there a connection between the Bathing Ritual and the vampiric curse? Could an occultist actually “self-Embrace,” turning himself undead, through some high-powered version of the Bathing Ritual?

Doing so would turn the undead world on its head, of course. People *can't* do that. A mortal only becomes a vampire when another vampire drains her dry, feeds her some blood, and expends the will necessary (a Willpower dot, in game terms) to raise her up.

But good stories come from the world being turned on its head, or at least, from the threat of that happening. Suppose a blood bather managed to turn herself into a true vampire, or something that resembles one (fangs, immortality, heightened strength and speed, inhuman allure) but could still eat, drink, tolerate the sun, and otherwise ignore the tradition banes of vampiric existence.

It's not the sort of thing we're prepared to put in the book, because it would turn the established World of Darkness upside down. And that's *your* job.

Learning the Ritual

Discovering the ritual isn't especially difficult, for someone looking in the right place. Virtually every culture on Earth has ascribed mystical properties to blood, and most primitive cultures include some form of ritual sacrifice that included bloodletting. As such, someone with the skills and resources to dig into the subject further might well unearth rumors of the Bathing Ritual.

Once the researcher is aware of the Bathing Ritual, researching it exclusively takes some time, and certainly some money. Artifacts, scrolls and ancient books that make mention of the rite can be found the world over, but because other blood bathers have found most of them (the practice is by no means new), these references are generally held in private collections, sealed rooms in universities, museum exhibits, or, in some cases, buried deep underground and guarded by sleeping monsters.

Put another way, the Storyteller can handle the quest to discover the Bathing Ritual in two ways. If the blood bather in question, whether designed as a player's character or a supporting character, has already created and begun to use her variant Ritual at the start of play, then simply detail the discovery of the Ritual in whatever amount of detail is appropriate to your chronicle. At the very least, this might form the basis of a prelude session, or perhaps simply justifies the character taking such Merits as Contacts or Allies. It can also justify dips in Morality, and various Flaws (including derangements) gained in the process of learning the Ritual.

If, however, the Storyteller wishes to play out the process of learning and customizing the Ritual, then uncovering it requires a bit more thought and system support. Doing research is usually an extended action, as described on p. 55 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, but discovering all of the information necessary to create a function Bathing Ritual requires several different applications of this activity. That is, discovering that the Ritual exists at all is probably the result of a character's search for immortality, and might require 10 successes of research (or more). From there, the character researches related myths, cults and practices. Each facet of the Ritual (see Systems, below) requires its own Research roll, but unlike most Research actions, the character isn't attempting to learn a set of facts. While he might not know it, he's customizing the Bathing Ritual to fit his own needs.

This isn't uncommon, of course. Religious sects do it often. A given church alters its ceremony slightly to better reflect the needs of the congregation. An individual chooses to ignore sections of her chosen faith if they conflict with the realities of modern life or offend her own sensibilities. For a more accessible example, consider that when cooking, people don't usually follow the recipe to the letter, but the food is typically edible just the same. Blood bathers *cannot* discover the true Bathing Ritual, because if it ever did exist, it's not extant now for any would-be

immortal to find. And so the bather learns as much as he can about the Ritual's past, follows the "recipe" to the best of his ability, but ultimately ends up making changes based on his own personal sensibilities, tastes and needs.

From a game systems perspective, this is reflected in five separate extended actions. The dice pool for each one is Intelligence + Occult, and the time required is one day of research per roll. The number of successes required is five times the absolute value of the cost in question. Therefore, uncovering a facet worth +2 when building the Ritual (see below) requires 10 successes, as does a facet worth -2 (the absolute value is the value of a number without regard to whether it is positive or negative).

From the perspective of the story, the character isn't necessarily discovering these facets. What he is doing is learning how other variants of the Ritual have functioned in the past, and adapting them to meet his own needs. When the player has met the success requirements for each of the facets, the blood bather can attempt the Bathing Ritual for the first time.

Note that a character can theoretically uncover facets to a Bathing Ritual that doesn't add up to zero, but if the character attempts to perform such a ritual, disaster is in store. Once a character has uncovered (or created, depending on one's point of view) all five facets of the Ritual, the player rolls Intelligence + Occult. Apply a negative modifier to this roll equal to the number of points above or below zero that the Bathing Ritual's facets provide.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The character believes that the Ritual will work. And, in fact, it has some effect — the Ritual changes the character into a monster if performed. The capabilities and agenda of this beast are up to the Storyteller (for an example, see Pig, p. 48), but the character loses all dots in Morality and is no more intelligent than a rabid animal. This doesn't occur if the character doesn't perform the Ritual, obviously, but with a dramatic failure, the character believes she has done everything right and is on the cusp of immortality.

Failure: The ritual won't work, and the character realizes that something is amiss, but not what. The player chooses one facet of the ritual to "keep," but must rediscover the rest (all research rolls for four of the facets must be repeated).

Success: The character realizes the ritual won't work, but can fix the mistake. The player must only re-research the facet(s) of the Ritual that cause the imbalance. This can mean repeating research on only one facet, depending on how the numbers work out (see the examples of Ritual creation, below).

Exceptional Success: The bather realizes her mistake and can fix the Ritual with minimal work. Only facets that cause imbalance must be re-examined, and the player need only succeed on a single Wits + Occult roll to change each one.

Mentors, Students, and Cults

Blood bathers don't have a "society" as such. Rather, while societies of practitioners do sometimes arise, they usually include one actual blood bather and a number of observers and hangers-on. This is for two reasons. First, it takes a great deal of will for a person to complete the Bathing Ritual and gain immortality, and not many people have such resolve. Second, a single blood bather often has to kill more than one person to obtain the blood she needs for her Ritual. Even a small cult, then, attracts even *more* notice, because even more people have to die.

That said, when a group of people discovers the Ritual in tandem (perhaps using the teamwork rules found on p. 134 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** to uncover the Ritual), they have advantages that a lone bather does not. First, of course, they can assist each other in finding blood — obtaining suitable victims, disposing of bodies (see p. 42), offering alibis, pooling resources, and so on. Second, a group of blood bathers can share a bath — this requires more blood overall than a single bather might need, but still less than a group of singular immortals. Finally, they can act as a bulwark against insanity for each other. A group of blood bathers has a slightly better chance of resisting derangements than a solitary immortal; see the mechanics on p. 38 for the game systems behind this.

Blood bather groups, when they do occur, usually take one of three forms: a mentor-student relationship, a cult, or a coalition of blood bathers who all discovered the Ritual together, or at least using the same resources.

- **Mentors and students:** Why would a blood bather teach another person to the Ritual? After all, two killers loose in the world, killing and bathing in blood in the same ritualistic manner, attracts even more attention than one. But blood bathers have several possible motives for doing so. One is loneliness. What good is immortality with no one to talk to or confide in? A blood bather is utterly alone; even if she manages to stave off insanity and death, she can live long enough to see everything around her change.

Another reason is a twisted desire to procreate. The Ritual doesn't necessarily make blood bathers infertile, but conventional methods of breeding are still inconvenient by dint of their lifestyle. Taking on a student allows the blood bather to feel that even if the unthinkable happens and he somehow dies, his knowledge and tales of his greatness (remember, many blood bathers are hugely egocentric) will survive.

Finally, the blood bather might want a scapegoat. He trains the student, helps her perform her first Ritual, and allows the authorities or other supernatural beings hunting him to catch her instead. He then relocates and (hopefully very quietly) picks up his activities again.



• **Cults:** As mentioned, usually a cult involves one blood bather and several hangers-on (see Mother Liesel, p. 44). But sometimes a group of blood bathers comes together around a central figure and all of them share in the Ritual. The central figure is the one at the center of the Ritual, but if they all get the benefit, then any of them can be the focus. If one of the cultists ever figures that out, a schism or coup typically results, and the cult either rallies around a new figure or implodes.

Either way, a cult of blood bathers probably uses a ritual in which all of the members enter the bath together. This might take the form of a blood-soaked orgy, a frenzy of Bacchanalian abandon, or it might be a slow, chaste walk into waist-deep tub of blood. In any case, the Ritual *will not work* without the cult, or at minimum, the same number of individuals, taking part (once cemented, a Ritual cannot be changed, after all) so a schism in the cult means that the remaining members of each faction need to shore up the membership before the next Ritual comes around.

• **Coalitions:** The blood bathers of a coalition might not all practice the same Ritual, but they often discovered the Bathing Ritual using the same references and occult lore. As such, as they develop their own takes on the process, they trade notes, influence each other's work, and perhaps even compete. Usually, such characters don't see each other in person often, but communicate through letters and online correspondence from across the world. They might take advantage of one another's money, power and contacts to obtain blood. Each of them, though, looks out for ways to prove that his version of the Ritual is the "true" version, or at least the purest possible with the tools at hand.

Such groups are not cults, since there is no central figurehead, but they can be just as dangerous because they all have a vested interest in making sure that the others stay hidden and happy. If one member talks to the authorities (mundane or otherwise), it's not difficult to track the rest of them.

Blood Bathers in the World of Darkness

Blood bathers are extremely uncommon, for obvious reasons. Many of them are mass murderers just by nature of what they do, and even those that can get by mostly using animal blood or coating themselves with blood, rather than bathing in it, still attract attention. The mundane authorities are often tracking blood bathers without realizing it (see Logistics, later in this chapter), and that's to say nothing of supernatural forces who might take a dim view of some jumped-up occultist cheating death by slaughtering people left and right.

As such, blood bathers don't have a society. Many of them believe their abilities to be unique (this is egocentric, of course, but it takes a certain amount of egocentrism to murder dozens of others to prevent one's own death). Because of their rarity, and because there are many reasons in the World of Darkness for people to come up dead or missing, blood bathers remain a seldom-discussed phenomenon. Below are some ideas for how these characters might mesh with the various types of characters from other World of Darkness games.

Vampires

The undead, of course, kill a fair number of people for blood themselves. They have the option, though, of taking a small amount of blood from multiple sources, rather than exsanguinating 30 bodies at once and having to find a way to dispose of them. When blood bathers and vampires meet, the results are usually violent in the long term. Blood bathers, after all, bring trouble in the form of hunters (who see "drained of blood" as "vampire activity," which is reasonable), law enforcement (which can be problematic for Kindred trying to cover up their activities) and scarcity of food (when people realize there's a killer on the loose, they tend to curtail nighttime activity).

Another source of conflict, though, is that once a blood bather has completed the Bathing Ritual, the blood becomes inert. It is useless for transfusions or any other medical purpose, and it is useless for any other mystical use, including consumption by a vampire. Once the local undead discover that someone is killing the living, draining their blood *and* making that blood useless, they will probably find a way to kill the blood bather. Or, least, they can try — blood bathers aren't exactly easy to kill.

Story Hooks

- **Deal with the Devil:** A sect of demon-worshipping vampires known as Belial's Brood discovers a blood bather and worships him as a god. They bring him victims, and take only a small amount of blood for themselves. He, in turn, provides funding and other resources for their degenerate activities. The blood bather is trying to alter his Ritual so it functions with the blood of the undead. If he manages this, he will grow even more powerful, and then no vampire is safe. He has the Brood's full support in this endeavor.

- **A Plague of Vampires:** The victims of a blood bather are rising up as vampires... sort of. These "vampires" are near-mindless and not as strong as true Kindred, but they are still deadly to unprepared people. They run in packs, and are weak-willed. In fact, a powerful vampire might be able to control them. But then, perhaps, so could the blood bather.

- **Common Blood:** The Bathing Ritual and vampirism share an ancestry. Vampires, for many years, were mindless predators. The Embrace granted immortality,

but it also removed the higher brain functions. Then, a Babylonian king called En Isiratuu was made a vampire. His advisors and high priests, not wishing to see their beloved master fall to bloodthirsty madness, developed the Bathing Ritual to give him not physical immortality (which he already had), but spiritual and mental immortality. The Ritual then spread, and was used on other vampires, granting them sentience until the old bestial undead were all but eradicated. Now, thousands of years later, descendants of this vampire-king have learned what the Bathing Ritual has become, and are dedicated to wiping it out — but doing so might damn vampires to insanity.

Werewolves

Blood bathers are abominations, and while a pack of werewolves might not care about their high murder rates, they would almost certainly be concerned about what their activities do to the spirit world. The concerns about blood bathers attracting hunters and increased scrutiny apply to werewolves as well as vampires, of course, but the greater concern is that a great deal of willfully inflicted death in a short span of time creates powerful murder-spirits. Such spirits want nothing more than to see more murders committed... and so the cycle continues. And this doesn't take into account more personal conflicts, such as what happens when a werewolf's cousin or sister winds up under a blood bather's knife.

Werewolves faced with a creature like a blood bather are usually content to hunt it down and kill it, but that's not always possible. Blood bathers usually have the resources to run, and some of them have been around long enough to know how to fight werewolves. A pack that figures the blood bather will be an easy target is probably in for a shock.

Story Hooks

- **The Bath of Life:** The blood bather's tub is a fetish, an object with a spirit bound into it by ritual magic. Werewolves are capable of creating fetishes, and sure enough, the one that this particular immortal uses is adorned with glyphs in the werewolves' primal tongue. Who made this tub, and what was its original purpose? The pack can kill the blood bather, of course, but then they'll never learn where she got it. And the writing on the tub warns of dire consequences should the tub itself be destroyed.

- **The Endless Hunt:** A pack of werewolves is stalking a blood bather. They have been hunting him for more than a century. It started out as revenge; he killed one of their packmates for his Ritual and skinned her with a silver knife, taking her flesh and blood to make himself immortal. But now his Ritual has mutated somehow, and it includes the pack. If the blood bather dies, they die. They can't bring themselves to admit the truth; that they're just driv-

ing him from place to place, making sure that he doesn't get to enjoy his immortality. But they'll fight to keep him alive should another pack try to kill him, claiming that he is their prey.

- **Ancient Truths:** The Bathing Ritual stems from the Uratha. It originated as a way for a promising wolf-blood (a human being related to werewolves, but not one himself) to survive long enough to father or bear a child to the greatest warrior of the generation. Originally, it was meant to work with only a few drops of werewolf blood, but the various corruptions of it over time obviously changed that. Is the Bathing Ritual itself still extant somewhere, perhaps in the spirit world where only a werewolf could reach it?

Mages

Heinous acts in the name of power — mages can sympathize. The lure of discovery, of magical might, has driven many of the Awakened to torture, murder and worse. And this makes them dogged foes of blood bathers when the two meet, because admitting that the lust for power that drives the blood bather is similar to the pride in the heart of a mage is just too difficult.

Then again, a chance to study the Bathing Ritual and the method by which it works might be too much for a mage to resist. Not all mages are ethical or wise, after all, and a blood bather who strikes a deal with one of the Awakened is even more dangerous than one working alone.

Of course, the most obvious option also exists. Mages are human, and the human response to a monster like a blood bather would be to kill it. Curiosity, identification and pride aside, a cabal of mages that discovers a mass murderer in its midst might be less concerned with motive and supernatural power and more concerned with prevention and justice.

Story Hooks

- **Local History:** A blood bather begins operating in the area, but when the players' cabal investigates the deaths and disappearances, they discover powerful magic clouding their investigation. The blood bather's father, as it happens, is the Hierarchy of the city (the leader of the local council of occult masters), and is bringing his considerable mystical might to bear to protect his son. When the truth comes out, the entire Awakened community might never recover from the scandal.

- **Doors:** A mage calling himself Chlorine meets up with Bob Pilot (see p. 52) and decides to help him. Chlorine (who took his name from the disinfectant, as in "chlorine for the gene pool") can open portals from Bob's factory to anywhere on Earth. People all over the world start to disappear, people that Chlorine feels the world would be better off without. Bob,

therefore, has a ready supply of bodies, and Chlorine gets to cleanse the human race. The characters might catch on, but if Chlorine figures out that he's being watched, any door the characters open might lead into the rotating knives.

- **The Bridge of Blood:** A blood bather has discovered that the Bathing Ritual is, in fact, born of the same Supernal Realms from which mages derive their power. He isn't sure *which* Realm, but he reasons that by using the blood of mages to power his Ritual, he can figure that out through a process of elimination. Each Path causes slightly different effects to the blood bather, changing his Effects. If the blood bather figures out which Realm originated the Ritual, he might be able to engineer his own Awakening. If he does, the Bathing Ritual will be realized in its true form, and the bather becomes a mad, blood-soaked Messiah. The characters, of course, can get involved at any point.

Prometheans

The Created are living beings made from dead flesh, and some of them created their own "children" by murdering others and stitching the body parts together. That makes for an interesting point of comparison to blood bathers, especially for those rare Prometheans who can't seem to get it right and keep trying to make the perfect child, again and again. Some Prometheans, too, follow a Refinement that encourages delving into the dark and debased side of mysticism, studying the entropic energies of the world. Such a character (called a *Centimanus*) might find a blood bather fascinating. Out of mass death comes eternal life — or is it simply a way to stagnate?

Noteworthy, too, is that Prometheans engender obsession and hatred from human beings, and that includes blood bathers. One of the Created that elicits these feelings from a blood bather might wind up being the next intended victim.

Story Hooks

- **Resurrection Mary & Beth Frakes:** Beth Frakes is a blood bather, one of the few who can survive on a coating, rather than a true bath. Resurrection Mary is a Promethean who took her name from a ghost story. When the two met, they hated each other instantly, but it was Beth who got the upper hand. She strapped Mary down, bled her dry, and performed her Ritual... but she was shocked to find that Mary got right back up again. She was even more shocked to discover that Mary's blood changed her Ritual somehow. The two of them realized that by staying together, they both could remain as immortal. Mary didn't die (not permanently) from the exsanguinations, and her blood could sustain Beth. But the two hate each other, and they take that hatred out on the residents of whatever city holds them. Secretly, each is hoping that someone kills the other, permanently, so that she can finally move on.

- **Symbiosis:** Some Prometheans develop truly grotesque powers. One, an insane and vicious creature called Halk, learned to liquefy itself and slither along the ground like a sentient puddle. It crawled into a vat of cow and human blood about to be used in a Bathing Ritual, and found itself stuck to the skin of a blood bather named Rachel. Unable to separate themselves, the Rachel/Halk amalgam is a living nightmare, a shapely young woman perpetually covered in a thick layer of blood. With a touch, it can flay the skin off a victim and consume his blood to sustain itself, but it can't risk going out in public. It continually hunts for other Prometheans, or anyone with occult knowledge, hoping to find someone who can help it.

- **The Wanderer:** Prometheans are animated by the Divine Fire, a sentient force that drives them toward life and humanity. But the Divine Fire has a darker side, too, and it is that force (called Flux) that created the Bathing Ritual. In the instant that the first Promethean stood up and realized *I am*, his blood took healing and restorative properties. His wanderings spread stories in all cultures of the curative powers of blood, and ultimately led to the creation of the Bathing Ritual. That Promethean never reached Mortality, choosing instead to remain a *bodhisattva*, guiding others of his kind... but also occasionally training human beings in the use of the Bathing Ritual. Why must he do this? Does he even remember? If he were destroyed, would all Bathing Rituals cease to function? Would all of the Created perished in flames?

Changelings

The Lost tend to have strong feelings about people who kidnap, torture and murder others. They are, after all, survivors of such treatment themselves. Some of them might intervene in a blood bather's activities on general principle, and some might be concerned that their atrocity will attract the attention of the Gentry. They might be right — the Gentry don't like competition.

Not all changelings are ethical, however, and some are downright monstrous. A man taken away to a slave pit and forced to eat unsuccessful gladiators might retain the taste for fresh meat upon his escape, and strike up a deal with a blood bather. A blood bather who discovers a changeling who can bleed forever might stop at nothing to obtain her.

Story Hooks

- **Dreams of Murder:** Some changelings practice the skill of *oneiromancy*, the magic of dreams. They can enter the dreams of sleeping humans and poison them, draw strength from them, or simply alter them as they see fit. But when the oneiromancers of the characters' area go missing, the characters track them back to the dreams of one man: a blood bather. His mind is a black hole, his dreams corrupted and empowered by the Bathing Ritual. In order for the characters to free their comrades, they will have to enter his dreams before he performs the Ritual again. If he manages that, his mind is "reset," and the changelings trapped therein will be truly lost.



• **Bacchanal:** On a beautiful island resort, a wealthy heiress is holding the party of the century. Thousands of people have “won” tickets to the island, including the characters. They don’t know, of course, that the heiress has recently completed her research into the Bathing Ritual, and intends to enact it there. She doesn’t need the thousands of people, of course — just a few dozen or so. But she wants to be able to pick and choose the best of them from among the wild, hedonistic guests. And that, again, includes the characters.

• **The Deal:** The Bathing Ritual was a bargain between the Gentry and humanity, struck so long ago that no record or legend of it exists. The Gentry and humanity agreed that the Fae could use human blood as an elixir of life, and in return, humanity could use the tears of the Fae as a panacea. But both sides have forgotten the wording of the oath; humanity now uses blood for eternal life (the Bathing Ritual), a blasphemous perversion of the original bargain. And what, then, do the Others do with human tears?

Hunters

Hunters occasionally face people called *slashers*, human beings who have devoted themselves to murder. Storytellers with access to **Hunter: The Vigil**, or its **Slasher** supplement, might find that a blood bather makes a compelling slasher.

But even on their own merits, blood bathers are good targets for a cell’s investigation. They have some measure of supernatural power and they prey on innocent people to retain that power — surely they are deserving of a hunter’s bullets? Of course, not all hunters pursue the Vigil for altruistic purposes. Some of them are after supernatural power for its own sake, and nothing says that a hunter can’t perform the Bathing Ritual.

Story Hooks

• **The Prisoner:** A compact of hunters called Ashwood Abbey has kept a blood bather incarcerated since the early 19th century. He provided them with the particulars of his Ritual, and they provided him with the materials he needed. He sits in a cell in London, a deep, dark set of rooms, and from there he dispenses advice on the supernatural and how to fight it. He is the Abbey’s own personal oracle, and of course, he wants nothing more than freedom. If he manages to catch the ear of a young member of the compact, what might he say to convince the character of his freedom? He might promise immortality — and he can deliver it.

• **Hunter’s Hunted:** A blood bather requires that the blood he uses for his Ritual comes from murder victims, but is squeamish about killing people himself. Through a stroke of luck, he encounters a slasher, a mindless and nearly indestructible beast who kills anyone he comes across. The bather follows the slasher, collecting the bodies and draining their blood for later use. Over time, he learns he can “steer” the slasher toward potential victims, and thus help him to avoid capture. Of course, if the slasher ever realizes the blood bather is near, he will kill him just as readily as he would anyone else.

• **Stimulus and Response:** Why do some people choose to become hunters? Rather, why do some people feel *compelled* to become hunters? It is because they cannot look away when they see the truth. Blood bathers, it could be argued, are much the same. The desire and ability to commit mass murder for immortality has the same root as the desire and ability to face the creatures of the World of Darkness and win. The Storyteller might find strong material in playing up this similarity, especially if research shows the first Bathing Ritual came about to help early hunters take on the supernatural.

Character Creation and Systems

Character creation for blood bathers generally follows the system laid out on pp. 34-35 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. At Step Five: Add the supernatural template, blood bather characters have only one concern: Construct the Bathing Ritual (discussed below). At Step Six: Determine Advantages, Morality begins at 5, not 7, and all blood bathers receive 10 experience points. They can lower Morality further for additional experience points as usual. This represents their unwholesome activities and the lessons those activities have taught them. In addition, blood bathers’ Willpower ratings begin at Resolve + Composure – 1, since they must expend a *dot* of Willpower to make the Ritual work. The player can buy back this dot for eight experience points.

The Bathing Ritual is different for every blood bather, and that means that it is built, rather than selected. The examples given below can certainly be used as written and applied to any blood bather characters you wish to create, but they should also serve to help you build your own blood-soaked immortals.

Facets

The Bathing Ritual is composed of five facets: Blood, Bath, Frequency, Effects and Preparation. These are described in detail below. Each one has a numerical value attached to it, either positive or negative. Players wishing to construct Bathing Rituals must assemble the different facets in such a way that the end result totals zero. Players are encouraged to create their own expressions of these facets, but if the blood bather character is meant to be player-controlled, the Storyteller has the final say. Three examples of Ritual creation follow the explanations of facets, and of course the sample characters at the end of the chapter have their own Rituals.

Bath

Bath describes the physical setting of the Ritual. This includes the “tub” itself. Some Rituals require that the tub be made from a particular material (iron, ivory, stone). This facet also governs the time of day, month or year under which the Ritual can be performed; the more specific these requirements are, the greater the modifier. The chart below explains how different materials and requirements of the tub and the circumstances surrounding the bath alter the Ritual.

- **No Tub:** The character does not require a receptacle to hold the blood for the Ritual. This is usually only appropriate for characters with the Coat the Skin trait (p. 34). **Modifier:** +3

- **Any Tub Will Do:** The character can perform the Ritual in any tub or vat large enough to hold her and the blood. Material is unimportant. **Modifier:** +3

- **Specific Material:** The tub must be made of a special substance. This might be stone (perhaps a certain type of stone, perhaps not), iron, ivory, marble, wood or anything else that the player can think of. **Modifier:** Special. The modifier is equal to the Resources cost of the tub. An iron tub is probably around Resources •• to purchase, while a tub made of marble might be as much as Resources •••• (see p. 116 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** for an explanation of how cost translates to Resources level). The iron tub would therefore confer a -2, while the marble would place a -4 modifier onto the Ritual.

- **Unique Tub:** The character can only perform the Ritual in one particular tub. If that tub is lost or destroyed, the character loses his immortality (whether or not the character can rediscover the Ritual is up to the Storyteller). If this ever happens, the character is probably subject to a spontaneous derangement (see p. 96 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). **Modifier:** -5

- **Symbols and Carvings:** The tub must be adorned with certain carvings symbols or decorations. **Modifier:** -1, or -2 if the character has to re-apply them every time she performs the Ritual. Applying these carvings or adornments requires an extended Dexterity + Crafts roll (5 successes required, each roll equals 30 minutes).

- **Attendants:** The blood bather requires others presence during the Ritual. A cult leader might require several people chanting, or two blood bathers might develop a Ritual together and perform it during coitus. In either case, the Ritual will fail unless the attendants are present and performing their appointed functions. **Modifier:** 2 (one attendant), -3 (up to five attendants), -5 (more than five attendants). If the attendants *require* special training to perform their functions, an additional -1 modifier is applicable. "Special training" includes learning long, complicated chants or ritual dances, involved medical procedures, and the like.

- **Any Hour, Any Day:** The character can perform the Ritual whenever he wishes (subject to the Frequency facet; see below). **Modifier:** +2

- **Day or Night:** The character can only perform the Ritual during the day or at night. Once the sun has set/risen, the character has until the sun rises/sets to complete the Ritual. This is usually plenty of time. **Modifier:** +1

- **Sunlight/Moonlight:** As Day or Night, expect that sun or moon must be shining on the character during the bath. This isn't usually too much of a problem, except that cloudy weather can stymie the character's efforts. **Modifier:** 0

- **Moon Phase:** The Ritual can only be performed during a specific moon phase, meaning that the character has roughly three nights during a month to do it. **Modifier:** -1

- **Seasonal:** The character can only perform the Ritual during a certain season. **Modifier:** -1

- **The Stars Are Right:** The Ritual can only be performed on certain days of the year. These might be blue moons, eclipses, solstices or equinoxes, or holidays, but only a few days out of the year (maximum of four) are eligible for the Ritual. **Modifier:** -3, or -2 if these days are regular occurrences like solstices.

Blood

The *Blood* facet involves the source of the blood, but not its extraction or anything mixed with it (these are the purview of the Preparation facet). This facet includes such factors as the types of victims that can be selected and how they must be killed for the Ritual to proceed, as well as the simple question of how *much* blood is required.

Some food for thought: The average adult body holds about a gallon of blood, give or take. Typically, a person's blood makes up 7% of his body weight. That means that if the blood bather requires enough blood to fill a bathtub most of the way, she'll probably need the last drop of blood from more than *two dozen victims*. Easy to see why Countess Bathory went through so many servants, isn't it?

The Storyteller might well choose to fudge this a bit, especially for characters who players might not want them to be mass murderers. But then again, immortality is a precious gift. We've presented the rules here without dodging the issue of how much (and how little) blood a human being holds, and by combining other aspects of the Ritual, we're certain that the Storyteller can find a combination that works for the chronicle.

- **Some Human:** The blood bather can include animal and human blood as she wishes, but at least one pint of the blood must come from a human being. **Modifier:** If the human blood is between one pint and one quart, +5. If at least two quarts of human blood is required, the modifier is +3. If a gallon is required, the modifier is -1.

- **Any Human:** Any human being, regardless of age, sex, race and so forth, is eligible to die to power the Ritual. **Modifier:** +2

- **Half the Population:** The Ritual can be performed using male or female victims, but not both. Where transgendered and transsexual individuals fall for the purposes of this facet is up to the Storyteller. This trait assumes that no other restrictions are placed upon the victims; if the Ritual requires adult males, the player should select "Age," below, and not Half the Population. **Modifier:** +1

- **Age:** Victims for the Ritual must be of a particular age, "child," "adult" or "elderly" serve as descriptors. Note that killing people for their blood is heinous enough,

but doing it to children is a good way to have local police and half a dozen federal agencies (to say nothing of any supernatural being who might be interested) chasing the blood bather down. Modifier: -2, or -3 for children

- **Race, Creed or Color:** Only members of a particular race, belief or ethnic group are eligible for sacrifice. Identifying someone positively as a member of the targeted group is therefore very important to performing the ritual correctly. Modifier: 0 if the target group is easily found or mainstream, down to as little as -2 if the group is rare, exclusive or takes pains to keep itself hidden.

How Does the Ritual Know?

Consider: A blood bather can only sacrifice Catholics to retain her immortality. She chooses someone that she sees participating in a Catholic Mass, taking Communion, reciting the prayers — clearly someone who knows the rituals of the Church. She kidnaps him, murders him and drains his blood, but does not know that this victim has never actually been baptized into the Catholic faith. He merely attends Mass because his girlfriend does, and the dogma and rigmarole of the service isn't really important to him. Does the Ritual work?

Likewise, what if a blood bather whose Ritual only works on Caucasian people kidnaps someone whose mother was black, but who looks white to all scrutiny?

Race and religion are cultural divides between people more than anything else. That doesn't mean they aren't important, obviously, but from a scientific standpoint, they might as well not exist. But the Ritual isn't precisely science, and the blood bather cements the particulars of the Ritual at the instant that he expends his will (in the form of a Willpower dot) on it. So, is the Ritual dependent upon what the bather knows? Should both of these Rituals function, regardless of the fact that they haven't been followed exactly?

The answer could be either “yes” or “no,” depending on what the Storyteller has decided about the Bathing Ritual. It bears noting, though, that it's very much in-theme for blood bathers to lose their powers (and their lives) all on account of a missed detail or a technicality.

- **Supernatural Blood:** The Ritual only works with the blood of a supernatural being. Examples include: werewolves, mages, changelings, vampires, ghouls, psychics, and other immortals. Blood bathers with this restriction don't tend to live very long, despite their power. Someone always notices when too many supernatural creatures go missing, and they often have ways to find their dead comrades, no matter how cleverly the blood bather covers his tracks. Modifier: -5

- **One Source:** The blood for the Ritual must come from one donor. This requires selecting the appropriate amount of blood for this facet (see “Coat the Skin,” below). It also probably requires killing the victim, and being very careful not to spill. Modifier: -3

- **Drained to Death:** The donor(s) must die, drained completely of blood, for the Ritual to function. Modifier: -5

- **Left Alive:** The victim(s) need not die for the Ritual to work. This allows the blood bather to retain some small measure of Morality. Modifier: +5

- **Coat the Skin:** The Ritual necessitates enough blood to coat the skin of the bather; one gallon is probably enough. Modifier: +2

- **Immersion:** The Ritual requires enough blood for the bather to be completely covered (about enough to fill a normal bathtub about three-quarters full; maybe 30 gallons). Obviously, this precludes “One Source,” above. Modifier: -4

- **To Spare:** The Ritual only works if the tub contains enough blood to swim in — probably more than 100 gallons. Modifier: -5

- **Fresh:** The blood for the Ritual must be drawn from the donor's body within one day of the Ritual being performed. Modifier: -3

- **Preserved:** The blood can be preserved for an indefinite amount of time before the Ritual, but cannot be allowed to rot or stagnate. Modifier: +1

Effects

The *Effects* of the Bathing Ritual are the benefits (and, sometimes, drawbacks) that the character derives from it. The most common, of course, is Immortality, but blood bathers might also gain the ability to heal, to boost their Attributes and even to affect the blood of their enemies.

Note: The Effects listed here conform to the visceral, physical nature of blood bathers presented in this chapter. If the Storyteller wishes blood bathers (or just one particular such character) to have more overtly magical powers, such as flight, mental domination or conjuring fire, such abilities can be engineered as Effects easily enough. This list, like the rest of the facets, should not be considered exhaustive.

- **Immortal:** The blood bather does not age as long as the Ritual is in effect. She will not die of natural causes, and is immune to non-supernatural disease. She receives a +5 modifier to any roll to resist disease of supernatural origin. Modifier: +5

- **Immune to Poison:** Poisons, drugs and other toxins do not harm the character. She can partake of them for pleasurable effects, but no matter how much she ingests, her body shakes off the effects in roughly 12 hours. Modifier: +2, or +4 if the effect extends to supernatural poisons.

- **Immune to Disease:** Even supernatural disease has no effect on the character. She simply never gets sick, no matter what she is exposed to. Modifier: +2, or +3 if the character does not also have the Immortal trait.

- **Attribute Increase (temporary):** The character can call upon the energy of her blood and increase her Physical Attributes. The player spends one Willpower point and rolls Resolve + Composure. Every success allows the character to increase Strength, Dexterity or Stamina by one point. This increase lasts for the scene, and increases derived traits such as Health, Speed and Initiative. Modifier: +5

- **Attribute Increase (permanent):** One of the character's Physical Attributes increases by one point each time this trait is selected. This increase is permanent. Modifier: +3 for each dot.

- **Quick Healer:** The character heals from damage twice as quickly as most people (see the Merit on p. 113 of the World of Darkness Rulebook; the prerequisite does not apply). Modifier: +2

- **Regeneration:** The character recovers from damage more quickly than is humanly possible. All bashing damage heals in 30 minutes, no matter how injured the character is. Lethal damage heals at one point per 15 minutes, and aggravated damage heals at a rate of one point per day. Modifier: +4

- **Return from Death:** The blood bather can return from death, as long as the body is relatively intact. Being burnt to cinders will kill the character, as might such extreme measures as dismemberment and separation of the parts, but a simple gunshot or stab wound just inconveniences the character. The bather heals one point of aggravated damage per hour after death. Modifier: +5

- **Striking Looks:** The character rises from her blood bath looking young and beautiful, no matter how old she truly is. This trait is identical to the four-dot Merit on p. 117 of the World of Darkness Rulebook. Modifier: +1

- **Intoxicating Presence:** The blood bather has a mesmerizing quality. It might be representative of physical beauty, or simply a truly seductive and perhaps predat-

tory bearing, but either way others have a hard time looking away. The character receives a +3 modifier on all Social rolls meant to seduce, persuade or distract. Modifier: +2

- **Blood Manipulation:** The blood bather has an affinity for blood, and can kill with a touch by inducing a stroke or heart attack. The character must touch her opponent (see Touching an Opponent, p. 157 of the World of Darkness Rulebook), at which point the player rolls Manipulation + Occult – opponent's Stamina. This roll is reflexive. Every success inflicts a level of lethal damage. If the blood bather grapples the target, this attack can be made each turn (probably killing the victim quickly if he fails to escape the grapple). This power has no effect on vampires. Modifier: +4

- **The Fading:** The character loses all benefits of the Ritual for a period of time immediately before she must perform it again. During this time, the character is not immortal, nor is she immune to disease. Other effects also fail her, including Striking Looks, if applicable. Once she performs the Ritual, she regains all of her usual traits. Modifier: Variable, based on how long the Fading occurs before the Ritual must be performed:

Time Powerless	Modifier
One month	–5
One week	–4
One day (24 hours)	–3
12 hours	–2
One hour	–1

If the character also has a Bath trait limiting the Ritual to particular days (The Stars Are Right, for example), the Fading is worth an additional point. That is, if the Ritual can only be performed on a solstice or equinox, and the blood bather loses her powers for the 24-hour period before the equinox, the Fading is worth –4.

- **Life-Bound:** The Ritual prevents the character from dying — literally. If the character is unable to successfully perform the Ritual on time, he perishes. This death can take any form the player or Storyteller wishes. Aging to death and decay in a matter of seconds is appropriate, as is collapsing into a rancid pool of blood and liquefied flesh. Modifier: –3

Frequency

Frequency, of course, refers to how often the character must perform the Bathing Ritual. The traits below are therefore arranged by the amount of time that can pass before the blood bather must immerse herself once again in the liquid of life. This raises the question of what happens when a blood bather performs the Ritual before the time runs out, or after it has elapsed.

If the character waits until the time runs out before performing the Ritual, she immediately loses access to any of the benefits the Ritual provides. In some cases, this might spell her instant death (see p. 35), but more often the character simply reverts to her “natural” age. This might kill her, if she has advanced well beyond a normal lifespan. Worse, becoming old and frail might remove any chance the character has of performing the ritual again, meaning that the would-be immortal must live out a few brief months or years, knowing that youth and vigor is within her grasp but unable to procure the necessary ingredients. Such blood bathers usually attempt to find helpers and promise them anything to obtain their assistance in acquiring the blood.

A blood bather that “jumps the gun,” performing the Ritual before the time has elapsed, usually just resets the clock, as it were. If the Ritual must be performed yearly, and the character performs it in July one year and June the next, she has until the following June to do it again. The Strict Timeline trait (see below) changes this rule.

- **Chronicle:** The character must perform the Ritual once in a very long time (anything over 10 years). For the purposes of the average chronicle, it doesn’t matter if the character has to bathe in blood once every 15 years or 1,500 years. It’s still only going to show up in the chronicle once. The Storyteller should think carefully about allowing this schedule, because it effectively removes the logistics of performing the ritual entirely. This doesn’t mean the Storyteller should automatically disallow it, but just that he should consider whether this arrangement fits the chronicle. Modifier: +5

- **Five Years:** The character must perform the Ritual every five years. Modifier: +3

- **Yearly:** The character must perform the Ritual every year. Modifier: +1

- **Semiannually:** The character must perform the Ritual twice a year. Modifier: 0

- **Quarterly:** The character must perform the Ritual four times per year. Usually, this corresponds with the four seasons, but the character might use other markers. Modifier: –1

- **Monthly:** The character must perform the Ritual every month. This might follow a strict 30-day cycle, or the character might need to perform the ritual on a particular moon phase. Modifier: –2

- **Weekly:** The character must perform the Ritual once per week. This effectively precludes the character from requiring more blood than necessary for Coat the Skin (see above), unless the blood bather has access to a dizzying number of people that won’t be missed or can use animal blood. Modifier: –4

- **Daily:** The character must perform the Ritual every day, perhaps at sunrise, sunset, high noon or some other special time of day. Modifier: –5

- **Strict Timeline:** The character can perform the Ritual when the previous one expires, and not a moment sooner. If the character attempts to enact the Ritual too soon or too late, some penalty applies. The particulars of the penalty alter the value of this trait.

Penalty	Modifier
Instant Death	–5
Lose all benefits permanently if the Ritual isn’t performed on time	–4
Suffering aggravated wounds equal to the number of months/weeks/days/hours that the character is “off”	–3
Loss of all benefits for one month after the Ritual is performed	–4
Loss of all benefits for one week after the Ritual is performed	–3
Loss of all benefits for one day after the Ritual is performed	–2

Preparation

Blood requires *Preparation*. Blood bathers can’t (usually) simply immerse themselves in whole blood and reap the benefits. The blood must be treated and mixed with herbs or other ingredients to make it useful to the character. This facet also covers how the blood is extracted from the victim’s body, and how pure it can remain.

- **Any Biomass:** While the character has to bathe in liquid, it can contain any other biological material from a victim. Simply put, the character has the option to grind the bodies into paste or slurry and dive in. This might require a machine capable of reducing a human being to liquid form, but if the character has access to such a machine, it cuts down on the work considerably. Modifier: +1

- **Simple Blood:** The character must use blood of the appropriate type, but the presence of foreign toxins isn’t a problem, nor is a little bit of cerebrospinal fluid, urine or other biomass in the bath. Modifier: 0

- **Pure Blood:** The character can only bathe in blood. No other bodily fluid is allowed, and the character must watch for contaminants very carefully. It also means that the character cannot drug his victims, and must test the blood for toxins before use. If the blood is contaminated, the Ritual will fail. Modifier: –1

- **Infusions:** The blood must be mixed with herbs, precious metals, alchemical reagents or any other interesting ingredients the player can imagine. If the blood is not treated thusly, the Ritual fails. Modifier: See the Specific

Material trait on p. 33 of this chapter. The Resources level required to purchase the infusions determines the modifier in the same way as for that trait. In addition, if the process of infusion is especially time-consuming or complicated, the Storyteller can choose to increase the modifier.

- **Still Alive:** The victim must be drained of blood while still alive. Aside from the logistical issues, this creates (restraint, sedation, etc.); it also constitutes slow murder or even torture, if the victim is aware. This can therefore affect degeneration rolls. Modifier: -2

Example: Mr. & Mrs. Halliwell

Arthur and Belinda Halliwell were married in 1906, after eloping to escape their uncooperative families. As they grew older, they were still very much in love, but they found that the energy just wasn't there. Their marriage had lost its vital spark, and this terrified them. Together, they researched and discovered a way to become not just young and beautiful, but energized and happy — forever.

The Halliwells' Bathing Ritual requires them to coat each other in the blood of a young, married person while having sex. It has to be performed each year, on the night of their anniversary, and the Halliwells grow noticeably older and wearier in the week before the ritual's time ends. The blood can be preserved — in fact, it *must* be, for the Ritual requires infusions of wine, flowers and poisons that take months to mix fully with the blood.

With all of this in mind, the Halliwells' Bathing Ritual looks like this:

Bath: No Tub +3; Attendants -2; The Stars Are Right -3 (anniversary; this is always the same date, but it is the only day that the Halliwells can perform the Ritual)

Blood: Coat the Skin +2; Preserved +1; Age (adult) -2; Drained to Death -5; Race, Creed or Color (married) 0

Effects: Attribute Increase (Stamina, +2 dots) +6; Striking Looks +1; Immortal +5; Immune to Disease +2

Frequency: Yearly +1, The Fading -4

Preparation: Pure Blood -1, Infusions -4 (-2 for Resources cost, -2 because of the time investment)

Example: Ms. Winrow

She's what they call a "cougar" nowadays, an attractive woman who enjoys the affections of younger men. She's also responsible for the deaths of nearly 100 such men over the last 30 years. Once every five years, she goes through her extensive list of lovers, hires young and beautiful men, and even picks them up off the street. It takes a lot of blood to fill her marble tub, after all.

In the course of one frenzied night, she drugs them, kills them and drains their blood into the tub. She draws the sigils on the side of the tub, and then immerses herself. And as the sun creeps toward the horizon, she feels age upon her once again. But when she emerges from that hideous bath, she is again young and beautiful. She is left, of course, with the problem of body disposal, but for another five years, she will remain immortal. Plenty of time to get out of the country. Plenty of time to change her identity. Plenty of time to meet more beautiful men.

Ms. Winrow's Bathing Ritual:

Bath: Any Hour, Any Day +2; Specific Material (marble) -4, Symbols and Carvings -1

Blood: Age (adult men) -2; Race, Creed or Color (attractive — at least Striking Looks ••) -1; Drained to Death -5; Immersion -4, Fresh -3

Effects: Immortal +5; Immune to Disease +2; Immune to Poison +4; Intoxicating Presence +2; Striking Looks +1; Blood Manipulation +4; The Fading (12 hours) -2

Frequency: Five Years +3

Preparation: Pure Blood -1

Example: Aidan Corbett

Aidan is an oddity for a blood bather — he's still a child. At the tender age of 11, he saw his father die of Lou Gehrig's disease, and became obsessed with the idea that growing up meant a painful death. He started digging into the history of death, and his mother, distraught with grief over her husband, didn't notice her son becoming morbid and obsessive. Two years later, Aidan discovered he could stop his aging in its tracks, never grow up, and all that was required was a quick coating of fresh blood. Adults were all doomed to die horribly anyway, so Aidan didn't see anything wrong with using them to keep himself alive.

Aidan's Ritual is quick and savage. He must ambush a victim (he only attacks adults, though his Ritual would work on younger targets), stab her to death, and in the process become coated in blood. He performs the Ritual every Friday, during daylight hours, and he knows the consequences of failure: he'll grow up and assume his true age (18, presently). Aidan's youth actually works for him — he's an indigent child, but he is practiced at blending in with school groups, church camps and other such settings just long enough to find a victim. And then it's off to the next stop on his eternal adventure.

Aidan's Bathing Ritual:

Bath: No Tub +3; Sunlight 0

Blood: Any Human +2; Coat the Skin +2; Fresh -3; One Source -3; Drained to Death -5

Effects: Quick Healer +2; Immortal +5; Attribute Increase (permanent — Strength 3) +9

Frequency: Weekly -4; Strict Timeline -5 (if he misses the Ritual, the effects fade permanently)

Preparation: Simple Blood 0; Still Alive -2

Morality

Blood bathers obviously don't tend to retain their Morality for very long. The chart of Morality violations on p. 91 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook** lists "utter perversion, heinous act (mass murder)" as a sin against Morality 1, and slaughtering people for their blood qualifies. As such, performing the Bathing Ritual constitutes a chance for degeneration (roll two dice). If the blood bather does not kill his victims, but still takes blood from unwilling people, the Ritual is a sin against Morality 3 (planned crime; roll two dice). Even if he only needs to kill one person every five years, the result is still a sin against Morality 3 (planned murder; roll two dice),

and some Storytellers might rule that this counts as serial murder, which is a sin against Morality 2 (roll two dice).

The **World of Darkness Rulebook** states that someone who falls to Morality 0 is beyond redemption and unavailable as a player-controlled character. A blood bather in this state is probably riddled with derangements, feels absolutely no remorse about what he does, and focuses only on obtaining the blood for his next Ritual. This is a fairly accurate depiction of blood bathers, though, and so if the player truly wishes to portray such a character, the Storyteller can, of course, allow it. See “Playing Blood Bathers,” later in this chapter, for a more in-depth discussion on players using these characters.

As stated above, starting blood bather characters have Morality 5, rather than 7, and have the option of lowering the rating further. For every point the player removes from the character’s Morality rating, she can add five experience points to the character. So, a starting blood bather character with Morality 3 has 20 experience points to spend (all such characters get 10, and dropping two dots of Morality nets 10 more).

A group of blood bathers that shares a Ritual is slightly resistant to gain derangements (though not to losing Morality). Whenever a character would have to resist gaining a derangement for an action directly in furtherance of the Ritual, *and* one of the other participants is present to see the act (whether or not she assists), the character may spend a Willpower point to gain the usual three-die bonus on the roll to resist the derangement.

Derangements

While it’s theoretically possible for a blood bather to go his whole career without incurring a derangement, it’s not very likely. Blood bather characters can begin with whatever derangements the player finds interesting (these act as Flaws if taken at character creation; see p. 218 of the **World of Darkness Rulebook**). The following derangements are especially appropriate: narcissism, megalomania, fixation, obsessive compulsion, and the new derangements listed below.

Sanguinary Animism (mild): This delusion grows out of the blood bather’s fundamental awareness of guilt about murdering mortals for their blood. Characters with this delusion believe they take part of a victim’s mind or soul along with her blood. For hours after the Ritual, the character hears his victim’s voice in his head, berating him, begging for mercy or making demands. The blood bather even experiences ersatz memories from his victim’s life, all concocted by the character’s unconscious mind, but seeming very real. Weak-willed or especially guilt-stricken blood bathers might even carry out actions on behalf of their victims.

Effect: Whenever a sanguinary animist kills a mortal, the player rolls Intelligence + Composure. If the roll succeeds, the imaginary voice and memories of the victim torment the character for the rest of the night, but the character can function adequately. If the roll fails, the images in the character’s mind are so strong that the other personality can influence the character’s actions. The angry victim-personality usually means to harm the character, but the blood bather might “buy off” the victim’s voice by doing something he imagines the victim would like.

(Note: Sanguinary animism first appeared in **Vampire: The Requiem** and has been adapted for inclusion here.)

Personality Shift (severe): A sanguinary animist who develops this derangement believes he actually *becomes* one of his victims for a short time after the murder. During this time, the character behaves in a manner consistent with how he perceives the victim, but has no special insight. For instance, a white man who murders a black man and then suffers from this derangement might attempt to speak in African-American vernacular English, but wind up sounding ridiculous. An American who murders a European gains no knowledge of the victim’s native language, whatever it happens to be. This derangement’s effect lasts for a scene, during which the character often tries to convey messages to the victim’s next of kin or otherwise tie up any “loose ends” his death has caused. Again, these desires are filtered through the character’s madness, and so they might not bear any resemblance to what the deceased would actually have wanted.

Effect: When the character commits murder, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. Failure indicates that the character takes on what he thinks of as the victim’s identity, as described above.

Blood Addiction (mild): The character feels uncomfortable if she doesn’t at least *see* blood on a regular basis. If she goes more than day without seeing or touching flesh blood, she must make arrangements to do so. This is as simple as cutting her own flesh, but consider the plight of a blood bather with the Regeneration trait (see p. 35) and this derangement. Minor wounds heal too quickly to bleed satisfactorily, so she either needs to inflict a point of lethal damage or get the blood from someone else.

Effect: When the character is placed under intense stress or scrutiny, *or* when she has gone more than 24 hours without seeing fresh blood, the player rolls Resolve + Composure. If the roll fails, the character must devote all her attention to satisfying her addiction.

Homicidal Addiction (severe): The endless killing has driven the character mad. She not only relishes the feeling of taking human life, she *craves* it. The character doesn’t feel the urge to kill every day, but when she gets stressed, injured or otherwise thrown out of her routine, she needs to cut someone up to feel like herself again.

Effect: As described for blood addiction, except that the roll only needs to be made when the character is subjected to a serious stressor. A massive injury, the death of a loved one, losing a job and being discovered as a blood bather all qualify.

Storytelling

Blood bathers are despicable. The absolute best of them, morally speaking, kill animals rather than people, but still need to drain living humans of some of their blood. Most of them are mass murderers. And yet, for all that, they are perfect World of Darkness fodder. This section discusses how the Storyteller can get the best horror out of the blood bathers, how they function in the World of Darkness, and what a player needs to know when taking on the role of such a character.

Themes and Motifs

In addition to the general themes presented in the Introduction, blood bathers embody some specific and unique aspects of **Immortals**.

Desperation

Blood bathers are desperate out of necessity. They have to be. What they do is horrific, beyond imagination, but they do it to keep themselves alive. Worse, some of them (including the iconic historical blood bather, Countess Báthory) do it to stay young and beautiful. Mythology is full of examples of people who sold out their friends, family and lovers to stave off death for a little while, and of people who sold their own souls to demonic or otherwise evil powers to avoid the inevitable.

But that's the unfortunate and horrible truth about death — it is inevitable. We call blood bathers “immortal,” but that implies that they *can't* die, and that isn't strictly accurate, any more than a vampire is “immortal.” Both types of character are, in fact, undying, which means they do not die naturally, provided a certain set of circumstances (the blood keeps flowing) are met. Vampires can starve and be rendered permanently inert, which is as near enough to death as can be. Blood bathers only need to miss their Ritual before they are as vulnerable as anyone else. Many of them can be killed at any point between Rituals, too — the blood doesn't protect them from bullets, just from time.

Consider, though, that when people talk about being afraid of death, most of the time they aren't concerned about the method. They're concerned about the inevitability, and *that* is the source of the desperation that a blood bather feels. Death is out there, waiting, no matter what form it wears. And by bathing in the blood of others, the character can cheat that inevitability. He still must be careful to avoid immediate sources of harm, yes, but he would have to do that anyway. With the Bathing Ritual, the unavoidable end is, indeed, avoided.

Shawn Crane, described on p. 49, is a blood bather designed with the theme of desperation in mind.

Visceral Horror

Ever smelled a large quantity of blood? It smells *thick*. It's usually described as coppery or metallic, and those descriptors are accurate, but there's an unmistakably biological scent that goes along with it. Blood also stains. It turns the hands red and brown, and it takes vigorous scrubbing to get it out. Specialized cleaning services operate to mop up murder scenes, and that's because few people are equipped for the kind of mess that a large amount of blood makes.

Now imagine *bathing* in blood. It wouldn't be like a hot bath, because as the cliché says, blood is slightly thicker than water. And it cools quickly, so it would be more like immersing oneself in lukewarm skim milk.

And then there's the taste. As anyone who's ever been punched in the nose understands, blood has a flavor all its own. Again, it is a natural, body-taste, but that doesn't make it pleasant. It's rich, it's at once familiar and repulsive, and too much can make you sick.



Blood bathers are physical, visceral characters. Search the Internet for pictures of someone bathing in blood (if you dare) and you'll see attractive, highly sexualized women reclining in bathtubs filled with red liquid. The reality of the situation would be much less pleasant, but that's one of the thematic points of the blood bather — it's *not* pleasant, but it yields awesome dividends. Buried in the horror of the experience is true power. And once you have the power, the horror isn't so bad anymore.

The World of Darkness isn't necessarily built on splatter-horror. **Werewolf** and **Promethean** capitalize on this motif a little more than the others, and obviously blood is right at home in **Vampire**, but subtle menace and psychological horror get equal time. Using a blood bather in your chronicle can put the red stuff right in center stage, and sometimes that's a good thing.

Pig, described on p. 48, is designed to highlight this theme.

Forbidden Truth

It's one of the major themes of the World of Darkness in general: keep searching in the shadows, and sooner or later you'll find *something*. For blood bathers, it's a little more specific. These characters hunt down the secret of immortality, and once they learn it, they're stuck with it (which plays into Addiction, below). The character can tell himself that he's searching out of academic interest or even morbid fascination, but it eventually comes down to a choice. Does the character try the Ritual, or not?

A character who does try the Ritual becomes a blood bather, and this chapter has discussed what that means. A character who *doesn't* attempt the ritual has Pandora's Box sitting right in front of him for the rest of his life, and as life wears on, as vision and hearing fade, as the energy of youth becomes a memory, that box looks awfully tempting.

Of course, an ethical person wouldn't even consider attempting the Ritual, and a sane person knows right away it won't have any effect. But is someone who is entirely ethical and sane going to be researching the Bathing Ritual in the first place? Studies on serial killers talk about "triggers," a stressing event that turns a potential murderer into an active one. What trigger might push an academic or a philosopher over the edge, making him a blood bather?

Dr. Remy Darabont (p. 46) is designed with the theme of Forbidden Truth in mind.

Addiction

The Bathing Ritual isn't the sort of thing a character only does once. Yes, it's possible to arrange the Ritual so it's only necessary once every century. That means that in a century, it's time to get out the knives again. And as everyone knows, time flies when you're having fun.

Once a blood bather performs the Ritual, she's stuck with it. Does that make her an addict? She'll die (eventually or immediately) if she doesn't perform the Ritual, and that's a pretty serious withdrawal symptom, so the word "addiction" seems to apply.

This theme — the inability to stop doing something ultimately detrimental to the character's well being for fear of the consequences — shows up in other World of Darkness games, most notably **Vampire**. **Mage** visits the idea as well, insofar as when a mage can teleport himself across the city at will, there's no reason to use a car anymore, even though such use of magic runs the risk of attracting attention. But for blood bathers, the notion of addiction is detrimental to the world as a whole, rather than only to the character. Blood bathers are addicted to murder, and their only choices in coping with that addiction are to stop (and die), or start to enjoy it.

Mother Liesel (p. 44) is designed with this theme in mind.

Narcissism

Finally, consider the notion of narcissism. A narcissist is someone in love with himself. This goes beyond vanity and pride, and into the realm of solipsism and pronia. A blood bather highlighting this theme believes the "little people" should be *glad* to die in order to prolong his life; the notion that he should die because *all* things die is, of course, utterly inimical to him.

Not all blood bathers are quite this egocentric, but as mentioned earlier, it takes a special kind of mindset to see a Ritual involving exsanguination and immersion in blood as a good idea. A blood bather is often convinced that he, and only he in all of recorded history, has been clever and persistent enough to uncover the great secret of the Bathing Ritual. In fact, of course, he hasn't uncovered so much as mutated it, but even if the character knew that, he'd probably feel the same way ("Only I could have altered this ancient gobbledygook to make it useful!").

Unfortunately, just as some people are utterly convinced of their own superiority, others are just as easy to convince. Blood bathers can attract cultists and worshippers, especially if they can demonstrate their immortality. And with the worship comes a supply of praise, assurance of what the blood bather already believes, and, most important, blood.

Domingo Flores, described on p. 51, represents the theme of Narcissism.

Human Worth

What is a human life worth? It really does depend on whose life one is talking about. The life of an elderly man living in Calcutta isn't worth the same to a woman living in Middle America as her father's life, even if they are the same age, have the same medial problems and are facing the same prognosis. The world's population is presently estimated at 6.7 *billion* people. We've all made the comment that a lot of them are a waste of space. The blood bathers are putting their money where their mouths are, so to speak.

It's hard to consider, but people die every day. Tens of thousands, in fact, die of starvation and from water-borne diseases. They die because too much of the world's plenty is in the hands of a privileged few (among other concerns), and to that few, their lives aren't worth saving.

This isn't to suggest, of course, that the deaths of starving people in the real world are morally equivalent to the deaths

caused by sociopathic immortal killers in the World of Darkness. It's just to highlight the question of human worth. Put another way, if a blood bather kills a corporate wage slave with no family, no special ties to the people around him, and who is making no meaningful contribution to the world, is that wrong? How about if he kills a man who beats his wife? How about if he kills a murderer? A child molester? Or, to take it in another direction, what if he kills a man with AIDS who doesn't have long to live anyway? What if he kills a woman who refuses to give her children adequate attention, school supplies, and medicine, even though those things are made available? What is *her* life worth?

Complicating things further, what if the blood bather in question can make a real contribution to the world, if given enough time? What if a man like Jonas Salk could have lived forever? What about Martin Luther King, Jr.? Leonardo da Vinci? Marie Curie? What discoveries, what accomplishments, might these truly exceptional people might have shown us had they not been mortal? Wouldn't extending their lives be worth slaughtering a few of the John Wayne Gacys, the Ted Bundys, the Richard Allen Davises, or the Aileen Wuornosos of the world? In fact, never mind choosing serial killers and rapists and other obvious monsters, what about the people who *aren't* making any contribution, the members of that aforementioned privileged few who do nothing but perpetuate a cycle of consumption and greed? If someone could clear out some of that deadwood and in the process preserve a truly great mind, wouldn't that be worth it?

These questions aren't meant to have answers. The notion of human worth is one that the Storyteller can present to a troupe alongside a blood bather. The characters might decide this is all double-talk and sophistry and kill the bastard anyway—but then, they've made a decision on the matter, haven't they?

Bob Pilot (see p. 52) is designed with the theme of human worth in mind.

The Life of a Blood Bather

How do blood bathers function? Never mind the question of how they remain sane (they don't), how can one person murder so many others and not only get away with it, but get away with it for decades?

It's not easy, but blood bathers find ways.

Victim Selection

Picking random people off the street for inclusion in the Ritual (that is, for murder) is dangerous. The blood bather never knows who he's picking—it could be a cop, a slumming heirless or celebrity, or just someone whose large family isn't going to take the disappearance well. But the advantage to taking people at random is that there's no pattern for the authorities to follow. Abducting street people might seem like a good way to go, as they seem anonymous. They're only anonymous to the privileged, though. Beat cops know the homeless people on their turf, as do local residents. They might not *care* if a bum goes missing, but they might remember that it happened when the nice man from the FBI asks. Also, if homeless people start disappearing, word's going to spread quickly and eventually

the shelters are going to catch wise. Undercover police officers look for anyone suspicious on the streets. Either way, the blood bather needs to choose victims carefully.

Taking them from a wide area is preferable. Authorities don't like to cooperate, and if the character abducts people from several different counties, cities or (better yet) states, it might take the police months to realize the connection. In the United States, the Federal Bureau of Investigation handles interstate crimes and serial murder, but hopefully the character can go long enough between Rituals that the trail goes cold (see below).

Another possibility is to import victims. Immigrants from Cuba, Mexico and many other places come to the U.S. every day. Many are there illegally, and thus have no status, no records and no one to report them missing (and even if they *are* reported, they are almost impossible to track, not that the authorities put much effort into it). Slavery still exists, and it is possible for a blood bather of considerable financial means to *buy* his victims, especially over time.

All of this assumes the blood bather can take any victim he wishes. Some bathers have more stringent requirements. They might need people belonging to a particular religion, people of a certain age, or attractive victims. This means that the character can't necessarily grab people off the street. How, then, does he keep the tub full?

One possibility is that he immerses himself in the culture from which he needs to draw victims. A blood bather that needs Catholic victims becomes a priest, or perhaps the secular head of a pro-Catholic organization. He promotes

Story Hook: Hidden View

Hidden View is a little town, holding perhaps 500 people. As the name suggests, it's easy to miss the place. It's situated in a valley, miles from a major highway. The people there formed the town to get away from the city and the lifestyles it promotes; most are devoutly religious, computer illiterate, and xenophobic.

The town was created by a blood bather with millions of dollars and a lot of time on his hands. He doesn't have to perform his Ritual often, only twice a century, but he needs a lot of bodies. He's planning to "harvest" the townsfolk, and then bury the town in a rockslide. It won't kill everyone, but it should give him enough cover to get away, replenished.

Of course, if strangers arrived in town and started digging into the town charter, they might find a long-forgotten document that mentions the mountains and who owns much of the surrounding land. A trip *into* those mountains might uncover the explosives...

the religion as much as possible, because more Catholics means more victims. A blood bather that slaughters the elderly makes contacts at nursing homes, as many as possible, and learns which patients have caring, loving families and which ones are wards of the state.

And then there's the Internet. With a few clicks of a mouse, a blood bather can find anything — or, in many cases, anyone — he needs. In a large metropolitan area, it's not hard to choose victims after learning about their shopping habits, their schedules, their love lives (it's not impossible to hack e-mail accounts, after all) and, if they post pictures to online galleries or social networking sites, their appearance. Making them disappear is harder, yes, but if the blood bather knows the victim's life well enough, he can find the perfect moment to strike.

Travel

Keep the passport handy. Blood bathers commonly stay on the move, if they can. Those who have to perform the Ritual in one particular tub might not be able to afford to move it, so they simply return to the site when necessary (this does present the problem of security and, more to the point, *paying* for security in such a way that it doesn't leave a paper trail).

Blood bathers often keep houses in nations with no extradition laws, or have multiple identities they can assume if they are exposed. Third world nations often have the advantage of primeval law enforcement techniques, meaning that the blood bather doesn't need to worry about DNA tests or forensic evidence linking him to a murder scene. On the other hand, "innocent until proven guilty" doesn't exist in all countries, and a blood bather who runs to another continent hoping that the lack of sophistication will help him might actually wind up in prison with no trial, no lawyer and no way to perform his Ritual.

Story Hook: The Blood Prison

It's a staple of action movies — the prison with the corrupt warden who wants to see the prisoners kill each other. But what if the warden was also a blood bather, and was using the prisoners not just as sport, but as a source for his Ritual? Likewise, suppose a blood bather was imprisoned, but managed to convince the warden to allow him to use the prisoners thus. What is the blood bather offering the warden to allow this? A promise to share immortality with him? Knowledge? Occult contacts?

Characters might become involved if they get sentenced to the same prison, or if a relative or loved one disappears there. This sort of prison would be difficult to imagine in the United States... unless it's a "black site," off the books, known only to a select few in the government.

These characters also often learn to be social chameleons. A blood bather has the advantage of years, and so can learn new skills, customs and languages. Someone who flees to rural Guatemala might stand out if he doesn't speak a word of Spanish, but if he's fluent and knows the lay of the land *and* knows the local customs and practices, a team of foreign investigators is going to have a hard time tracking him down.

Money

Being a blood bather is expensive. Even if the Ritual doesn't require special infusions or materials, the character still needs to consider space, travel, buying off police officers and other officials, and whatever hedonistic excesses with which he chooses to occupy eternity.

Not every blood bather is rich, but many of them are. One advantage that such characters have in making money is time. Immortality grants the character the chance to make a fortune playing the markets, or selling childhood possessions that have become priceless antiques. And then, of course, there's the John George Haigh method: robbing one's victims and signing over all of their possessions. This might have been easier in Haigh's day (he was executed in 1949), but with a computer and some skill, identity theft isn't difficult.

Wealth enables travel, security, and legal defense. A good lawyer is the best investment a blood bather can make, at least in the United States, where trials don't come down to what's true so much as what's admissible. More than one blood bather has evaded conviction simply on the basis of the lawyer asking for a motive. Why would this wealthy, erudite individual kill people? To drain their blood into a tub and *bathe* in it? It sounds ridiculous, and for the citizens of the World of Darkness, sounding ridiculous is all that's necessary for an acquittal. The alternative, after all, is admitting that such a thing is possible.

Alternate Identities

Having an alternate identity is as simple as having a driver's license, a birth certificate, a credit history and (in the U.S.) a Social Security Number. Money can buy all of that, and blood bathers, who have many reasons to maintain multiple names, often find it a worthy investment. If one identity is drawing too much scrutiny, the blood bather simply kills it, faking his own death and walking away as someone else.

Interestingly, the propensity for alternate identities might put the blood bather in contact — or conflict — with other supernatural beings. Vampires and changelings, especially, have a need for legal documentation, and someone who produces this material for money might wind up with a truly strange client list. For more alternate identities, see the *alternate identity* Merit, p. 110.

Body Disposal

A human body doesn't just vanish once the blood is gone. A blood bather who has to kill multiple people has a number of heavy problems on his hands. Following are a few possibilities for getting rid of corpses:

- **Dismemberment:** No matter what method of disposal the character uses, it's always easier to dispose of small, portable pieces than full corpses. Even without blood, an adult human being often weighs in excess of 150 to 200 pounds, and that's a lot to lug around. Plus, a corpse is distinctively shaped, and people tend to remember someone walking around carrying something body-sized.

- **Burn them:** Human bodies require amazingly high temperatures to truly burn, which is why cremation isn't just a matter of setting a corpse on a pyre. It requires an oven or some similar structure to manage the heat necessary. That said, industrial incinerators, crematoria, and even metal dumpsters might work if the character has access to them. Likewise, an enterprising blood bather might construct his own body incinerator. It's not easy, but it's possible, and certainly the character has the time to make it work.

- **Out to sea:** Dropping a body into the middle of the ocean isn't possible for most people, but suppose the character has access to a boat large enough to hold the bodies? Then it's just a matter of getting them onto the boat without being noticed, or being patient enough to do it one at a time. If the character has the means, he might chop up the bodies and put them in crab pots (meaning that the animals eat the remains), or tie them in chicken wire and weigh them down (fish pick the bodies clean, but the chicken wire prevents large pieces from breaking free and floating to the top).

- **Melt them:** Again, it worked for John Haigh, just not for very long. The "Acid Bath Vampire" of England, Haigh melted down his victims in a barrel of sulfuric acid and poured the resulting mess down the drain. Melting human corpses in lye is actually being proposed as an alternative to interring them. The trouble a blood bather might face is that purchasing the materials leaves a trail.

- **Grind them:** It's as simple as a wood chipper and an ocean view. Dismember the body, freeze it, put it into the machine and spray the result out into the sea. Characters like Bob Pilot (p. 52) that have access to industrial machinery might have an even easier time of it — destroy the body, pour it down the drain.

- **Bury them:** It's a lot of work, obviously, and for a blood bather who must kill dozens of people to make the Ritual work, it probably isn't feasible. But if the blood bather has access to a graveyard or can bribe a gravedigger, he might be able to bury a corpse or three in the bottom of a deeper-than-usual grave and have the casket put on top of it. Likewise, if the character owns a great deal of land (and perhaps a backhoe), he can dig his own mass grave whenever necessary. Once again, dismemberment helps — easier to dig lots of little holes than one big one.

- **Eat them:** It's not as though blood bathers are well-adjusted, after all. Cannibalism probably isn't out of the question. Of course, this doesn't help with bones and other inedible bits. Consider, though,

that it doesn't have to be the blood bather doing the consumption. A pig farm means a large number of infinitely hungry diners. Or, alternately, what if the blood bather has access to a sausage factory?

Playing Blood Bathers

So, with all of the above in mind, what Storyteller in his right mind would allow a player to take the role of a blood bather? What player would *want* to? Wouldn't that be tantamount to playing a serial killer?

Bad, Wrong, Fun

We're not going to say it's *wrong* to play murderous characters. It's actually somewhat in-theme for the World of Darkness to play monsters, provided there's something out there more monstrous, but that's not a hair we're prepared to split. And as long as your troupe is having a good time, you're not playing this game "wrong."

But read that last sentence again: as long as *your troupe* is having a good time. That means you shouldn't play a character designed merely to upset the other people at the table. Different players have different levels of sensitivity to violence, even when the violence is just being described. It is irresponsible for a player to violate another player's comfort zones, and it is irresponsible for a Storyteller to allow such. Storytellers, before allowing a player to take on the role of a blood bather in your chronicle, find out how much violence and gore the other people at the table can stomach.

That goes for the other characters, too. A player might have no problem hearing about someone getting killed, exsanguinated, dismembered and fed to pigs, but his character might (justifiably) want nothing to do with the blood bather. He might feel compelled to take action against this character, and that's an entirely logical stance. Looking the other way for a character's drug habit is one thing; it might cause some in-game conflict, but it's not immediately morally repugnant. Looking the other way for serial murder, however, is a little harder to justify.

This section discusses playing blood bathers without paying much heed to the question of what the troupe wants to include. That's the job of the Storyteller and the other players to figure out.

Yes, perhaps, but then again, we encourage people to play vampires and werewolves without thinking twice about it. This isn't really all that different. Werewolves and vampires (and even mages) can derive great benefit from killing human beings, but they don't *have* to do so. It's relatively easy to arrange a Bathing Ritual so that it only requires a single murder once every five years. Even with more frequent killings, a player could certainly arrange the character's other traits to facilitate a character who isn't slaughtering people left and right.

That isn't to say that one couldn't play a character that requires more blood than that, but quite apart from the issue of troupe comfort (see sidebar), consider the time involved. Rounding up victims and killing them requires time and effort — does the character have any left to be involved in the story? A blood bather character can be an interesting addition to a group of characters, but the character's Ritual should definitely be built to allow the character to do the things that players' characters do.

Maintaining Morality

One of the main concerns in playing a blood bather is the Morality rating. Of course, having a high Morality rating doesn't really *mean* much to mortal characters. Supernatural characters (vampires, werewolves, etc.) have different forms of Morality, and extremely high or low ratings in these traits have an effect on game mechanics; but for characters like blood bathers, all having a low Morality rating means is having to make degeneration rolls less often. Technically, when a character falls to Morality 0, he is no longer available for play, but as mentioned earlier, the Storyteller can waive that requirement. But if she chooses not to, another possibility is to allow the player to keep three experience points on hand to buy back the last dot of Morality, should he ever lose it. Yes, normally raising Morality requires acting within the boundaries of a higher level than one normally possesses, but the difference between Morality 1 and Morality 0 is thin.

Another possibility, of course, is for the player to spend experience between Rituals to keep the character's Morality rating up. This requires some in-game justification for the expenditure, of course. One possibility is that between Rituals, the blood bather attempts to live a normal life. He avoids violence and selfishness, and attempts to help others, or least avoid harming them. This allows the player to justify buying Morality, against the time when it becomes necessary to kill again. Note, too, that the Ritual doesn't *guarantee* the loss of Morality, it simply requires a degeneration roll.

The Storyteller should endeavor to provide some reward to the player for keeping the character's Morality rating up. One possibility would be to levy penalties to Social rolls when the Morality rating falls below four. In this case, people can sense how inhuman the character has become, and they instinctively respond. Another possibility would be to allow the player to spend Willpower on the degeneration roll, but only if Morality is above a certain level (yes, this violates the usual rules for degeneration).

Choosing Victims

There are a lot of people in the World of Darkness that no one would miss. That doesn't mean "people who could just disappear," but rather "people who shouldn't be breathing." The blood bather could choose his victims from murderers, rapists and other individuals who have committed terrible crimes in their lives. Does that justify what the blood bather does? Rather, does it justify it enough to have any effect on Morality? That's up to the Storyteller (under a strict read of the rules, no, murder is murder, but again, the rules can bend for the story).

This kind of justification can be a slippery slope, of course, but that's fine. It allows for character development and some tough choices later on. If the character kills according to a code, how important is that code? Under what circumstances would he violate it? Would he go to jail rather than kill someone innocent? Would he forego the Ritual (and perhaps die) rather than do so? Facing these kinds of questions presents the kind of conflict that can make a blood bather an interesting character for a player.

Sample Characters

Mother Liesel

Quotes: *Love is blood.*

You don't understand now, but you will. Just relax, and let them kiss you.

Please call me "Mother."

Description: Mother Liesel appears to be in her late 20s. She has long, beautiful chestnut brown hair and soft, blue eyes. Her skin is tanned from years in the sun, but she hasn't a single wrinkle on her face. Her back, from neck to calves, is adorned with intricate red-brown tattoos. She adds a new segment every time someone joins her Circle, or so she says. If that's true, the membership should be at more than a thousand, however.

Background: Mother Liesel was born Liesel Abendroth in Germany, 1933. She grew up during the horrors of World War II, and after the war ended, her father took her and her brothers to Canada. Liesel was a quiet child, but very studious and polite. Her mother had taken ill and died during the war, and her father, though he didn't realize it, had difficulty looking at his young daughter without feeling a pang of grief for his wife. As Liesel grew up, her father became more and more distant. Liesel didn't rebel, didn't make him angry, but inwardly she was lonely and terrified. She didn't want to grow up and get sick like her mother. She didn't want to die alone while bombs shook the building.

When Liesel turned 20, she left home and moved to America, settling in upstate New York. She took a job as a teacher, and quickly became the students' favorite. She was warm, motherly and beautiful, and although she was pursued, she never so much as dated. To her, courting led to marriage, which led to age and death.

It was spring of 1960 when Liesel learned of the Bathing Ritual. She found a gray hair that morning, and called in sick to her school. She sat in front of the mirror obsessively brushing her

hair, looking for more gray, when she realized that age — death — was inevitable. Despondent, she drove to New York City and wandered around aimlessly. She wound up at the Museum of Natural History staring at an exhibit on ancient Egypt. Reading about the practice of mummification, she noted the ankh, the symbol of eternal life. The pictures in front of her seemed to depict a beautiful woman in a tub shaped like an ankh, but the liquid in that tub wasn't water. It was too dark.

Liesel left the museum and that night dreamed of immersing herself in a pool of black liquid, and emerging feeling refreshed and alive. She returned to the museum the next day to look again at the pictures, but they had been removed. She asked to see whoever had designed the exhibit, and wound up in the office of an Egyptologist named Brian McAllister. Dr. McAllister explained that the pictures she had seen yesterday were fakes, and he'd only recently become aware of that, but Liesel, practiced at spotting lies as only a teacher can be, saw through this story. She seduced him, and he revealed the truth: the Bath of Life was real. The liquid in the tub was human blood, and McAllister was close to finding the truth.

Liesel left her job and for the next three years, she worked with McAllister to uncover the truth. Finally, in 1963, they believed they had discovered it. It required a special tub, one presently under restoration at the museum. It required the chants of the devoted worshippers, and it required the sacrifice of one who loved the bather. McAllister despaired of ever being able to perform it — human sacrifice was too much. But Liesel, over the past few years, had been busy assembling her own cult.

The Circle of Eternal Life was composed largely of people who had protested for the Civil Rights movement. Liesel found susceptible men and seduced them, or susceptible women and brought them into the fold with promises of worship. She chose people from militant groups as well as peaceful ones, and when she and McAllister completed the Ritual, she had her followers break into the museum and steal the tub. Covering that theft took some difficult maneuvering, but of course McAllister covered for Liesel, whom he'd taken to calling "my queen."

On November 22, 1963, U.S. President John F. Kennedy was assassinated and the country's attention stayed firmly on that tragedy. Liesel jumped at her chance. Her followers murdered McAllister and two other men from the cult, and poured their blood over their goddess's naked body. Liesel stood up from the Bathing Ritual looking younger, stronger and somehow divine. She had become a blood bather.

Since then, Liesel (or "Mother Liesel," as she insists her followers call her) had performed the ritual four more times. Because the timeline isn't strict, she tries to arrange it after some major national tragedy, something that captures the country's attention so she can dispose of the bodies in peace. The cult owns a compound in upstate New York, and the huge ankh-shape tub rests there, waiting to be prepared and used. Liesel is rich, beautiful and loved by everyone around her... and she is thoroughly miserable.

The cult provides everything for her. When she wants food, she can call upon members who are (or were) talented chefs to provide it. If she wants to travel, she can



be anywhere in the world in hours. If she wants sex, which is often, she has men and women who want nothing more than to please her. But Liesel has never managed to shake off the feeling of inevitability, the notion that she will die alone, deathly ill, with no one to mourn her.

Despite her cold, calculating precision in building the cult, Liesel feels terribly guilty about killing McAllister. She knows now that if she had let him live, they would have published their finding about the Bathing Ritual, married and had a family. He would have worshipped her, and that would have been enough. Now she is immortal, but alone, and has chosen the life of a murderer.

Storytelling Hints: Liesel wants true love, but murdered her only chance for it years ago, or so she thinks. She's an addict wishing she could get shed of her Ritual, or rather, wishing that she could keep the immortality but lose the murder. Some days she still loves the adoration, and she always pretends to love her followers. Liesel is a very sick individual.

In a chronicle, the characters might lose a loved one to the cult and learn that sometimes, members of the Circle of Eternal Life wind up floating in the St. Lawrence river, drained of blood. A character might also meet Liesel's father or brother, who wish to find her again. This expression of love might be enough to get Liesel to repent for her crimes — but can she?

Bathing Ritual: Mother Liesel must bathe in a mixture of blood, water and wine. The Ritual must take place in an immense stone tub shaped like an ankh. The victims of the Ritual must love Mother Liesel, but they don't need to give their lives willingly (though some have). As she bathes, her cultists stand around the edge of the tub, chanting quietly to her, ready to dry her when the Ritual is complete.

Bath: Unique Tub -5; Attendants -3; Symbols and Carvings -1; Any Hour, Any Day +2

Blood: Race, Creed or Color (must love Liesel) -2; Drained to Death -5; Immersion -4; Fresh -3

Effects: Immortal +5; Immune to Poison +2; Immune to Disease +2; Attribute Increase (permanent; Stamina x2) +6; Quick Healer +2; Striking Looks +1

Frequency: Five Years +3

Preparation: Infusions (wine) +/-0

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 2, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 5, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Egyptology) 3, Computer 1, Crafts (Painting) 3, Investigation 2, Medicine 2, Occult 4, Politics 3

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 1, Firearms 2, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Animal Ken 2, Empathy 4, Expression 4, Intimidation (Mysterious) 3, Persuasion (Seduction, Oratory) 5, Socialize 3, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 4

Merits: Allies (cult members) 5, Fame 1, Holistic Awareness, Inspiring, Language (German), Meditative Mind, Quick Healer, Resources 4, Retainers 5, Striking Looks 4
Willpower: 5

Morality: 2 (depression 3, anxiety 4, inferiority complex 5)

Virtue: Charity

Vice: Lust

Health: 9

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 9

Dr. Remy Darabont

Quotes: *This is the way the world ends.*

If I could just see it done once... my God, what am I saying?

Put those down! You can't see them! No one can!

Description: Dr. Remy Darabont is a haunted man, and it shows. He seldom sleeps, and his skin is pale and worn. He has bags under his eyes, his brown hair is thin, patchy and unkempt, and he smokes constantly. His eyes dart nervously, partially from paranoia and partially from the stimulants he takes. He long ago stopped caring whether his clothes, or even his socks, match.

Background: Remy Darabont completed his doctoral degree in folklore and ancient cultures, and knew that he had a plum research contract waiting for him. His older sister was the dean at a prestigious university, and while nepotism would normally have been repugnant to him, the competition was so fierce that he was resigned to any advantage he could get. He started researching the effect of ancient myths being reinterpreted in modern times, and with that subject came interest in urban legends, cult phenomena, and so-called Fortean events. He never expected to find anything supernatural about any of it. Dr. Darabont was a dogged atheist and skeptic, and though

he interviewed many people who claimed to be practicing rites handed down from the Celts, the ancient Greeks, the Gypsies and so on, he found the same thing in all cultures — people were just looking for answers.

One snowy night in 1990, he interviewed a man who claimed to have belonged to a Satanic cult. The cult, the man claimed, stole people from rest stops along highways, from traveler's motels, from malls and big box stores and anywhere else they could spike a drink or slip a needle into someone's arm. Dr. Darabont didn't believe it. He'd heard these stories before, from brainwashed children and frantic parents, from falsely accused daycare workers. The "Satanic Panic" stories from the 1980s were mass hysteria — but this man named names of victims, and when Darabont started looking into it, he found that these people *had* disappeared. He sought out the informant again, but could find no trace of him. He went to the police and showed them his findings, but they had no idea how to proceed without knowing who this mysterious (and now missing) informant was.

But Darabont saw him again some months later. During an unseasonably late blizzard, he saw the man forcing his sister into his car at gunpoint. Darabont ran after them, but slowed by the snowdrifts, he couldn't reach them in time. He doggedly tracked them down, and found them both a week later. They were hanging from their feet in a warehouse, throats slit, over a cast iron bathtub. Three other bodies hung nearby. The blood was nowhere to be found, and neither was the killer.

Darabont threw himself into research, trying to find some inkling of *why* someone would do this. And as the



years worn on, he discovered the truth. A successful Bathing Ritual *can* grant eternal life, he's sure of it. And someone out there used his older sister as part of it. The discovery — or, rather, belief, for Darabont hasn't actually *seen* it work — has nearly driven him mad, and he has developed several different Rituals but never used any of them. Whenever he gets the urge (and as his smoker's cough worsens, he does feel that urge), he feels a cold, prickling sensation on the back of his neck and hears his sister's voice like a distant echo.

Remy Darabont remains on the lecture circuit, giving talks on cults, occult beliefs, ancient cultures and various other topics. He remains on the lookout for anyone who can help him, but since the various supernatural factions in the World of Darkness are devoted to secrecy, for the most part, he's received more misinformation than anything else. He's smart enough to sift through some of it, but he has so many conflicting theories that he can't keep them all straight anymore. Secretly, he wonders what he'd do if he ever actually found his sister's killer.

Storytelling Hints: Darabont is a man on the edge. He wants revenge for his sister, but more than that, he wants to know *why* this happened. He wants to meet a real blood bather and prove that the Ritual can work, that his sister and so many others didn't die because of some superstitious delusion. He's more likely to wind up dying at the hands of one, but he's made arrangements if that happens. He never goes anywhere without a cell phone and a GPS tracker, and members of the FBI and many local police departments, as well as serial crime task forces and other such units, know him and maintain regular contact. Killing Remy Darabont would spark a manhunt the likes of which few blood bathers (or other supernatural beings, for that matter) could imagine.

And there, of course, is one potential story involving Dr. Darabont. Another possibility: what happens when he joins up with a cell of hunters? He doesn't know a lot of fact about the supernatural, but he has a surreal amount of data. If he could confirm or refute just a few stories and observations, he could start putting the rest together like a puzzle. If that happens, he might become one of the most knowledgeable and thus dangerous men in the World of Darkness.

Bathing Ritual: Dr. Darabont has developed several, but has never used any of them. If he ever does become a blood bather, the Storyteller should feel free to devise a Ritual suitable for the circumstances.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 5, Wits 3, Resolve 4

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 1

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (Sociology, History) 4, Computer 3, Investigation 4, Medicine 1, Occult (Cults, Bathing Ritual) 5, Science 3

Physical Skills: Drive 2, Firearms (Pistol) 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Persuasion 2, Socialize (Academia) 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Police) 3, Contacts (Police Departments, FBI, Occultists, Medical, Academic), Encyclopedic Knowledge, Eidetic Memory, Fast Reflexes 2, Quick Draw (pistol), Unseen Sense (ghosts)

Willpower: 6

Morality: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Greed

Health: 6

Initiative: 7 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
.38 Special	2L	1	N/A	8

Armor

Type	Rating	Defense	Speed
Kevlar Vest	1/2	0	0

Belle Darabont

Remy Darabont's sister Belle returned as a ghost, and haunts her brother, urging him to find her killer and take revenge.

Description: Belle appears much as she did in life, when she manifests. She was almost 50 when she died. Her hair is cut short, and she wears a blood-stained white blouse and a simple pair of brown slacks. Her throat is cut wide open, but the wound does not bleed, and the blood on her clothes is dry. Her fingers are worn and raw, as though she tried to claw her way through something before death.

Storytelling Hints: Belle wants the man who killed her dead, but she can't remember much about him. She knows he was tall, handsome and that he spoke something other than English, but she can't remember much beyond that. She thinks she heard other voices, and she knows that others were killed before her, because she remembers someone begging for his life.

She has tried communicating with her brother directly, but he is teetering on the brink of insanity already, so she works in more subtle ways. She acts overtly and violently if he is threatened, however.

Attributes: Power 3, Finesse 3, Resistance 2

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Wrath

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 16

Size: 5

Corpus: 7

Numina: Ghost Sign, Possession, Telekinesis

Anchor: Remy Darabont

Pig

Quotes: <high pitched squeal, followed by a delighted snort>
<chewing noises>

Description: Pig is over seven feet tall, with a massive chest and arms as thick as girders. His nose is slightly upturned and this, coupled with his bald head, led to his nickname. Pig is usually naked, but sometimes squeezes into his victims' clothes. He is perpetually covered in grime, dried blood, and his own filth.

Pig doesn't attack people on sight, at least not all the time. If he is outnumbered, he hunts people, stalking them until he can get them alone. While he prefers to kill with his bare hands and rend his prey to pieces, he's not above grabbing a tree branch or some other club-like weapon to beat a foe unconscious before eating them alive. Pig is partial to young women, but he'll attack anyone who crosses his path.

Pig fears loud noises and knives, and flees from well-armed foes. He doesn't forget an injury, though, and if someone manages to injure him, he tracks them for as long as is necessary to kill them.

Background: Who was Pig before the Ritual went wrong? He was a monster in any case, he just wasn't as big or strong. Pig used to be a serial killer named Heath Wainwright. Heath liked to dig his fingers under his victim's skin and pull it off, getting showered with the blood in the process. Never much for studying, he learned about the Bathing Ritual almost by accident — he picked up a book on the history of butchery and someone had left a note in the margin that read "only blood or does csf work too?" It was on a page talking about draining the blood from cattle.

It took several years, but Heath learned about the Ritual and became obsessed with trying it. He didn't put the effort he should have into making sure it was safe, however. One night,



with the harvest moon high over his head, he ripped open three coeds from a nearby university and showered himself in their blood. He felt himself growing stronger... and then what little humanity remained in him trickled away. His body grew stronger, faster and larger. His tongue swelled in his mouth to the point that he could no longer speak, and his vocal folds lengthened and shrank, stripping him of the ability to make any sounds but horrible squeals. Hungry, confused and immortal, Pig charged off into the night, looking for more victims.

Since then, the "Pig-Man Killer" has become a campfire story, an urban legend in many parts of North America. He can't be killed, the stories say, except by skinning him alive and burning his fleshless body. He tears his victims in two and guzzles the blood, and he moves so fast that no one can fight him. Bullets bounce off his skin. Knives don't penetrate. If you see him coming, just close your eyes and say goodbye. (At this point in the story, someone generally jumps out from behind a tree or in a closet and screams or squeals.)

But for the most part, these stories are true. Pig doesn't leave survivors if he can help it, and he hibernates during the winter, retreating to the deep woods and sleeping under the snow. In spring, he wakes hungry, and feeds on carrion, hikers or whatever else he can find.

Storytelling Hints: Pig is a monster. He is the result of a Bathing Ritual gone horribly wrong, and now the only possible end to his story is death. Despite what the stories say, he *can* be killed, but it isn't easy. No matter what sort of World of Darkness game the Storyteller is running, Pig makes for a good combat adversary. He's not subtle or clever, but he's very, very dangerous, even to a group.

If the troupe's characters include a blood bather, though, Pig might be an interesting wake-up call. Strip away the occult trappings and promise of immortality, and there's Pig, tearing people in half and drinking their blood, squealing and rooting and playing with the corpse. Any blood bather should see himself in Pig's voracious insanity, and hopefully feel sickened by the similarity.

Bathing Ritual: None. Pig destroyed his mind and soul by attempting a botched Ritual. His "Ritual" is powerful, but it cost him his cognition, his language and everything about him that was human.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 1, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 6, Dexterity 5, Stamina 6

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 1, Composure 2

Mental Skills: None

Physical Skills: Athletics 5, Brawl (Grappling) 5, Stealth (Stalking) 3, Survival 2, Weaponry (Clubs) 4

Social Skills: Animal Ken 3, Intimidation 4

Merits: Danger Sense, Fast Reflexes 2, Fleet of Foot 3, Fresh Start, Giant, Iron Stamina 3

Willpower: 3

Morality: 0

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Gluttony

Health: 12

Initiative: 9 (with Fast Reflexes)

Defense: 5

Speed: 19 (with Fleet of Foot)

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Dice Pool
Claw	1 (B)	11
Grapple	0 (L)	11

Armor: 2 (hide)

Supernatural Powers and Weaknesses:

- **Animal Mind:** Pig uses the higher of his Wits and Dexterity to determine Defense, just like an animal.

- **Immortal:** As the Effects trait, p. 35.

- **Inhuman Grip:** Pig inflicts lethal damage to targets he grapples (see Grappling, p. 157 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*).

- **Predator's Run:** Pig adds three dice to all foot chases (see p. 65 of the *World of Darkness Rulebook*) where he is chasing down a target.

- **Regeneration:** As the Effects trait, p. 35.

- **Return from Death:** As the Effects trait, p. 35.

- **Thick Hide:** His tough, leathery hide is worth Armor 2 against all attacks.

- **Tracker:** Pig can track by scent. This requires an extended Wits + Survival action. Each roll represents 15 minutes of tracking, and the number of successes is equal to five plus the number of hours head start the quarry has. The Storyteller should apply modifiers for Pig based on the conditions. For example, rain might be worth a -3 penalty, while a bleeding wound might give Pig a +2 modifier. If Pig goes a full hour without making any progress, he loses the trail.

- **Hibernation:** Pig sleeps during the winter. When the weather turns cold, he trudges into the forest, digs a den, and waits for the spring thaw. If he is interrupted, he wakes and fights, but applies a -4 to all actions.

- **Need for Blood:** Pig must kill one person a week during the spring and summer months. He can either consume or bathe in the blood to maintain his powers. If he is prevented from killing for one week, he loses the following powers: Immortal, Return from Death, Regeneration. If he manages to kill again, though, he immediately regains these powers.

Shawn Crane

Quotes: *Excuse me, sir, have you ever considered donating blood?*

We don't need much. Just a little drop!

Don't be fucking selfish. Get on the table and don't move.

Description: Many blood bathers are beautiful and vain. Not so Shawn Crane. He is rail-thin, gangly and wears a wide-brimmed hat that makes him look like a scarecrow somehow escaped from its pole. His teeth jut out too far,



his hair is long and blond, but uneven, and the myriad of tattoos that adorn his arms and shoulders are a pastiche of Japanese *kanji*, cartoon characters and tribal bands.

Talking to him is an interesting experience. Shawn can go from polite, funny and interesting to creepy and threatening in seconds, and it doesn't take much to set him off. But it's not until one gets into conversation with him that this switch happens, and this is how he manages to lure his occasional victims to their doom. Shawn is, among other things, a practiced con artist. He just can't keep the con going very long anymore.

Background: Shawn's life is a series of almos. He almost wasn't born, but his teenaged mother never worked up the courage to get an abortion. He almost went to the state finals for discus in high school, but his stepfather was too drunk to drive him. He almost graduated from college, but he discovered the joys of heroin his junior year. He almost died of an overdose, but his dying friend inadvertently saved his life.

That whole evening was a nightmare. Shawn bought a gram of smack from someone he'd never met, and the guy just didn't seem *right* somehow. But the monkey on Shawn's back was calling the shots by that point, and Shawn went to his friends' house to get high. They all shot up, and that's when the visions started. Things were crawling out of the walls to get to them, the floorboards were growing legs, and the television set described each of their deaths in gruesome detail. Shawn, apparently, was the only one to hear these descriptions, and as a further effect of the drugs, he found he couldn't move.

The voice from the television described Lisa clawing out her own eyes, trying to get the visions to go away, and stumbling through the open window, falling to her death... and seconds later, she came screaming into the room, hand-

fuls of flesh in her hands and her eye sockets pulsing blood, tripping, screaming, and suddenly stopping.

It described Bill as blowing his own head off with a shotgun, and as Lisa's screams faded, Bill entered the room, sat next to Shawn, stuck the barrel of his gun under this chin, and pulled the trigger. The blood coated Shawn from head to toe, and he still couldn't move. The television told him of his own death — rent to pieces, pulled apart, clawed, bitten, eaten while still screaming. And then the TV shut off.

The room was still alive, however, and Shawn heard creatures pulling themselves out from under shadows and wriggling into the apartment from in between his heartbeats. He knew he had to leave, but he still couldn't get his body to move. But as his friend's blood sluiced down his face and body, he felt his strength returning. Shawn didn't know how he knew it, but there was power in that blood. He fled the apartment, and the creatures didn't get him. Not then, at least.

Panicked, he broke into an ex-girlfriend's house, washed the blood off, and immediately felt weaker. The blood had somehow given him power. Having been on the underside of the city for more than a year by that point, he started talking to the people that others had warned him to avoid. Soon he was reading the mad ramblings of insane "sorcerers," the dream-journals of supposed demon-worshippers, and anything he could find on the subject of blood and power. And eventually, he found and performed the Bathing Ritual.

So What's Going On?

What are the creatures that Shawn heard that night? What caused the television to speak and his friends to kill themselves? The Storyteller is free to tie these creatures into whatever existing mythology he likes, in the World of Darkness or not. This write-up makes the following assumptions:

- The creatures are from somewhere other than this plane of existence. Hell? The spirit world? The endless maze from which the Fae come? The unknowable Abyss? All are possibilities.
- The creatures cannot fully enter our world... yet. For that, they need Shawn to fulfill his destiny, dying in a gruesome, horrific manner. He almost did in the apartment, but his friend's blood revived him and he escaped.
- The Bathing Ritual keeps the creatures at bay. It also has some advantages for Shawn, but the creatures can't kill him as long as he follows the Ritual's rules.
- The creatures are hostile to humanity, and their release into our world would be nightmarish on whatever scale the Storyteller would find motivational to the players.

It hasn't helped, however. He knows his destiny is still out there, and he performs the Ritual (which, for him, is fairly easy to perform) any time he can manage it. He knows that to cease the Ritual would spell death, though he doesn't quite understand why. Meanwhile, the creatures wait patiently behind shadows and in between heartbeats for Shawn to finally slip up.

Shawn is a desperate man. He's been off drugs for a while, because he can't afford to nod out for 16 hours and then forget to perform the Ritual. He still drinks, of course, but he stays at least half sober. Various police agencies are tailing him, but when they get too close they always seem to meet with unfortunate accidents — flat tires, false leads, unrelated criminal activity — and Shawn gets away. Something is watching over Shawn, and it's bigger than the Bathing Ritual. Shawn Crane has a great and terrible destiny, and when he fulfills it, the television's prediction will finally come true.

Storytelling Hints: Shawn doesn't want to die. He is desperate to avoid the fate of his friends. It has never once occurred to him, though, that these creatures want anything more than to kill him personally. He doesn't realize his death will be the third tumbler in the lock keeping monsters from everyone around him, and even if he did know, it probably wouldn't intensify his desire to stay alive much. That is to say, weighed against "the entire world," his priority is still "Shawn."

Shawn might run across the characters looking for victims for his Ritual, or for help in staying ahead of the cops. The characters might also find whoever it was that sold him that bad batch of heroin and discover the eldritch ingredients mixed with it — who was that dealer? Was he *trying* to bring Hell to Earth? Shawn has never even thought about it.

In fairness, Shawn doesn't have much time to think. He barely has time to eat, and he certainly doesn't sleep much. Shawn, after all, has to find enough fresh human blood to coat his skin *every day*.

Bathing Ritual: Shawn's Ritual is extremely quick. He can perform it in 10 minutes or less, if he has the blood. He needs enough blood to coat his skin, meaning he can just barely draw enough from one person to make it work and not leave a trail of bodies behind him. He sometimes follows blood drives around and steals their blood, but he prefers to avoid the scrutiny this brings.

Bath: No Tub +3

Blood: Any Human +2; Left Alive +5; Coat the Skin +2; One Source -3; Fresh -3

Effects: Regeneration +4

Frequency: Daily -5; Strict Timeline (instant death) -5

Preparation: Pure Blood -1; Still Alive -2

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 4, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3 Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Crafts (Car Repair) 2, Medicine 1, Occult 3

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Firearms 1, Larceny 3, Stealth 3, Weaponry (Improvised) 2

Social Skills: Intimidation 2, Persuasion 3, Socialize 1, Streetwise 4, Subterfuge 2
Merits: Barfly, Danger Sense, Fighting Style: Kung Fu 3, Fleet of Foot 2
Willpower: 3
Morality: 4 (Fixation 5)
Virtue: Faith
Vice: Sloth
Health: 7
Initiative: 5
Defense: 3
Speed: 13 (with Fleet of Foot)
Weapons/Attacks

Type	Dmg	Size	Range	Clip	Dice Pool
9mm Pistol	2L	1	20/40/80	17+1	6

Domingo Flores

Quotes: *No one will miss him. Or her. Use them both.*

How many times must I tell you? First the right wrist, then the left!

Idiot. Just let me do it. Go and prepare my room, and God help you if I find blood on my sheets.

Description: Whatever else may be said about him, Domingo Flores is beautiful. Thick black hair, deep, brown, soulful eyes, a perfectly toned swimmer's body and a voice that could soften rocks all coax unfortunate people into dying under his knives.

One of Flores' biggest social assets, though, is that he can blend in with any crowd. All he needs is a few minutes to artfully muss his hair and he can be a counter-culture artist. A little dirt and a disaffected stare, and he's a broke punk. No matter who he's with, Domingo is beautiful, popular and unforgettable.

Background: Domingo Flores was born in Spain to an extremely wealthy family. Spoiled rotten from birth, he was taught that he could have anything he wanted in the world. All he had to do was ask for it. And when his mother died on his 16th birthday, driving her car off a cliff into the sea while drunk out of her mind, Domingo decided what he *really* wanted was never to die.

He poured his family fortune into finding the secret of immortality. His family had no real occult connections, but the old adage about monkeys and typewriters seemed apt — one of his paid researchers discovered the Bathing Ritual and worked out the method by which it might function. Domingo, in probably the only real effort he'd ever put forth in his life, made it work, and moved from "spoiled brat" to "murderous psychopath."

Most of Domingo's staff knew the truth about what went on at his "winter parties," but Domingo paid them well. He also kept several ex-military manhunters on staff, and if anyone went blabbing to the police, they wound up under the knife the next time around. Life was good, Domingo was immortal... and then he picked the wrong victim.

Lyuba Novy was a Russian girl vacationing in Spain, and she met Domingo at a party in Madrid. She spoke very little Spanish and Domingo assumed she was a student traveler, probably someone who wouldn't be missed, especially if she deviated from her itinerary. He invited her back to his estate, and killed her

along with six other victims for his Ritual. What he didn't realize, though, was that Lyuba's mother was a powerful witch. She tracked her daughter's murderer down, but instead of confronting Domingo, she disguised herself as a beautiful young woman and seduced him. Learning about the ritual, she laid a curse on Domingo. Since he had taken a witch's blood, a witch's blood was *all* that would sustain him. And then the woman left, reasoning that Domingo would die old and frail, since he'd never be able to capture enough witches to perform the Ritual again.

The witch might have been better served by just killing him. After he performed the ritual again, Domingo realized something was wrong, and set his researchers back on the task. They started by going through the identities of his previous victims (which they'd fortuitously kept records of) and learned about Lyuba Novy's family. The mercenaries that Domingo employed tracked her mother back to Russia and tortured her until she confessed, and Domingo sent them tracking down "witches." As luck would have it, one of Domingo's soldiers wasn't just "ex military." He had once worked for a secret branch of the U.S. government devoted to tracking down and eradicating the supernatural. With Domingo's money behind him, he recruited others who had retired from the "monster-hunting" business, and they went in search of the blood Domingo needed.

It's been five years, and Domingo has managed to perform the Ritual each time. Domingo travels the world, returning to his palatial estate to perform the Ritual, or whenever the mood takes him. He has been romantically linked with daughters of industry, movie stars, politicians' daughters and even royalty, but as anyone who dates him realizes quickly, there's only one true love in Domingo Flores' life.



Storytelling Hints: Domingo is a complete narcissist, and it's going to break his heart when he realizes he'll have to fake his own death someday. Actually, it's more likely that someone is going to find out what's going on and kill him before that happens. Domingo is used to being able to throw surreal amounts of money at a problem and making it go away, one way or another, and it's amazing how often that works. He realizes he doesn't have to know anything, or how to do anything, provided he can pay others to do it for him. He has financiers to keep his fortune vast, bodyguards to keep him safe, contacts in several countries to help him hide bodies, and a staff of occult researchers digging into ways to break the curse. Domingo himself isn't very impressive, once you strip away the money and the staff. The trick would be actually *doing* that.

Characters going up against Domingo need to be extremely careful. In addition to being immortal, he's also famous and fantastically wealthy, and he's not above seducing the wives of enemies and then publicly humiliating them just to prove a point. He also has friends in the governments of multiple countries, not to mention some allies he doesn't know he has (his staff aren't the only monster hunters in the world, after all). Domingo could easily become the major antagonist behind an entire chronicle, and what's worse, he could probably do it without even realizing it. Making Domingo care enough about something to hate it would be quite an achievement.

Bathing Ritual: Domingo performs his ritual once a year, in winter. He requires the blood of seven "witches" (mages work, but other living people that can use mage magic of one type or another also qualify). Domingo's staff drugs the victims to paralyze them, and then slices them open so the blood can pour over Domingo's naked, godlike body. While he uses an ornate, marble tub, it's not necessary. He just enjoys the grandeur of it.

Bath: Any Tub Will Do +3; Attendants -6; Seasonal -1

Blood: Drained to Death -5; Supernatural Blood -5; Immersion -4; Fresh -3

Effects: Immortal +5; Immune to Poison +4; Immune to Disease +2, Attribute Increase (temporary) +5; Regeneration +4; Intoxicating Presence +2

Frequency: Yearly +1

Preparation: Still Alive -2

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 4

Social Attributes: Presence 4, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 2, Occult 1, Politics (National, High Society) 4

Physical Skills: Athletics 3, Brawl 2, Drive (Motorcycle) 3, Firearms 2

Social Skills: Expression (Guitar) 3, Intimidation 3, Persuasion (Seduction) 5, Socialize 5, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies (Spanish Government) 3, Barfly, Contacts (Corporate, Criminal, Government, Military, Occult), Fame 3, Language (Arabic, English, French, German, native Spanish), Resources 5, Retainers 5, Stunt Driver

Willpower: 5

Morality: 2 (narcissism 5, megalomania 4)

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Pride

Health: 9

Initiative: 6

Defense: 2

Speed: 11

Bob Pilot

Quotes: *Please God, this time.*

If it doesn't work this time, I'll just let myself die.

This time. This time I'll get it right.

Description: Bob doesn't look sick, but he certainly looks like he has been. He was once a strong, wide-framed black man. Now, skeletal and wasted, Bob still hobbles and coughs as though the cancers are ravaging his body. As he grows sicker when the Ritual runs out, he loses his hair, his eyes go a sallow pink, and his fingernails and teeth turn yellow-brown. Whatever is wrong with Bob, it passed the realm of simple cancer long ago.

Background: Bob Pilot was the plant foreman. Probably would have become a manager, but the cancer shot that down. It spread all across his body, but never quite managed to kill him. His wife "moved on" before he was ready to, and he wound up in hospice care. Alone, dying, his insurance running out, he could do nothing but wait. He busied himself with reading, learning about the history and culture of the world that he had never had occasion to learn before. He became active in many online communities, discussing history and literature, and slowly found his way into more esoteric areas of study.

He wound up posting several very insightful essays on the nature of death and the process of dying. He received letters from around the country, complementing him on his courage and his simple, direct manner of writing. He also received admonitions to accept various religions lest he face eternal damnation, as well as requests for monetary aid, since, after all, he couldn't take it with him. And Bob noted that humanity was a mixed bag, indeed — the best were often quiet, the worst were often outspoken, but any given person contained the seeds of both.

And then, a woman with a very interesting story came to see him. She told him about the Bathing Ritual, and about how it could save his life — if he was willing to make the necessary sacrifice. Bob, under the impression that he would only have to perform the Ritual *once*, spent his savings uncovering the Ritual. The woman who put him on the path to finding the Ritual disappeared shortly thereafter, and Bob has never managed to discover her identity, though he has tried. The workers at the hospice have no memory of her, and Bob finds that his own recollection is faulty — was she blond? Brunette? Young? Old? He can't recall.

The following summer, Bob broke into the plant where he used to work, and readied the equipment. The very first person into the grinder was his ex-wife, but others followed, people that Bob believed were more of the worst than the best. He lowered himself, coughing up blood and leaking it from his eyes and ears, into the mixture, and emerged healed — still thin, still weak, but healed.

After a few months, he felt his health deteriorating again, and he realized he would have to kill again if he wanted to live. And he did, he decided. He'd just have to be as much of the best as he could, to try and keep things in balance.

Storytelling Hints: By bathing into the liquefied bodies of others, Bob realized he could have his life back. He wants the Ritual to be permanent, however — he hates killing. But he's come so far now, he's sure that with just a little adjustment, it can work. Maybe using other cancer patients?

Bob, for all of his blue-collar background, is highly intelligent and thoughtful. He believes anyone has the *potential* to be the best or worst of humanity, but most people default to the middle. He tries to choose victims who are greedy, selfish, inconstant (like his ex) or useless. He recognizes the hypocrisy in what he does, but honestly believes that by living in accordance with higher ideals between Rituals, he can “make up the difference” somehow.

This attitude, though, is only possible because Bob thinks he'll only have to perform the Ritual “correctly” once, and then its effects will be permanent. He's wrong, of course, and if he ever realizes that, he'll have to decide either to continue being a blood bather or die. How he makes the decision would depend on how he learns the truth.

Bathing Ritual: Bob uses the grinder at the plant where he used to work. The plant is decommissioned, but the company found it cheaper to let everything sit and rot than to dispose of it safely. Bob was able to get it working again, no problem. He usually kills his victims beforehand, transports their bodies to the plant in a van, and drops them into the grinders. The resulting mixture of blood, flesh and bone spurts into a huge iron tub below, and he lowers himself into it, trying all the while not to vomit. Once he's finished, he simple flips a lever that opens the tub into the drain below, and the remains of all those people simply wash away.

Bath: Any Tub Will Do +3; Any Hour, Any Day +2

Blood: Any Human +2; Drained to Death -5; Fresh -3; To Spare -5

Effects: Immune to Disease +2; Immortal +5; Attribute Increase (permanent — Strength +1, Stamina +1) +6; Life-Bound -3; The Fading -5 (one month)

Frequency: Semiannually 0



Preparation: Any Biomass +1

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 4, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Academics (Philosophy) 3, Computer 3, Crafts (Machinery) 4, Medicine 2, Occult 2, Science 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive (Forklifts) 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Weaponry 3

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Expression (Online) 3, Streetwise 1

Merits: Contacts (Medical, Business), Fame (online only) 1, Meditative Mind, Resources 3

Willpower: 5

Morality: 5 (avoidance 5)

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Pride

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

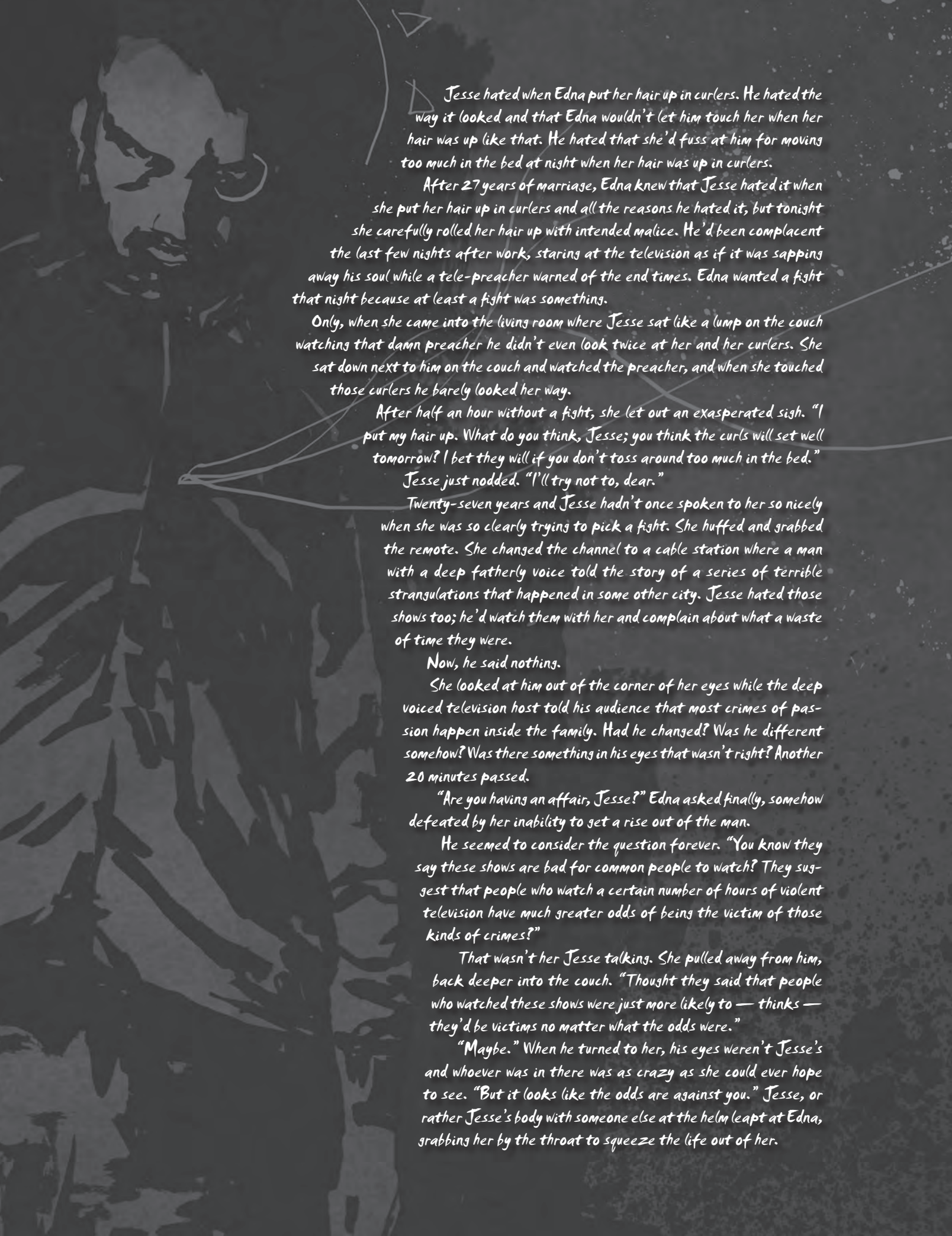
Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Special	Dice Pool
Large Ax	3 (L)	3	9 again	8





Jesse hated when Edna put her hair up in curlers. He hated the way it looked and that Edna wouldn't let him touch her when her hair was up like that. He hated that she'd fuss at him for moving too much in the bed at night when her hair was up in curlers.

After 27 years of marriage, Edna knew that Jesse hated it when she put her hair up in curlers and all the reasons he hated it, but tonight she carefully rolled her hair up with intended malice. He'd been complacent the last few nights after work, staring at the television as if it was sapping away his soul while a tele-preacher warned of the end times. Edna wanted a fight that night because at least a fight was something.

Only, when she came into the living room where Jesse sat like a lump on the couch watching that damn preacher he didn't even look twice at her and her curlers. She sat down next to him on the couch and watched the preacher, and when she touched those curlers he barely looked her way.

After half an hour without a fight, she let out an exasperated sigh. "I put my hair up. What do you think, Jesse; you think the curls will set well tomorrow? I bet they will if you don't toss around too much in the bed."

Jesse just nodded. "I'll try not to, dear."

Twenty-seven years and Jesse hadn't once spoken to her so nicely when she was so clearly trying to pick a fight. She huffed and grabbed the remote. She changed the channel to a cable station where a man with a deep fatherly voice told the story of a series of terrible strangulations that happened in some other city. Jesse hated those shows too; he'd watch them with her and complain about what a waste of time they were.

Now, he said nothing.

She looked at him out of the corner of her eyes while the deep voiced television host told his audience that most crimes of passion happen inside the family. Had he changed? Was he different somehow? Was there something in his eyes that wasn't right? Another 20 minutes passed.

"Are you having an affair, Jesse?" Edna asked finally, somehow defeated by her inability to get a rise out of the man.

He seemed to consider the question forever. "You know they say these shows are bad for common people to watch? They suggest that people who watch a certain number of hours of violent television have much greater odds of being the victim of those kinds of crimes?"

That wasn't her Jesse talking. She pulled away from him, back deeper into the couch. "Thought they said that people who watched these shows were just more likely to — thinks — they'd be victims no matter what the odds were."

"Maybe." When he turned to her, his eyes weren't Jesse's and whoever was in there was as crazy as she could ever hope to see. "But it looks like the odds are against you." Jesse, or rather Jesse's body with someone else at the helm leapt at Edna, grabbing her by the throat to squeeze the life out of her.

Chapter Two: Body Thieves

...she had glimpsed a hastily withdrawn face – a face whose expression of pain, defeat, and wistful hopelessness was poignant beyond description. It was – incredibly enough in view of its usual domineering cast – Asenath's; yet the caller had vowed that in that instant the sad, muddled eyes of poor Edward were gazing out from it.

– H.P. Lovecraft, "The Thing on the Doorstep"

– H.P. Lovecraft, "The Thing on the Doorstep"

At some point or another in life, everyone has wished or will wish they could be someone else. We've all looked at a friend, coworker, family member, or complete stranger with envy. Everyone has looked at another person with a heart that coveted. If only we could be stronger, luckier, smarter or kinder. Most people, reaching a certain age will look at those around them and think 'if only I could be a bit younger, if only I had a body like that.'

Of course, the difference between the average person and the body thief is that the thief has found a way to see what they want in others and take it, usually by force. There are a million and one reasons why someone might take the step from simple natural envy and cross over to some of the most despicable kinds of robbery. Sometimes it starts innocently, an unconscious need and a wish fulfilled by outside forces. Sometimes a thief walks into their wanton career with eyes wide open, having been taught or heavily researched the art of stealing life itself. Sometimes people, with lives too short or will too strong, find a way to extend their existence by moving from body to body through the ages, escaping death by not being there when it happens.

However, whereas there are a million or more reasons to seek immortality through the violation of others, there are three neat, or nearly neat, categories into which a body thief can fit. The Mentally Talented body thief uses will and thought alone to transfer his soul from one body to the next in the race against mortality. The Magically Talented body thief has found or been taught dark magic that can shuffle his consciousness from one body to another, but he must either find a soulless body or kill the original body to make the transfer permanent. Sometimes, body thieves come from seemingly nowhere, or have methods that defy easy terminology, those rare curiosities fall into the third category of Oddities.

To the character who would be a body thief, nearly more important than the type of thief they are is the society they fall into, the subculture of like minded, or at least like talented people who create a network for the thief to fall back on. Some body thieves are solitary individuals who know few if any others of their kind. However, in a world where almost everyone thinks you are someone very different from who you are, many body thieves seek some sort of continuity in their long lives. In the sections to follow, a number of societies are listed. This is not an exhaustive list. Storytellers willing to have body thieves in their chronicle should consider using homemade thief societies as well as those presented in this chapter.

Humanity and the Thief

The truth is that for most of us, theft is a crime and on a deeper level, it's a thing that can wear away at the moral fiber of anyone willing to take things that do not belong to him or her. It could be argued that there are cultures that do not hold to concepts like ownership or personal possession, but currently those cultures are rarely isolated. Within a community, that sort of sharing may be normal, but the average person realizes that taking things from people who




Deceptions and Continuity

Living in someone else's body is hard work, especially at first. Unless you are lucky enough to end up in the body of an independently wealthy recluse, your new body has a job to do, friends and acquaintances to deal with and all of the many minor details of daily life that the body's original owner knew by heart and that you may have no clue about.

A body thief who fails to successfully impersonate the person whose body she now inhabits is usually safe from detection. Only the paranoid and a few exceptionally observant Hunters will realize the truth. However, failure can result in the individual being fired from their job and the body's friends and loved ones trying to stage some sort of intervention. If a body thief seems sufficiently uncertain about the names and identities of the body's loved ones, he might even be declared mentally ill and locked up.

Having a social network of other body thieves can help resolve all of these troubles. A group of body thieves can help one another research a new identity and provide help with a new career. More importantly, they can provide a new group of friends for the body thief to spend time with. When someone ceases to recognize their friends and becomes a recluse, the people around them worry. If the same person is simply too busy and has a new and eccentric group of friends, people may suspect drugs or they may simply be insulted, but they're not going to be nearly as worried. Also, other body thieves understand who the body thief really is and call him by a name he'll hear from no one else.



don't share that outlook is still wrong, especially if what you are taking is someone else's body. In the case of the casual body swapper who only temporarily borrows bodies, there is a temptation to further degeneration but not a direct threat. For the literal thief who takes bodies permanently or at great detriment to the host, the harsh reality is that they will eventually become amoral monsters, if they didn't start that way.

Most body thieves have a low Morality, and that's a simple fact of existence. For those to whom Morality matters, (see the Seekers of Knowledge below,) there is time between thefts with which to do the kind of good deeds required to recover from the Degeneration. For those who take wantonly and care little for the consequences, the potential for madness is far more an issue than low Morality. While there is

no way to fully stave off the madness that can come with the lifestyle, some body thieves have found that an umbrella of like minded people can sometimes cushion the drain on their sanity. (See the Support Group Merit below.)

Character Creation

Outside of their ability to hop from body to body, many thieves are otherwise unremarkable in comparison to any mundane inhabitant of the World of Darkness. While there is an extensive and comprehensive list of Merits to reflect powers appropriate to the body thief, all body thieves were once normal people and their character creation should reflect that.

Character Creation Steps One Through Four

Creating a body thief should start with the creation of a normal mortal character following steps one through four as listed in the **World of Darkness Rulebook**, p. 34-35. Take note if a player wishes to create a character in one of the societies mentioned further down in this chapter. In each society section, there are some character creation suggestions; these are not gospel and are there merely guidelines to assist in creating a character from scratch. If the player envisions a specific concept that exists somewhat outside of the definition of the societies' creation suggestions, final decisions on the matter should lay with the Storyteller.

When working out the background of the body thief, special attention should be paid to why it is that a character would be motivated strongly enough to take on the extreme measures of the body thieves. It is easy to look at the material provided and create a villain who cackles, twirls his mustache and explains his evil schemes before following through with them. The challenge of attempting to create either a villain or a tragic hero is to create a real human being in a very unreal situation. Not everyone who finds themselves able to steal bodies wants to. Some are recalcitrant and require extenuating circumstances to take advantage of their gifts; still others are unable to control themselves or resist the transference, dragged through body after body by forces beyond their control.

Having said that, chronicle permitting, there is nothing inherently wrong with playing a debased son of a bitch out for nothing more than self gratification and personal success. Certainly, a back-stabbing, high drama chronicle based around a group of wicked immortals would be great fun with the right combination of players and Storyteller. Even if that's the choice for characterization, it might be wise to consider depth and breadth when creating even the most evil of characters. After all, everyone has weaknesses beyond the mechanical weaknesses inherent in the system, and those weaknesses make for great storytelling.

Further, depending on how long the thief has been at his trade, a player should consider skills that would facilitate the tapestry of lies and manipulations necessary to keep up the lifestyle. Again, this is an excellent place to bend dull characterization. What about a body thief who can't lie to save his life and gets through by directly bulling her way through trouble? What about a thief who keeps ending up in the bodies of the well to do, but has no Socialize score to back it up? Sometimes when considering Skills and Attributes, the things a character doesn't have define them as much as the things they do have.

Step Five: Adding the Body Thief Template

At this point, after fully defining the character as a mortal, add the body thief template. The body thief template eliminates the possibility of the character becoming most other templates with the possible exception of vampire or mage at Storyteller discretion. If the character gains either of these templates, all body thief-specific advantages are lost. It is possible that a body thief might be able to carry on a hunter's Vigil, but it is far more likely that a hunter would come after her when they realized her capabilities.

Selecting the Talent: After deciding that the character should be a body thief, determine what kind of thief would best suit her. As mentioned above and fleshed out below, the character can be either mentally or magically talented. A Storyteller may choose to allow his player to create one of the oddities, but creating one is far less straightforward and better suited to Storyteller characters.

Each form of the body thief talent comes with its own benefits and drawbacks. As a Mentally Talented body thief, a character will quickly expend Willpower they use for most if not all of their abilities. As a Magically Talented body thief, the character will be challenged to make sympathetic ties with the people she might swap with later. In the case of the Oddities, consult the Storyteller on all such matters since certain storylines and themes presented there might not be appropriate for all chronicles.

Selecting or Creating a Society: Under each Talent type, two suggested societies will assist player and Storyteller alike feel out what sort of things a thief will fall back on when they feel afraid for their lives or possibly just their sanity. Under Oddities are two scenarios explaining other possible roots of the swapping phenomenon. The society sections below outline some helpful hints on character creation, including mechanical advantages and weaknesses of those societies. Many, for instance, provide discounts on the purchase of certain Merits related to how the society operates and what kinds of connections they have. When creating a new society, assume that almost all will have a required defining Merit. This Merit should cost no more than four dots and is free to all members of the society. Most body thief societies also have advantages and weaknesses, but these are not required.

Other Inherent Aspects of the Thief: When dealing with a character that can supplant his own consciousness into the body of another, the problem of mechanics comes up quickly. Whose Attributes, Skills, and Merits are used? What transfers with the thief and what stays behind in the body?

To create cohesion with this unique character type there will be some straightforward guidelines set down for the manipulation of the character to which a Storyteller can refer in situations of doubt. Consider flexibility when applying these guidelines to a character. When in doubt, a Storyteller should err on the side of logic and player enjoyment rather than rigorous rules and calculations.

The mind, personality and soul are considered one in this transference and they travel with the body thief wherever he might land. The body in this case is merely that, its biological functions and external appearance. Therefore, when dealing with the mechanical side of the character after transference, the thief will maintain her own Mental and Social Attributes and Skills in her new body, along with applicable specialties. Mental Merits remain the same, but Social Merits might need explanation in order to stay; Contacts and Allies, for instance, might need to be convinced they should keep working with the character in question. The Striking Looks Merit is an exception, and should remain with the body.

On the side of the body, the body thief will now have all the Physical Attributes and Skills of the current body. For simplicity's sake, this book assumes that Physical Skills are largely rote muscle memory and exist largely in the body itself. Merits become somewhat trickier, as some Physical Merits are a part of the body, and Merits like Strong Stomach and Quick Healer should obviously remain there. In the case of any Physical Merit that requires specialized training, like Fighting Styles, the Storyteller can greatly simplify things by assuming that such training is half in the mind and half in the body. That is to say, a body thief will lose access to any Physical Merits that require training and will not be able to access any physically trained Merits in his new host body. Instead, he can buy them back at half the normal experience point cost to reflect the fact that they are easier for him to adapt with his current situation.

Of course, in the case of a temporary swap, such close attention doesn't need to be paid to experience point expenditure and Merit exchange. The Storyteller can simply switch any physical traits for the few hours the thief is newly embodied.

Beyond this and the thieves' available Merits, there is little to separate her from a normal human being. Body thieves have no inherent resistances to supernatural powers and are not able to heal in any way that would not be available to any human. Devastating wounds or the loss of a limb are permanent, at least in the case of current body, and tend to be further impetus to steal a new body as soon as possible.

Step Six: Merits

If a character is to be a member of an established society of body thieves, the player should first make note of the defining Merit inherent to that society, as that Merit is free at character creation. Furthermore, a character can have any Merits from the end of this chapter (p. 82.)

It is worth noting that a player need not concentrate his character entirely on the inherent special abilities of the body thief, as other outside Merits may be essential to survival for the thief. First, a thief who wishes to reap the benefits of a society must have at least one point in Status among the respective subcultures. A thief who wants to steal bodies the way a member of the Club (see the Club below) does must have a dot of Status: the Club.

Possession

The defining feature of the Mentally Talented body thief is their ability to possess the body of another and make it their own. All Mentally Talented body thieves have this power and need pay nothing for it. By using their own will to overcome the will of another, the thief is able to leave his body, push out the current inhabitant and take full ownership of a new body.

What happens to expelled souls? It's debatable. Most likely, they go where most souls go when they die. (That is to say, no one knows.) On occasion, in the case of particularly violent or unfortunate expulsion, ghosts are not unheard of.

In order for the body thief to overtake a new body, he must contest his would-be victim in an extended contest using his own Resolve + Composure versus his targets Resolve + Composure. Each success on the thief's part removes one point of Willpower from the victim; each success on the victim's part costs the thief one point of Willpower. Once the thief has won in this series of contest, having drained his victim of Willpower, the thief must expend a permanent dot of his own Willpower to complete the transference. If this is not done, nothing happens. At that time, the thief must also make a Degeneration roll as a Morality 3 sin to reflect the effective murder of the original owner. Shortly after the transfer is complete, the thief's original, and now-empty, body dies of what seems to be natural causes.

The body thief can use this ritual on any mortal human, including thaumaturges, psychics, ghouls and the wolf-blooded. However, this ritual cannot be used on any other type of immortal except blood bathers, patchwork people or other body thieves. It also cannot be used on any individual with a major supernatural template, such as a vampire, werewolf, mage, Promethean or changeling. Also, the body thief cannot use any of the target's supernatural abilities. The thief must be able to clearly see or hear his target to use this ability.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Composure versus target's Resolve + Composure (+ supernatural advantage, if any).

Type: extended and contested roll, the body thief may make one roll every turn. The loser of each roll subtracts one point of Willpower.

Target Number: Until one party has exhausted their Willpower

Cost: 1 dot of permanent Willpower

Suggested modifiers: The target is suicidal or otherwise seriously depressed (+1), the target willingly and knowingly gives up her body (+3), the target is injured, drugged or ill (-1 to -3 to target's roll depending upon the severity of the injury or the degree of impairment from the drug or illness).

Dramatic Failure: The intended victim is not so easy to uproot and the body thief in question exhausts himself on the subject. The thief loses an additional point of Willpower and is unable to take possession of that particular body for one week. Also, the victim is aware that the body thief attacked them in some fashion.

Failure: The body thief makes no headway in her efforts to expel the body's current inhabitant and suffers the loss of a point temporary of Willpower. If the thief loses his last Willpower point, he cannot attempt to steal a body again until he regains at least one point.

Success: The body thief gains ground, claiming some part of the intended victim's person. The victim loses a point of Willpower. If the victim has no temporary Willpower to lose, the battle is lost and the thief forces her from the body. At that point, the thief can take steps to become the body's new owner.

Exceptional Success: The thief makes an Exceptional Success in this contest; the victim instead loses two points of Willpower and the thief gains one.



Additionally, while a thief can live by the skin of his teeth lifetime to lifetime, that sort of low living gets tiresome pretty quickly, and the Resources to live well can mean the difference between letting nature take its course and having the gumption to renew and start over again in a better, younger body. Of course, to maintain money or wealth when switching bodies requires skill and cunning, and patsies like friends, family or employees can ease the transfer.

Many thieves network with one another, as it helps make their lives easier. Even randomly developed body thieves network, or at least attempt to do so. Many independent body thieves create complex personal webs to keep in contact with each other.

Through Merits, any body thief should show at least the inklings of this desire to network; arguably, their continued existence depends on it. Humans are social creatures whose identities are socially reinforced. If everyone around you thinks you are someone else, then you are likely to either doubt your own existence or attempt to openly demonstrate who you really are, neither of these is good for a body thief's long-term survival. However, a few trusted Allies who know the thief's secret or even Contacts with whom the thief deals exclusively by letter or e-mail can help a body thief deal with everyone else who sees them as someone very different from who they are.

The Mentally Talented

Some people just have 'it.' For the Mentally Talented body thief, the ability to free oneself of their physical form in favor of another is an act of instinct and will. The mentally talented merely need the right vessel, the will to do it, and some kind of sympathetic connection with their new body. In some cases, this is a physical matter. Some thieves can only steal the body of a close blood relative or someone they've exchanged intimate fluids with. Sometimes, it's something more abstract. Conceptual attachments like love or hate, need, or even outright desire to give up their body for another are all possible. The stronger the connection, the more likely the thief will be able to uproot her consciousness from her current body to another.

It is arguable that the Mentally Talented body thieves are simply specialized psychics. On occasion, random people will exhibit these talents without any training or reason attached. (See Nancy Murphy below.) However, without a support network, wild talents like Nancy often have trouble integrating themselves into their new existence.

In many cases, the network of thieves found among the Mentally Talented spring up as a group. A number of people with the potential for the ability find one another and with a little time, develop together as a group of thieves. Why is it then that a talent that is so rare in total and so dangerous in scope

happens more regularly to a small group of people than to a single individual? As mentioned before, the reality of a body thief is that they steal literally everything from their victims, and it might take a group mind to embolden any one or all of its members to take the step to force their consciousness over into someone else's

Nancy Murphy, Wild Talent

Nancy is a wild talent. She uses her limited but potent abilities to move from body to body as smoothly as most people change from work clothes to evening wear. She didn't struggle to gain her abilities. She didn't struggle to find a way to cheat death one body at a time. She tripped over her talent, in a manner of speaking.

She wanted to go to law school; she wanted to be a high-paid high-rolling lawyer who played the courtroom like a violin. She couldn't afford law school and received a paralegal certificate at a less than scrupulous tech school. A paralegal is not a lawyer, and when she started sleeping with her boss, it wasn't because she wanted to be with him, it was because she wanted to be him.

One night, her desire to be him became so strong that something inside her snapped, something changed. After what she would describe as a rough night of sex, she found she wasn't exactly herself anymore. In fact, she was her boss, and her own body lay in the bed breathing shallowly. She watched in horror as her own body slowly stopped living. She was trapped in her boss's body with no sign of his consciousness.

She quickly realized she wasn't up to pretending to be her boss, there was just too much about his life she didn't know about. Still, she was cunning, so she found a young female attorney, someone with less background and less baggage. Nancy seduced her. It was strange, to say the least, sleeping with a woman as a man, but she thought it was the only way. She wanted to be this woman even more than she wanted to be her boss, and this time the transference was even easier.

Now Nancy is Sophia DiAngelo, struggling with her new body and the life that comes with it. Eventually she is going to get used to Sophia, she's getting better and better at sorting out a person's life. It's only a matter of time before Nancy will find someone else she wants to 'be.'

body, driving them off to who knows where. Likely, it happens to a small group of people because it wouldn't happen without a small group of people. Also, while psychic powers are innate abilities, it's also definitely possible for someone to learn possession if they are surrounded by others who are either attempting the same feat or who are attempting to teach this ability to them.

The small group dynamic of these networks empowers and complicates these thieves' progress through the ages. After all, no friendship is without its difficulties in a normal lifespan. Imagine taking every fight and misunderstanding that can happen over the natural lifespan of a pair of people and extend it indefinitely. Add to that the fact that many of these people know most of your secrets. They know where you have buried the bodies, because they helped to bury them. Add the kind of egomania common to body thieves, and therein is the recipe for the mother of all love-hate relationships. For many Mentally Talented body thieves, their miniature societies become the games they play to make their endless lives interesting as well as the net they fall back on when things get too risky or complicated. Beware the Mentally Talented body thief with no one to turn to because he is desperate and cunning, but he far more wary of one who isn't alone because they have a host of deadly allies.

The Club

In most industrial nations in the world, there is a difference between the Haves and the Have-nots. The Haves tend to have better food, entertainment, medicine, and of course, better education.

Starting from an early age, many of the children of the well to do are hustled into uniforms and sent off to get the best education (or at least the best looking diploma) money can buy. Of course, even within this closed society of privileged tots are even smaller networks. Often, exclusion from a clique has a lot more to do with tax brackets, family names, or even how a family came by its money. Alternatively, in the case of the Club, it's what you do with forever.

The Club is what the children on the inside call themselves, a loose network of body thieves, new and considerably older, united both in the way they operate and where they hunt and recruit. Once, the Club was a boys' prospect exclusively, but for the last half century, the elder members have been seeing little girls raised to be every bit as ruthless and cold blooded as they are, and thus ideal candidates.

To differentiate the branches of the Club from private school to private school they add things like 'the Lion's Club' or 'the Fox's Club' in apparent mockery of their fathers' private fraternities.

Srips and Snails, Where Bad Boys Come From

It's arguable that these Clubs appeared spontaneously at private children's schools throughout time. By far however, the most famous history belongs to the Club at St. James Academy for Boys. In retelling, the dates tend to vary because word of mouth is questionable at best and the people who were there are liars by nature. The story goes that it was some time in the 16th century; the Italian Renaissance was in full swing. In England, things were still very dull for boys who had seen Venice but had to live in Enfield.

At that time a group of boys, not quite men but too cunning to be children, entertained themselves with provocative reading, drinking, sexual exploration and of course, the dark arts. They loved the decadence they heard about in the houses of the Venetian courtesans and free thinking society's apparent existence without the shackles of the Church. They used their combined influence and cleverness to run rampant over St. James. There wasn't a girl in town they didn't know by charisma or force. Any boy outside the Club they turned into a disciple or servant. Even the faculty grew afraid of what these devil-children were capable of committing. They ran the school. At one point, the boys were interrupted on a rowdy night of drunken orgies by the boys' fathers who dragged them off rebuking them saying 'you can't be boys forever; you'll have to grow up some day.'

This was about the point the boys decided they couldn't and wouldn't grow old. They'd be young, beautiful, and able to do what ever they wanted to do forever. They discussed immortality, and discussed how to achieve it. They decided that unaging bodies would grow boring after a few decades. They needed to find a way to hop from body to body and stay the children of the wealthy forever; lost boys with hands in the pockets of the kings and queens of the world.

After some time experimenting, they found that they needed a body without any consciousness in it. Since none of them actually had any magical talents, they couldn't hollow out bodies and take a dip. However, their combined will was horrifyingly powerful. After a while, they found a way to take the bodies of other boys who were already willing to give up on life.

Once they had it down to an art, their Club grew and changed. These men in the bodies of boys created complicated webs of deceit and subterfuge for entertainment and intrigue; over the years it became a game. The core group of boys ended up dissolving and moving to other schools and formed their own Clubs. They taught a new generation of the wealthy and idle how to escape the responsibilities of growing up.

Around the same time, the wealthy had started settling in the new world and the Club had spread thin but seemingly omnipresent. A number of the oldest boys from St. James found their way to New England and settled in to enjoy a completely new experience.

Clap Your Hands if You Believe in Eternity

If you know where they come from it's easy to lump the 'children' in the Club with one of the mystical branches of body thieves. However, these monsters act wholly on raw psychic abilities. The first group of boys found that the easiest body to enter was the body of someone who was already on their way out. They discussed options, but they came up against the same problem: a person who wanted to live, even if it was just a little bit, would put up a good fight against the boys when they tried to transfer themselves to the new body. What they really needed were people who wouldn't put up too much of a fight on their way through death's doorway. The boys made the logical leap from there and decided suicides were the solution to most of their problems.

Early experiments proved rather quickly that the thieves could talk the young and impressionable into many things, but that the will to live largely worked separately of the consciousness. A morose boy could easily be driven into a situation where he had no friends left, where his family hated him, and any hope of a happy ending were long gone, but to take the step to end his life was somewhat less common than Shakespeare would have had them believe.

Over time, their mental talents ripened and matured to include the ability to control the emotions of others (See the Emotional Urging Merit on pg 83.) With judicious social manipulation and a few well placed emotions, it became easier and easier to drive their peers into a final desperate act.

Then came the challenge and the true excitement. Getting another youth to take his own life was a cause to an end. Getting them to do it in a way that allowed the body thief to take over was another matter entirely. Every now and again one of their targets gets clever and wanders off in the woods to blow his brains out, and there isn't much to be done in those cases. In better scenarios, a boy in the Club will get their potential body to take his own life at a date and time convenient for the Club to be nearby and intercede. Over the years the boys have gotten more and more degenerate and many started keeping score cards. The Club members award each other points, and occasionally lavish prizes for coming up with new and increasingly exciting means to drive their peers over the edge. For many, the rush of machinating the death of another has become as much of a rush as the actual body transference.

Club Benefits

Means of Transference: Possession

Defining Merit: Emotional Urging

Weakness: First, in order for the theft to succeed, the thief must enter a body already empty of a soul or in the process of emptying out. The members of the Club have spent centuries honing their talents to the point that they cannot possess another without the victim killing himself, or at least attempting to do so in the process. They've acquired a taste for it, and while other Mentally Talented body thieves are not so specific, the

Boys Will Be Boys

- One of the characters' siblings or younger relatives contacts the character to say she has been enrolled into a very prestigious school but she hates it. She says she has no friends and no one likes her because she's the new kid. A few weeks later, she attempts suicide. When she gets out of the hospital, she's different, very different and while doctors assure the family that a change in behavior is perfectly normal after as traumatic an event as a suicide, the characters feel like something is wrong. In reality, a Club member has stolen the sibling's body and will attempt to pull the character into her intrigues before long.

- While at a local bar one night, the characters notice a group of clearly underage boys sitting together in a booth laughing, talking, and drinking. There's something predatory in the way they look at other people, and if anyone tries to eavesdrop, they'll hear the boys talk about 'points' and 'scoring' all the while laughing lewdly. When one of them mentions Mitchell Lincoln and how he was a 'misfire' and no one is getting any points for him, one of the characters might remember reading in the paper about a boy who died under questionable circumstances. If they look into it, they might uncover the terrifyingly high suicide rate at the private school nearby.

- Vampires love their little intrigues, as they are often the only way to stave off the ravages of time and boredom. Of course, so to do Club members and many of them have had centuries' experiences in their little domains. Imagine the shock of a young vampire, or even a group of young vampires, sent by their elders to administer a private school through ghouls and proxies, only to find there are older monsters already entrenched there. The members of the Club might find great amusement in luring the vampire into their manipulations.



boys and girls of the Club don't know there is any way to do it. In order to initiate Mental Possession of a victim, the victim in question must have inflicted injury on himself sufficient to inflict wound penalties; in other words, the victim needs to be close to dying. In addition, a player and Storyteller should remember that the members of the Club are all teenagers and should therefore restrict certain Merits based on the countries where they live. Club members in the U.S. should not, for example, have Barfly because they are all under the legal drinking age.

Advantage: Because of their communal background and the society on which they prey, they are able to purchase the following Merits at half price: Resources, Status, Retainers and Fame (round all costs up). This advantage requires the character to have at least one dot in Status: the Club.

Character Creation: Not surprisingly, most members of the Club favor Social Attributes primarily with Mental coming in second. Their Skill selection follows suit with a necessary focus on Persuasion and Socialize, but thanks to the education the children all receive, high Mental Skills aren't uncommon. Academics is expected, and Medicine is a prized trait among these little monsters as it assists a group of them in preserving a body after it's original inhabitant left it.

Depending on how much control the member has over their parents' pocket books, Resources is a common choice. Of course, Status both in the school she goes to and in the Club itself are both very important.

Unsurprisingly, Greed and Lust are very common vices among the Club with Faith by far being the most common Virtue. In this instance, Faith not being a belief in some higher power, but more that they are a sort of a higher power of their own.

Concepts: Centuries Old Monster Teen, Girl with Something to Prove, Reluctant Companion, First Ethnic Club Member, Modern Oedipus

Martin Oakley

Quotes: "No, honey, don't drink that. I know Darren is really cool and all, but I'm telling you, he put something in your drink."

"You, you're different from these other plebeians. I can tell it just by looking at you. You think and feel and really experience things. Not like these, these animals."

Martin looked up from his cigarette at the tall, slender, good looking boy leaning against a stone wall under a school crest. He had to be 16 at the most, but something in his eyes was older. "Dude, are you hitting on me?"

The other boy laughed. "No, are you disappointed? I just see most of the kids at this school as merely the mechanical creation of moneyed eugenics programs. They have no souls, not like you or I. Let me ask you something, do you look at them with hatred, or pity?"

Martin flicked his cigarette away and gave the other boy a good hard look. He'd been at St. James Academy for boys for three weeks and not one of the rich snots he shared classes with so much as looked at him, let alone talked to him. It was the best education money could buy, but he was Nuevo Riche, and no kind of money could buy you into this social stratum. "I'm not looking for drugs dude,



so I don't know what you want. Why don't you just get out of here and leave me alone."

The boy laughed again and paced around Martin. "You don't belong among them. They're chattel at worst, fat wealthy chattel, and even the best of them aren't meant to be more than vehicles to the likes of us. You see them for what they are in a week or two at this school, and then you come find me."

"Where?"

"The Clubhouse shouldn't be too hard to find if you ask around." The boy straightened his tie and walked away, two more boys joined him a few feet down the sidewalk. They looked back at Martin over their shoulders with the same old eyes as the first.

Background: Of course, not all members of the Club are maniacal monsters who revel in the suffering of others. A few, like Martin Oakley, got pulled in too fast and ended up over their head before they realized what was going on.

At first, Martin loved what the boys in the Club had to say. Calling your own shots, making your own way, living life and experiencing everything life has to offer. At sixteen, it sounded like everything he wanted and more.

The mental training seemed weird, but he saw results, and it all happened so fast he didn't see what was truly going on until it was too late, some kid was dying and he was moving out of his body into a new one.

Description: Martin's life is now a tragic scramble to balance his karmic debt. He has blood on his hands and will have to be involved in the death of many others before he's done. In the mean time, he does whatever he can to ease the chaos the Club creates around him. He regularly tries to

protect girls at a party from Rohypnol cocktails and to talk undeserving targets out of becoming vessels for his fellow body thieves. As the years wear on, his concepts of 'undeserving' are getting more and narrower and he's growing more and more permissive in his opinion of murder. The older members of the Club know what he's up to, and wouldn't have it any other way. He's an amusing challenge in as much as he makes what they do a little trickier and therefore a lot more fun.

Martin was once a lanky, awkward teenager with bad teeth and so little confidence that he hunched whenever he was sitting still. He's been a few people since then, but right now, he's a broad shouldered Adonis with blond hair and deep green eyes. He doesn't mean to brood and be so 'bad boy,' but that's the side effect of the weight on his shoulders and the handsome body he now inhabits.

Martin is always watching because he never knows what insignificant sign could lead to the next web of wickedness spun by his brothers in blood. He fidgets like a smoker when cornered, and even if his new body isn't a smoker, he'll see to that soon enough. He's a lot older than his body would indicate and he grew up fast. He speaks like a grown man; in fact, he speaks like a hardened cop or detective with the voice of a boy. His morality is starting to slip and he doesn't care about things like he used to. Still, he justifies his continued existence by making token stabs at stopping the rest of the Club. He'll randomly pick a girl or underdog of a boy and protect them with all the same skill and cunning that his fellows show in their own hunts.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (The Classics) 2, Computer 2, Crafts 1, Medicine 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics (Running) 3, Brawl 2, Drive 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 1, Subterfuge (Impersonation) 2

Merits: Emotional Urging, Fleet of Foot 2, Iron Stamina 2, Resources 3, Striking Looks 2

Willpower: 4

Virtue: Justice

Vice: Wrath

Morality: 5

Initiative: 4

Defense: 2

Speed: 12

Health: 8

The Seekers of Knowledge

We are vast glorious soul-beings as great and perfect as God itself. We are beautiful perfect entities trapped in small imperfect shells of flesh and suffering. What's more, the world that we live in is a lie, a terrible trap created by the enemy of God to keep us from regaining our part of divinity. We are all in Hell and until we can let go of the physical will we never truly find God.

Philosophies like that have existed in many cultures, but reached a peak during the earliest days of Christianity. A cult or possibly alternate faith of Gnostics held these ideas. The Seekers of Knowledge do not claim that they are directly members of that ancient cult, but they practice from a number of the same books and hold to many of the same ideals.

Through meditation, they believe, they can escape the prison of the flesh. Once the body has been discarded, the luminous soul is free to find God. Among their successes are a small percentage of clerics who can exit their body and enter into the prison of a willing disciple, freeing them to rise up. The benefits are two fold, the power grants the host a shortcut to Heaven, and the cleric is able to extend her life indefinitely to pass her teachings on to future generations so that the truth is never lost.

Fäith and Time Travel

It goes back to the Classical Greeks, if one was to follow the etymology of many of the concepts and terms the Seekers use day to day. Since these ancient days, the Seekers have sat on the sidelines of religious history, quietly contemplating their vision of universal truths. They held their meetings among other Gnostic groups with openness and honesty as was common in the sub sect of early Christians.

Somewhere around the 3rd century A.D., the Church had grown strong enough that it felt a need to unify against the pagans of Rome. Wars between Christian sects were common in those days and all the while, the Gnostics retreated deeper and deeper into their own contemplations. After all, wasn't the structure of a Church as much a lie as the rest of the world around them? They became a secret order among the Christians, hiding their books and papers where someone might one day find them and regain a path to the truth.

For the Seekers among the Gnostics, preserving papyrus scrolls in clay jars was fine, but it wasn't enough. They argued in secret meetings, that the greatest minds and teachers of their order should find some way to go on. It was the soul, after all, that mattered, and surely, the wisest of the teachers was willing to put off Heaven a few short centuries to keep the truth alive. A repentant merchant, once known for his hedonism, now an ascetic was the first to volunteer to carry the Seekers' message into the future. It took many years for him to move successfully from one body to another, but once done, others in the secret sect offered to make the same sacrifice. Most were unable, and it is unknown even to the Seekers how many of those travelers actually made it to a more enlightened time. It is unlikely that any member of the cult dates to those dark times, and certainly, no traveler claims that kind of age. It is most likely that a traveler would move through the world, secretly spreading her message from generation to generation until doing so becomes too much of a burden. Then, most find a student to teach the ways of transference as well as the beliefs of the cult. After that time, rarely longer than two hundred years, the traveler at last dies of old age and finds her place in Heaven.

There is Only One Sin

To Gnostic ideal, and indeed to the Seekers, the only real sin is turning your back on God. Once a person understands the truth that everything around them is a lie, giving into the lie is the only thing that constitutes sin. Even in that situation, it isn't sinning against God, as people are only hurting themselves.

So why then would men and women who considered themselves real believers willingly remain trapped in Hell? While to an outside perspective, taking over other people's bodies and artificially lengthening a life might seem like it would create a paradox, to the Seeker it is simply a matter of duty. The Seekers know that physical death means one of two things, the soul will be free to join God in Heaven, or it will return to the material world in a new body to finish whatever job it was intended to do and learn whatever lessons it intended to learn. The Seekers are simply cutting that processes a little shorter for themselves, and hopefully a lot shorter for the inhabitants of the bodies they will take over.

That is not to say that it's all tambourines in the woods and navel gazing. Some militant Seekers recognize that not all people will give up the ghost in the name of altruism. Perhaps they remember the early Christian period, or more likely live in fear of the stories they have heard, and are always prepared for a time where the Church hunts them like witches because they do not heel to the Church's dogma. These Seekers tend to play faster and looser with their purpose. Even a hint of someone being on their trail causes these paranoid travelers to hop from body to body until they are certain they have eluded any pursuers. Only then will they once again try to set up a new cult to spread the truth. The downside to this kind of transit is that they don't have the time to fully indoctrinate their hosts into the truth and often have to find other means to force their targets into willingness.

Seeking the Truth

Means of Body Transfer: Mental Possession

Defining Merit: Willpower Drain

Weakness: Because the Seekers aren't addicted to the sickening rush on which the Club thrives, their would-be vessels do not need to take their own lives before a Seeker can over take the new body. It does present a challenge to the traveler since she must get the host to a state where he is completely willing to give up his body. In effect, this means that the Seeker suffers an additional negative in his Resolve + Composure roll equal to the total remaining Willpower points a target possesses.

Advantage: Many members of the cult are everyday people who keep their esoteric studies to themselves, but they are always looking for more people with which to share their truths. As a result, they can buy the Allies and Contacts Merits at half price (round all costs up). Additionally, as meditation is so core to their faith, they may buy the Meditative Mind Merit at half cost, which is particularly handy in staving off degeneration when stealing bodies.

Character Creation: Because the Gnostic philosophy of the Seekers of Knowledge attracts people from all lifestyles, there is no one ideal type to successfully become a traveler. However, many focus on mental pursuits, and because such an emphasis is put on meditation, high Composure and Resolve are common.

Academics and occult are common skills as they reflect the teachings of the lost gospels core to the cult's teachings. Many

Story Hooks

- Over many lifetimes while studying and meditating on truth, as they understand it, many Seekers come across other obscure pieces of information and lost lore often without ever realizing it. In looking for some piece of another puzzle, the characters find the name of an old hermit thought to know a little bit about everything. He's their only good lead; however, when they track him down they find him in a coma. He expires shortly after never regaining consciousness, as if he simply stopped wanting to live. Of course, the old man is not dead, he still has the information the characters need, and he might be the last person in the world who does. Now the characters will have to gain the trust of a secret cult to learn the new identity of the man so they can ask him what he knows.

- Major banks throughout the city are being brazenly emptied in broad daylight at gunpoint. The robbers are different genders, ethnicities, ages and lifestyles. The only similarities between robberies are that they work solo, drop dead with no apparent reason before the police get there, and somehow in all the confusion the money still goes missing. The reality is that a militant branch of the Seekers is looking to fund their operations; it takes a lot of money to run a good cult. Enterprising members go out, walk into a bank and steal the body of a teller or manager as soon as the vaults are open, and walk out with cash while the police try to sort out the bodies.

- A group of Prometheans discovers a group of the Seekers and the secret they use to survive the ages. While not all Prometheans agree, some believe the right physical change is what is necessary to regain their humanity. If they could learn what meditations are required to transfer their soul into a human body, would it be a short cut on their journey? If it were, to what lengths would the Created go to achieve it?

Seekers still cling to the allure that a secretive cult holds, and so are skilled at stealth and even larceny. While devotion to God is a precept of being a Seeker, a willingness to prolong a stay in Hell shows great Charity and it is a common virtue. Like many body thieves, more than a few Seekers suffer from Envy, with Wrath following it among the more militant members of cult.

Concepts: American Assyrian, New Age Guru, Repentant Televangelist, Near Death Survivor, Visionary with Leukemia

Sister Stone

Quotes: *It's alright baby, let it burn. Let them all burn. It would have been far more cruel to let them live in those tragic shells.*

The gunfire became sporadic, mixed with only the laughter of the paid mercenaries, who had no idea why they were there or what they were doing. Among them, Sister Stone, now a tall thin and beautiful blond woman, stood holding a machine gun to her side and looking smugly at the carnage around her.

Brother River climbed out from under a car and looked around in disgust. "What have you done? You killed all of them!"

"We had to get to the shipment of guns." She no longer batted an eye at these things.

"But you didn't have to kill everyone on the dock to get them!"

"Look, kid, either everything we believe is right and none of this matters, or we're wrong. What would you rather believe?"

Background: Sister Stone could have been many things. She could have been a Swiss saboteur, she could have been an early Protestant, and she could have been a Latin American revolutionary, a renegade slave, a black panther, or a member of Al Qaeda. Her story changes every time someone asks, but the running themes have a lot to do with revolution and even more to do with violence.

At this point in her long and bloody career as an extremist, she's a true believer in the general Seeker philosophy, but it's arguable that her faith came after the sheer joy in finding a construct that justified her desire to create chaos.

Description: Stone is a charismatic cult leader with no moral center and a desire for oblivion of which she isn't aware. Given time, she can turn any argument to make her insanity seem both sane and reasonable. Anytime she meets new people she starts immediately with compliments and flattery. She uses that flattery to lower defenses and seem so very reasonable. She likes to seduce others to her cause but if she can't, she also loves to kill.

She's a perfect example of how even a peaceful faith can turn dangerous with the right sociopath behind it. She conducts all manner of dangerous operations in the name of her version of the truth: drug running for profit; guns and terror for its own sake. She has around her a tight cell of other Seekers that are devoted to Stone and her ends to the point of suicide.

Stone only steals the bodies of women and has a tendency to take the concept of 'willing' very liberally.



After all, if you get them drugged up enough, you can talk someone into almost anything. That and a gun to the forehead make for a marvelous argument. More specifically, she favors women of statuesque proportions and athletic build.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 3

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Politics (Propaganda) 1, Science (Explosives) 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Brawl 1, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 2

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Indoctrination) 3, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Extremist) 2, Boxing 2, Fast Reflexes 2, Language 1 (Spanish), Retainer 5, Willpower Drain

Willpower: 6

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Wrath

Morality: 3 (suspicion 4, narcissism 5)

Initiative: 8

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Health: 7

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Dmg	Size	Range	Clip	Dice Pool
SMG, small	2 (L)	1	25/50/100	30+1	8
Knife	1 (L)	1	—	—	6

Armor: 1/2 (kevlar vest)

The Magically Talented

In literature, the search for immortality has led many a fictitious magician down the path to damnation through black arts and demonic investment. In stories, the thirst for life beyond death almost always ends in good triumphing over evil and the magician being dragged off to Hell. Reality is rarely so cut and dry. Magic is rarely good or evil and the reasons to want immortality are often as normal and human as the reasons a person might fall in love. While other magicians may find alchemical or necromantic methods to eternal life, the Magically Talented body thief uses ancient (or not so ancient) rituals and arcane secrets to transfer their consciousness from one body to another.

Unlike the Mentally Talented body thieves, magical means of transference tend to be more of a swap than an outright expulsion. Once the ritual is completed, the magician and his victim switch bodies temporarily. If a magician makes the switch, and his original body is killed before he can switch back, then he is trapped in the new body as if it were his own. This has led some magicians looking for permanence in their new skin to devise elaborate Rube Goldberg machines to automate suicide once the switch has happened. A less clever magician might just go to her old body and murder it before the ritual ends. Also, the Amulet Merit (see p. 83) provides another option for indefinitely maintaining such a transfer.

The associations between magicians who jump bodies are somewhat more fast and loose than some other types of body thieves. Since it isn't an inherent ability or random occurrence but a carefully learned ritual, there is much more room for jealousy and secrecy from magician to magician. Often, they keep in touch either to exchange other mystical secrets and research or because of other more mundane connections that have very little to do with their body-swapping rites.

Occasionally, someone uncovers this ritual without the aid of a mentor or research assistant. In those rare cases, the magician usually ends up in over their head quickly. (See Sean Hearty below.) Without even the loose association of like-minded people, or at least people of similar talent, a lone Magically Talented body thief is more likely to succumb to the madness his sort of activities produce. That is not to say that the other more ordered magical thieves aren't mad, but simply that they tend to be more functional in their madness thanks to connections with people to bolster their understanding that what they are doing is permissible.

Sean Hearty, the Lone Magician

Like many boys in high school, Sean Hearty grew up envious of the people around him. While it is true that Sean is awkward, shy, and not overly intelligent or athletic, his own self loathing is really what alienated him from his peers and kept him out of any social group. Sean didn't see it that way; Sean blamed Patrick Anders. Patrick Anders was everything Sean didn't think he could be; he was strong, smart, handsome, popular and able to get away with all kinds of less-than-savory activities thanks entirely to the fact that he led the football team to undefeated conquest for three years running.

Sean thought he was on to something one day when exploring his grandfather's private library and found what seemed to be a bona fide spell book. Within its pages was a spell that supposedly gave Sean the ability to take everything an enemy had and make it his own. On the spot, Sean decided he would take everything from Patrick: his looks, his friends, his talents, everything. The only hard part as far as Sean could see was getting Patrick to eat skin from the other boy's finger. (Sean's understanding of Latin wasn't as great as he assumed.)

One day, after weeks of trying, Sean managed to establish a sympathetic tie with the other boy and completed the ritual; then he waited for friends to start flooding his voice mail and success to land on his doorstep.

Instead, Sean found himself lying on the floor of an unfamiliar bedroom in what ultimately proved to be an unfamiliar body. Sean was exceedingly successful performing his ritual, but misunderstood the text and ended up switching bodies with the jock. Patrick isn't the smartest football player in the world, but it's only a matter of time before he figures out that Sean has his body, and so Sean has left town in a hurry hoping that the right body is all it takes after all. Sean also doesn't know that without either an amulet or murder, the transfer will end in a little over a month.

Mystic Exchange

While the specifics of the ritual vary from magician to magician, at its core is a manifestation of ancient powers that very few practitioners truly understand. What seems clear is that there needs to be a sympathetic link between magician and victim whether it be that the magician is in possession of something dear to the victim, or that said victim carries a piece of the magician or a personal possession on him often hidden in a token or amulet. Possible sympathetic connections include actual fragments of the target or magician, such as hair, skin or blood. Alternately, they could be anything either important or regularly used to either individual, such as a beloved book, an often-worn piece of clothing or a well used toothbrush or pen. A clear photograph of the subject that was taken with the subject's knowledge also works, as does any amulet made using the Amulet Merit. To use the connection, either the magician must be touching a connection to the target or the target must be touching or carrying a connection to the magician. Also, if either individual ingests a bit of blood, skin or hair from the other, the two are connected for the next full day.

The magician can use this ritual on any mortal human, including thaumaturges, psychics, ghouls and the wolf-blooded. However, this ritual cannot be used on any other type of immortal except blood bathers, patchwork people or other body thieves. It also cannot be used on any individual with a major supernatural template, such as a vampire, werewolf, mage, Promethean, or changeling. Also, the magician cannot use any of the target's supernatural abilities.

At the Storyteller's discretion, a body thief may be able to temporarily steal the body of a vampire, werewolf, mage, Promethean or changeling. In such cases, the thief can use most or even all of the character's abilities, but won't have any idea what they can do. Also, such transfers only last for 24 hours and require a new sympathetic connection every time they are attempted.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Occult versus Resolve (+ Supernatural Advantage, if any).

Type: extended and contested roll, the magician may make one roll every 10 minutes

Target Number: Target's full Willpower

Cost: 1 point of temporary Willpower

Suggested modifiers: The magician has a fragment of the target and either a high-quality photo of the target or an item used by the target (+1), both parties have a sympathetic link to the other (+2), the magician has a live video feed of the target (+2)

To perform the ritual, the magician must make an extended and contested roll Wits + Occult roll, contested by the targets Resolve. This roll has a target number equal to the target's Willpower. At the time of the ritual's completion, the magician needs to spend a point of Willpower to complete the act.

If this transfer is successful, the magician must make a Degeneration roll as a Morality 4 sin to reflect stealing the target's body even temporarily. Murdering the target while he is in the magician's original body requires a separate roll.

Dramatic Failure: The spell fails completely and not only does the magician stay in his body, but the sympathetic tie he has fails, requiring him to make a new link with the victim. The magician still loses the Willpower point. The magician also cannot use this ritual for one full day.

Failure: He suffers a loss of a temporary Willpower as above and does not swap bodies.

Success: On successful casting of the ritual, the magician and her victim switch bodies temporarily with the duration lasting as many as 10 days minus the victim's Mortality. In the event that the target has no Mortality, the swap is permanent, or at least until the magician performs the ritual again.

Exceptional Success: Garneres all the benefits above and adds an additional 30 days to the duration of the swap, if it wouldn't have otherwise been permanent.

The Avalon House Wardrobe

Somewhere in a flat in Milan overlooking the Duomo di Milano is the center of a minor but influential fashion house sometimes called the Avalon House. There, one of fashion's best-kept secrets lives, surrounded by a personal stable of muses.

To step through the door into the flat one might think they've wandered into Olympus, the place decorated in post-modern Greco Roman perfection, complete with a dozen beautiful women in luxurious dresses, lounging listless and lovely everywhere.

These beautiful women are every bit the model stereotype, vapid and distant. They also seem so high on drugs that they appear utterly incapable of even feeding themselves. That is, of course, because they are incapable of feeding themselves; the models of the Avalon House are simply pretty shells, a wardrobe of skins the magicians behind the fashion house use to maintain their network of information, wealth and debauchery.

The masters of Avalon, as they colloquially refer to themselves, are a varied bunch loosely tied to one mentor who perfected the rituals required to keep a human wardrobe, but that was centuries ago and the old bastard is likely dead. Largely these days, the masters of the house are members of a small self-congratulating coven that gather to out do one another and engage in the occasional orgy. They'd be laughable if they weren't so well connected, and of course, happy to kill.

A Closet Full of Skeletons

No one knows what possessed Franco Italioni to start studying a way to magically take over the body of another, but what those who knew Franco are sure of is it had to do with a woman.

In a kinder version of the story, Franco had married an older woman out of love instead of lust and as the years began to ravage her body and her mind but not her spirit, he started his research to find a means to achieve not immortality, but simply a few more good years with his beloved. He found no good way to repair the damage to her body, however, and realized the only way was to get her a new one. His spells were only effective for a short period, and then the body's original inhabitant would get it back and force his poor wife back into her decaying prison of flesh.

That's where the story takes a darker turn. Apparently he knew the easiest way to complete the swap was to hollow out a body of its soul completely. (Similar to what the Mentally Talented do naturally.) However, magic is a fickle thing and the proposition was a more difficult one than he had first imagined, all the while his beloved grew older and older and closer to death.

Finally, he had an epiphany, a way to weaken the soul of a person through sympathetic magic so that in effect, the soul died leaving nothing left of the person. He devised a method using his knowledge of amulet crafting to make a token that would grant its wearer some small gift, good



luck or beauty, but all the while slowly stripped away her very soul. The story goes that on the eve of his greatest accomplishment, when he had finally found a beautiful young woman and used his black arts to turn her into nothing but a lightly breathing doll, his beloved wife dropped dead making all Franco's efforts tragically for naught. Some say the Devil came for Franco himself and dragged him off to Hell where he would suffer the greatest punishment possible, an eternity in Hell knowing he'd be without his wife who waited for him in a Heaven he would never reach.

In his laborious studies, he'd taken on three or four apprentices who carried on his perfected arts, using his amulet-making and body-swapping methods for their own ends, ends that had not even a glimmer of foundation in good as Franco's once had.

These black magicians used their ability to escape death in the bodies of the young. Then they made their way into the upper echelons of Italian and indeed European society. They kept their numbers small and, of course, their secrets are carefully guarded, with all eyes on them forever.

At Least You Have Your Health

Like Franco, the modern House of Avalon primarily deals in amulet making (see Merits, p. 83.) While most are simply meaningless trinkets only thought to bring good luck, they circulate among some of the richest and most successful people of the world as a private and little recognized status symbol with all the power and legitimacy of a rabbit's foot.

Then again, some rabbits actually are lucky little bastards, and some small numbers of the amulets, reserved for very special clients, have tiny magical gifts worked into their odd Etruscan designs. On occasion, a rare new face in the world of fashion, not connected yet nor well received, will find themselves granted one of these baubles with no explanation. Indeed, occasionally an agent of the House of Avalon will give the amulets to nobodies based entirely on odd combinations of requirements with no other provocation at all.

It is this third type of amulet that is the guts of Avalon's wardrobe. Cursed far more deeply than they are blessed, like Franco, the masters of Avalon use these sympathetic ties to bait and ultimately destroy the souls of the recipient.

Master of the House

Method of Transference: Mystic Transference

Defining Merit: Amulet Making

Weakness: The magic of the House of Avalon is very specific. They can purchase any Body Thief Merit they desire, but can only use those involving taking qualities from others by means of an amulet. In addition, the sympathetic connection to a target from whom they wish to steal the body must be an amulet. Also, they can only permanently switch into the body of a target whose Willpower has been reduced to zero at the time of the transfer, regardless of what other means are taken

Advantage: Not surprisingly, the House of Avalon has money and connections, allowing any member in good standing to buy Resources and Contacts at half the normal price.

But Why?

The next logical question then, is what is it the House of Avalon does with these living zombies? They can be moved about and will breathe and respond to simple stimuli, but are so listless that they cannot follow simple commands and must be force fed most of the time unless they are actively starving, and even then, they will barely maintain themselves.

The purpose of these shells varies depending on the magician who made them. On many occasions, a wealthy and despicable patron creates them on request.

A certain Madam Colette Tremain has created her own select wardrobe of empty women so that she can change bodies the way the rest of us might change clothing.

Some say that Hugo Marchiani, another master of the House, is a pimp who keeps a few of these shells around for special clients with discerning tastes. Whether this is to give the client the opportunity to push the bounds of sexuality on these shells or in them is unclear.

A master who goes only by Umbra works as the House's chief information broker and uses a series of shells he or she has created to infiltrate the parties, homes, and businesses of the well to do either for blackmail later or to perform any manner of espionage.

Character Creation: Manipulation is the bread that the House of Avalon sups on, and without it, it is rare to make it very far in the coven. A keen mind is handy and a high Resolve comes in handy when dealing unflinchingly with the escapades that happen behind closed doors for those in the coven.

Being, by design, a sort of body merchants, Persuasion and Subterfuge are useful, and the coven expects all members to have at least a rudimentary understanding of the Occult to perform their transference ritual at all.

Prudence and Temperance are often ideal virtues among the masters, though at first blush they might appear counter to what the magicians stand for. In reality, a drug dealer who too frequently partakes of his own product is doomed to lose money, so it is with a coven of magicians who deal in moral decay. On the other hand, Pride and Lust are so common as to be nearly dull in the House of Avalon.

Concepts: Personal Secretary, Man of a Thousand Faces, Party Planner, Fashion Maven, Bitter Aging Mistress

The Ninth Circle of Hell is for Betrayers of Their Own Kin

- The characters are approached by a lovely young man or woman with cold eyes and a flyer advertising 'Giancomo's Marvelous Marvels' a small curio shop somewhere off the beaten path in their home town. They will receive a number of the fliers from various delivery people over time until they finally visit the place. When they get there, they find a small junk shop filled with every piece of crap imaginable from the interesting to the downright juvenile. Toys and games, trash novels and lewd magazines in foreign languages, a shop full of guilty treasures. Giancomo is there, all five foot nothing of him, with the same cold eyes they'd seen on the flier-wielding youths. All he wants is to sell the characters something they want; remarking that the rights treat can bring fortune to the body and free the soul. His amulets in the form of meaningless kitschy trinkets are the same as those used by the rest of the House of Avalon. Giancomo is looking to add a few new bodies to his wardrobe.

- There is a new Street Family in town. Effectively, these Street Families organize like miniature gangs with a pair of older teenagers acting like surrogate parents to a number of orphans, stealing and surviving however they can on their own. However, in this case, the surrogate parents are in fact a brother and sister from the House of Avalon plying their body-snatching trade on the underside of society simply for the thrill of slumming it, so far from the rest of the coven's swanky digs. They're amassing quite the holdings as well, using the hallowed out bodies of rebellious children in suicidal robbery runs, happily discarding the bodies to avoid being caught.

- Within the Vigil, there exists an organization of Hunters called the Ashwood Abbey. They are effectively a hellfire club that hunts monsters purely for the sport of it. These well armed and old moneyed dilantans seem distant cousins, if not soul mates, of the House of Avalon. However, what if the connection is more than causally through friends of friends? How would other Hunters respond to finding out that the Abbey had strong ties among the wanton flesh peddlers of the House? Even if no current connection exists, how far would the Abby go if they discovered a group of magicians who could offer all that the House of Avalon can?

Caina Ugolino

Quotes: *"Your mentor, he told you the story of Franco and his bride, si? I can promise you, he didn't tell you the whole story, and the Devil has no part of it."*

The pair of men looked over the short woman with disdain. "Haven't you any idea who we are, little piggy? Do you have any idea what kind of power we wield?" asked one while the first snickered.

The woman, though bodily youthful, stood up from her chair with the slow stiff movements of a woman three times her age. "I do, in fact. More than you know, amusingly enough." She pointed at each man in turn. "You were the son of an olive oil maker born some 33 years ago, and you are older, though not as old as you claim to be. In life neither of you were anyone and both of you fell into all this power quite accidentally."

The two men sat slacked jawed and tried desperately not to look at one another and give away how very right she was.

"One of you is a traitor to your house. I'm not sure which, so I figure I'll kill both of you." They shrieked when she pulled her gun, a dinner party was no place to have or use a gun, but she didn't care. She had lied, she shot one and walked away through the chaos leaving the other man to wonder if she'd picked purposefully or at random.

Background: The stories the House of Avalon circulates about their origins are equal parts romantic fantasy and out right lie. In fact, the only things that Caina can be sure of out of all that mess is that Franco Italiano did exist, though that wasn't his real name, and he didn't get dragged down into Hell. In fact, he is still alive to this day, forever penitent and using his wicked powers to perpetuate his own punishment.

Caina is a woman now, but once she was a man of great intelligence and cunning, and she suspects, a man capable of the greatest and purest type of love imaginable.

It has been many lifetimes since those times, since she inadvertently created the House of Avalon, and has forgotten much of her own history, replaced with more flattering memories.

Description: Caina is not alone in her journey; a thing that claims to be the angry soul of her long dead wife constantly bedevils her. Caina has seen many things over the years, and doubts very much that the thing is really her beloved's ghost. However, whether it is a ghost or devil, it follows Caina no matter what body she possesses, tormenting her with minor annoyances and occasionally endangering her life with various spiritual tricks. The thing says that it exists entirely to punish her for the terrible things she did and unleashed on the world.

When not avoiding her tormentor, Caina works to extend her own life and herd the House of Avalon from the shadows. Once, many years ago, she had a purpose for all of this. She knew exactly why she didn't just let herself die or why she didn't try to stop the House of Avalon from working its evil. Now, she manipulates the House because it is all she remembers wanting to do. Of course, Caina's idea of protecting the House is strange at best, homicidal at worst. There appears no rhyme or reason to her games, just circular unending farces.



In her current body, Caina is short and completely uninteresting as if she took special effort to find a host that would be of little to no interest to anyone. In fact, Caina seems to prefer bodies that are totally contrary to the sorts usually favored by the rest of the House. She renames herself ironically with each new body. In this case, her name is a reference to Dante's *Inferno*. Mostly her intention is to watch and wait and until she has a good idea of the kind of people surrounding her. Apparent good or evil are not necessarily the qualifiers that draw her attention.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 1, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 2, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 2, Crafts 2, Investigation 1, Occult (Folklore) 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 2, Intimidation 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise 3, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Amulet-Making, Barfly, Contacts (fashion industry, high society), Morality Sap, Language (Italian) 2, Language (Spanish) 1, Resources 3, Willpower Drain

Willpower: 4

Virtue: Faith

Vice: Lust

Morality: 4 (fixation 4, depression 6)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 9

Health: 7

Family Ties, the Archer Family

The Archer Family likes to refer to themselves as Pavees, a term some Irish Travelers use to describe themselves (as opposed to derogatory terminology such as "Pikeys," or "Tinsmen"). They are in fact a family branch of a legitimate Traveler family, but in the case of the Archer family, they have so fallen to lies and deceit as a way of life that they have been shamed out of the society from which they came by a council of respected elders.

Regretfully, the Archers uphold a number of bad stereotypes about their people and culture up to and including the fact that they are all con artists and thieves, speaking in intentionally thick accents to confuse their quarries. In the case of the Archer Family, the cons run very deep. Although they are body thieves, it's almost an afterthought in their schemes to defraud and rob everyone they come across. In truth, magic isn't the Archer's strong point, and while frequently used in their petty crimes, they perform sloppy and half remembered rituals and rites. Ultimately, their magical approach is by the seat of their pants.

Where They Have Walked

Some suggest that Irish Travelers are related to the Romani, those suggestions of course are purely hypothetical. The Archers don't suppose back that far and really look at their own history more as it relates to their rap sheets.

They don't know where they learned the magic to swap bodies, and they don't much worry about its source except maybe to spin a yarn on the matter designed to evoke sympathy or fear. They agree however, that Bobby, the family Patriarch, has been around for a very long time and that his abilities are something to fear.

Sometime in the late 1950s, the Archer family got into some kind of trouble with a larger family and because the Archers aren't much on diplomacy or making or keeping alliances, the problem escalated to violence pretty quickly. A formal tribunal of the many prominent families got together and discussed what they called 'the Archer Problem.' It had a lot to do with the impersonation of a royal and nearly made a hamlet in Southern England outlaw Traveler camps altogether. Of course, that was just the straw that broke the camel's back. The tribunal unanimously decided that the Archer family had to go, and while official word was that they were merely forbidden from being Pavees anymore, the truth had more to do with 'open season on beatings, killings and whatever.' Many of the Archer family members suspect it came down to power, and that the Archers had amassed so much magical power in so short a time that the other families were afraid, not angry. Regardless of the truth, it wasn't safe to be an Archer in Europe anymore and so Bobby packed up his family and headed to the greener pastures of the United States.

Not five years later, they had their routines set up. They ran the gamut, from petty theft to insurance and unemployment fraud. Bobby had a thing for ripping off the elderly. He claimed it had a lot to do with punishing their children for not taking better care of their elders. It might have had more to do with his hatred of aging.

Thanks to the varied law enforcement deals within the U.S., and indeed the territorial conflict with many law enforcement agencies, the Archers had a good and easy time moving from state to state playing their games. Bobby is an unusually thoughtful man and reads obsessively, he's well versed in U.S. law, and in fact often knows local law better than the cops trying to hassle his people. He watches the papers for shifts in local policies to make sure locals forget his family's footsteps before returning.

Starting in 1970 with the establishment of Federal RICO Act, the federal government has been following many small criminal enterprises like the Archer family. However, they have no way to link actual crimes back to the Traveler family thanks to the magical nature of most of their crimes. They've grown drastically in numbers since the '50s, with five independent caravans operating with family heads of their own, who naturally report to Bobby most of the time. On occasion, the caravans will split into four or five smaller family units to move less conspicuously across state borders or through small towns.

The Game

The actual history of the spell that Bobby and his family use to swap bodies is long lost. Where as the family Patriarch might be an astute man with a great desire to read and retain information, he is not inherently a very good magician. In fact, though he would never admit it, he thinks the whole thing is bunk. He knows the few rituals and charms he knows work. He doesn't really believe anything else does.

Because of his relative lack of reverence for the process, the ritual he leads and has taught his family is sloppy at best. His notes are scattered, filled with commentary on a match he gambled on, how much he liked the looks of a particular woman at the bar, and similar nonsense.

Consider the situation with Elinore Montgomery, 72, mother of three, living alone with cleaning women who came in twice a week. Elinore had long been telling her children that she thought the 'colored maids' were stealing her money, and because the children could find no evidence of that, they ignored it. Eventually, tired of her complaints, her oldest son hired a pair of the Archer daughters to clean house, hoping that it was racism and not senility that motivated her mother's paranoia.

Once in, the sisters worked fast. They found whatever documentation Elinore had laying around while they cleaned. Meanwhile, one sister would make tea and play cards with the old lady; she would chat her up and charm her simply by providing Elinore the attention she so badly needed. Overall, it took the sisters about three weeks to get enough information to drain Elinore dry of everything she had. (She, like many of the Archer's other victims, had wealthy children, making it to them a victimless crime.)

Week four, one sister sat Elinore down for her usual tea and cards while the others went off to set up. The card-playing sister drank herself to dangerous levels, to make her body sick and nearly helpless.

That's about when a couple of brothers broke into the house dressed in black and with masks. They made a good show of capturing the Archer sisters first to confuse the old

lady further. Taking Elinore and her card-playing friend down to the basement where the ritual space was already set up, bound and gagged, they started the ritual.

It called for, among other things, a chicken, likely for sacrifice, but someone had forgotten it, so someone ran upstairs, grabbed a seasoned chicken breast out of a TV dinner, and put a knife through it. They couldn't get the right red candles in time, so one of the sisters wrote the word 'red' in red nail polish down the sides of the candle. Since no one liked the smell of the required incense, the ritualists used a cigar instead.

The body swap worked anyway, with Elinore now in the liquor-soaked body of one sister, while the sister went off to the bank in her new shell to make a withdrawal, redistribute some funds, and empty the safety deposit box.

None of the Archers, Bobby included, know exactly how or why the ritual works. The only core components that are vital are that the leader of the ritual is the one who does the swap (often times the anchor of a teamwork roll involving anyone in the ritual who is actually a Magically Talented body thief. See *World of Darkness* p 134.) This leader has to have in her possession something personal from the would-be victim in order for the sympathetic link to be made and the transference complete. All other aspects of the ritual change nearly every time the Archers perform it, resulting in no one being sure what parts matter and what parts don't.

Identity Theft and the Body Thief

In the United States, millions of people are victims of identity theft each year resulting in billions of dollars in consumer damages. To a body thief, this sort of crime rarely has much to do with profit and much more to do with necessity. For body thieves in need of a way to recreate themselves in their new lives, a quick trip to the Internet produces plenty of thoughts and ideas on how to steal someone else's life even as they are stealing someone else's body, and it's even easier when one has their fingerprints and DNA to go along with fraud.

Of course, in the modern era, there's often little need to prove identity to a human being. With Internet banking and ATMs, so long as a body thief has set up his information correctly, he can easily keep his hands on his old assets. If that's too high tech, of course, cash is always cash and there's no need to prove who you are with cash. Getting a new photo ID, at least in the U.S., is as easy as having a birth certificate and social security card. Holding loosely onto an old identity can, therefore, be easier than acquiring a new one.

Shell Games

- Here's a good one. A caravan rolls into town, camping on a remote spot off the turnpike and sets up shop. The body thieves among them move into town, swipe purses and wallets out of the lockers at a 24-hour gym, and then head back to camp. From there, they systematically hop onto strangers' bodies to explore potential cons. Only one of them happens to swap bodies with a player character while she sleeps. A good look around her apartment gives the thief a good solid idea that the character is up to something. The thief in question drops something or a few things that are worthy of blackmail out the window and runs for them later. From there, hopping from body to body, the thief starts making demands of the character, drawing her deeper and deeper into trouble.

- Coursing is a form of hunting outlawed in many parts of the world where participants release a game animal, and then release a set of dogs, two or three, hunting the prey with speed and sight rather than smell. Some Archers have taken this Traveler pastime to a new level. The game works like this: they chose a victim and snatch something of his. From there, when he's sleeping, an Archer steals his body, and goes out on a one-man crime wave. He robs liquor stores, pisses on cars, and commits any other mischief the body thief can imagine. Just when the cops are about to shout 'freeze,' the thief jumps back, leaving a bewildered target to run or get the crap beaten out of him by some very angry cops.

- It isn't as though the average werewolf keeps a harem of wolf blooded (people related enough to a werewolf that they are more likely to birth more werewolves) but that doesn't mean they don't tend to look at wolf blooded as a territory worth claiming. Therefore, if a werewolf were to discover that a caravan of traveling, untamable con artists had a number of wolf blooded in their mix, how could he even begin to claim territory over them? Worse still, if he were to discover what the Archers could do, how could he hope to contain them? What if they figured out what he was, what kind of damage could one of the family's members do in the borrowed body of a werewolf?



One of the Family

Defining Merit: Sleight of Hand

Weakness: The Archer family has gotten their body-swapping ritual so confused for so long that the crazed dynamism has actually become part of the process. At this point, their need for that chaos has grown so strong that the ritual only works if the primary caster is suffering a negative to her dice pool thanks to distraction. Drunkenness is a common means, but not absolute. Sometimes just having the ‘wrong’ equipment works.

In addition, no permanent swap is possible for the Archers, regardless of the victims Morality, unless he or she is a red head. This applies even if the thief kills his previous body with the victim in it — try this with a blond, and the thief dies and the victim instantly switches back into her body. However, because this ban centers on the same scattershot methods as the rest of the Archer’s magic, dyed hair works so long as the thief doesn’t know it’s not natural.

Advantage: After a fashion, the Archer’s are a close-knit family and they tend to have each other’s backs when the chips are down. They can buy the Merit Allies: Archer Family at half normal cost. Additionally, because teaching flows from one generation to the next only by word of mouth and the Archers can only trust each other, they may purchase the Mentor and Retainer Merits at half cost to reflect the ease with which they can find teachers or students within their own ranks.

Character Creation: Life on the road is hard, especially if cops beat you to death in the backwoods somewhere before you hit the ground running. For this reason, and because Bobby and other older family heads tend to plan the actual runs, most younger members of the Archer family actually favor Physical Attributes with Stamina being a favorite. Social attributes, Manipulation especially, tend to be a close second in favor.

An Archer without Larceny or Subterfuge is an Archer not long for the road, and while other Physical Skills come in handy, especially for the thugs and heavies among them, Persuasion and Streetwise are trained so early into most young Archers that they tend to be second nature. What they do is rather cut and dry, but why a member of the family does what they do is as varied as there are types of beer in the world, and so Virtue and Vice are equally as varied.

Concepts: Mechanic, Petty Thief, Legitimate Fortune Teller, Illegal House Keeper, Crooked Roofer, Caravan Patriarch

Isbelle Archer-Fay

Quotes: “Here’s the thing, you don’t want to bet on the Murphy kid. I know it’s a good solid bet, but the fact of the matter is I heard he’s a drinker, kid’s drunk as we speak.”

“I’m telling you Marty. Jack’s a sure thing, you put 40 large on him and he’ll come through for you tonight.” Isbelle smiled, she was wearing the face of Donnie Marcon, and so the smile was crooked and had fewer teeth than her own. One of her boys had stolen his wallet two weeks ago, bound and gagged him, trapped in Isbelle’s body in a bathroom somewhere while she made the play.

“You’re absolutely sure about this Donnie? I mean, you know something I don’t know, because the spread says...”

“Don’t you worry about what the spread says, Marty. I know a lot of things, a lot of things you don’t know. You put the money down, and if our boy doesn’t win, you shoot me right in the head, right here.” Isabelle tapped Donnie’s forehead with his hand and grinned.

Background: Her daddy was a boxer, but not one of those big fat celebrities with padded gloves and agents. No, Isbelle’s daddy was a bare-knuckled killer who worked where he could and fought wherever he found a ring that would take him. Yeah, by in large it was men just about killing each other in dimly-lit basements while other people exchanged money. Maybe it was a little too visceral for a young girl to watch night after night, but Isbelle had a love for watching her daddy work from the first time she could remember seeing it. She understood the delicate dance in the way the fighters moved, and sometimes she was jealous that she couldn’t be more like them.



Then one night daddy killed someone outside of the ring and stopped fighting. He took to drinking and didn't leave the trailer much. She tried to take up where he left off, at least as far as supporting the family went, but the men at those rings didn't have much patience for a teenage girl trying to get a piece of the action. She got beat up and thrown out a few times.

That's when her older cousin Crystal came by with a case of beer. She said, "There's a way you can get in without them having any idea who you are. You wanna learn?" So, Crystal taught Isabelle all the magic she'd ever need.

Once back in the circuit though, Isabelle realized betting on fighters fair and even was a chump's game. The best fights were rigged, and the people making the money were the cheats on the top of the food chain. Everyone else was just a bunch of suckers.

Description: Isabelle is many things these days, but she isn't a sucker. She has her job down pretty pat, and now she has a small group of Archer boys who do all her heavy lifting for her. It runs something like this: someone grabs a bit of personal goods from some up-and-coming or over-the-hill slime ball. Isabelle waits for a fight night and uses said patsy to get his buddies to dump a lot of money on the wrong fighter, and then, when the guy's buddies show up with guns wanting an explanation, she escalates the discussion to the point of violence and then hops back, leaving the patsy to a quick and confusing death.

Yeah, people die, but this isn't underground knitting, after all.

In her own body, Isabelle is soft and pretty with the kind of heart-shaped face that's plastered on tourism brochures from Ireland. With the freckles and the bright red curls, even she doesn't realize how dangerous she is. Like her father before her, she has a temper like a time bomb, but she won't take it out on family. She saves and stores it up for times when she is in a man's body.

Some part of her has toyed with the idea of swapping bodies with a boxer just to know it from that side, but she's afraid she won't want to come back out if she did.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 3, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Crafts 2, Occult 2

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl (Boxing) 3, Larceny 3, Stealth 2, Survival 2, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Intimidation (Subtle Threats) 2, Persuasion 2, Streetwise (Gambling) 2, Subterfuge 2

Merits: Allies (Archer Family) 2, Resources 2, Retainer (Family Members) 3, Sleight of Hand, Striking Looks 2, **Willpower:** 4

Virtue: Prudence

Vice: Greed

Morality: 4 (narcissism 5)

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Health: 7

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Knife	1 (L)	1	5

Oddities in Body Swapping

Not everything in the World of Darkness is as cut and dry as 'well, it's just magic,' or 'it's just a psychic' or even 'it's just a vampire.' For some types of body thieves there is no clear reason for how or why they do what they do, sometimes the events that lead to a body thief are singularities that would either be difficult to reproduce or more rarely, utterly impossible to recreate. Sometimes, things just happen.

The two examples below of body thieves who got there in strange ways are ideal plot hooks for any World of Darkness game, but they can also be used as a character type if a player and Storyteller wish. Storytellers are also encouraged to use these as springboards for their own unique body-thief scenario.

The examples below rely on pseudoscience and fantastic technology; other options are also possible when creating an oddity. What about a swingers' club that's been around since the 1950s, it has its own power, its own resonance, and for what ever reason, sometimes the swingers switch bodies just like they switch partners? People die in hospitals every day, but not everyone stays dead. What happens when two people die at the same time in the same hospital, resuscitated a moment later, with their consciousnesses ending up in the wrong body? They say lightning never strikes in the same place twice, but what about an incident where the same bolt hits two people at the same time? When they come to, they find they're in the wrong bodies, what do they do from there?

In some cases, oddities in body swapping just happen, as is the case with Henry Franklin below. Where as most oddities can at least point to a source for why or how this happened even if it is as thin a reason as 'I logged into an evil Web site.' In cases like Henry, they are body thieves just because they are.

Unlike earlier sections, these oddities each have their own mechanic to describe how they become what they become. The following body thieves are very special cases and should be treated as such.

Henry Franklin – Supernatural Oddball

To an outside view, Henry is a tragic victim of his own mental illness. By all appearance, Henry suffers from an extreme case of obsessive compulsive disorder that causes him to be barely able to function in society. Most of the time, he is unable to bring himself to leave his house, and even when he does leave to buy food or pay his electric bill, his day is so full of ritual that what should take him an hour takes three. He cannot abide being touched by strangers or even friends. Any bare skin to bare skin contact causes Henry to throw a fit and leave screaming or black out on the floor.

Henry actually is obsessive compulsive, but the severity has much more to do with the fact that he considers himself to be communicable. He knows that sometimes, when he touches other people his body blacks out and he realizes he's in someone else's body. It never lasts long, a few hours at most, but long enough for him to stumble around confused and experience all the horrors that other people think are common place. Dirt, filth, bacteria, body hair, even the thought of touching himself while in another body drives Henry insane. Once, Henry found himself accidentally in the body of a man who had to go to the bathroom and spent the next three days showering when he got back to his own skin.

At first blush, it's an amusing predicament, but deeper in, Henry is a pathetic creature. His daily rituals are so complicated he barely gets by, but he believes with the whole of his person that he needs them to stay inside his own body.

Tuned In, Drugged Out

In 1972, a year before Richard Helms had the CIA destroy all the paperwork related to secret governmental drug research, Dr. Eugene Michaels left a CIA testing facility under the cover of night with his research in hand and fled to Mexico to continue his research. He was a biochemist, one of the best, so good that his name never hit the history books. He claimed that the CIA saw to that.

Beyond being a simple biochemist, Michaels was a free thinker and imaginative in the extreme. Not long

after he started into the study of how certain hallucinogens affected the mind and body, Michaels started indulging in them personally, the dry second-hand information available to him was insufficient to satisfy his thirst for understanding.

It is debatable if he first had the idea for his mystery drug while high or while sober, but regardless, some time just before he left the government he began experimenting with a chemical combination that would 'open the mind to it's utmost and provide escape at it's highest level.'

After a few months of heavy research on the government dime, Michaels came across something marvelous, quite by accident. While doing an experiment on a chemical that would artificially grant a person so-called psychic abilities and a greater understanding of the universe, he discovered that his test subject had become so very open that he in essence slipped out of body and somehow switched with one of the lab assistants nearby. It was brief and inexplicable, but after that night, Dr. Michaels packed up his studies and fled the United States.

Once in Mexico, he became a man obsessed. He attempted hundreds of experiments to recreate the switch but was unable to for a number of years. Finally, in an act of desperation, he tried the drug on himself late one night. Short of funding, he had been processing cocaine for a drug lord for some time, and on that night one of the mercenaries who regularly came by for shipments stopped in unannounced.

Michaels wrote in his journal: *"I felt the unmistakable sensation of movement all at once. First, my hands and then limbs became so heavy that I could not move them, but in the moment that Hugo walked through my door to check in on operations I felt a tremendous 'whoosh' and movement! Yes, I was traveling, my head just opened up like I had no skull and I traveled through the universe like a lightning bolt! It was the most wonderful trip I had ever taken, and when I found I embodied again, the most terrible sorrow swept over me. I had been as big as the stars on my trip, and now I was distilled down, evaporated to a sludgy residue of what my soul should be, and jammed into a pitiful human body."*

Only the body the doctor found himself in was not his own. In a rush of excitement, he tried to explain what a wonderful thing it was that he and Hugo had experienced, but Hugo was less than impressed, trapped as he was in the doctor's small old frame. It took some doing, but once the effects wore off and both were back in their own bodies, Hugo decided not to shoot the doctor and explain it away to his employer. What Michaels could not explain to Hugo was the need for silence on the events. In a matter of months, Michaels belonged to his previous benefactor, producing this odd cocktail en masse for the drug lord.

The story ended for Michaels like these things often do, eventually he became more of a hindrance for the drug lord than a benefit, and Michael's body ended up in the foundation of the drug lord's new patio. Since the doctor's death, almost all attempts to recreate the drug have failed, and indeed, it does not work every time or on all people, so its market value was debatable. Occasionally, it slips out into the mass market in places like the U.S., sold sometimes at exorbitant rates to special interest groups. Ironically, the U.S. government has some of Michael's wonder drug, but there is no evidence to suggest they realize what they have or at the very least, how to recreate it.

The Brown Acid

Michaels' miracle drug, a drug that was supposed to open the minds of all the world, supposed to free the world of all of its hang ups and limitations, ended up doing nothing of the sort. It surfaces from time to time, in a party for the elite, a commune of experimental sociologists, or just the wrong kid at the wrong time.

Typically, the drug can be snorted, but in liquid form it can also be injected. Because it is a derivative compound of ketamine, it has all the same effects as that drug. (See *Hallucinogens*, *World of Darkness*, p. 177.)

However, on occasion the drug's secondary effect will kick in requiring the character to roll Stamina + Resolve, with a penalty equal to the number of doses taken beyond the first. On a Dramatic Failure, the user suffers the full effects of a Toxicity 2 lethal poison, plus one for each additional dose. If the character fails the roll to resist, he switches bodies with the next person with whom he makes eye contact for a number of hours equivalent to two times the number of doses initially taken.

The ramifications of a random exchange like that can go any number of ways from the mildly inconvenient to the downright deadly. The transference may be a momentary flash that merely leaves both the user and bystander bewildered. In more extreme situations, the confusion might easily lead to violence. A person walking down the street, past an alley where a user is getting high finds she's all of a sudden high and in a cardboard box. More than that, she's not herself anymore. A normal person freaks out for the few hours necessary for the effect to wear off. Now, if the person passing on the street happens to be the violent type, maybe shell shocked military or a hardened killer, the confusion could lead to a brutal attack or plain old manslaughter.

Don't Do Drugs

Assuming that a player or Storyteller would want to use this chemical cocktail in their story as part of the body thief template instead of part of a storyline,

First One's Free

• Stop me if you've heard this one. Someone is selling acid to kids. The blotter paper hits have bright purple dinosaurs on it to make it more appealing. Truth is, the guy doing the selling doesn't work for the government at all, he's a free agent trying to figure how to make a mix of the drug that will work every time. He's got it in his head that younger people are more able to be open-minded and that they make better test subjects. The youths do the drugs and have weird trips, not really a problem until they start going missing.

• Here's another good one. A dealer named Rusty has a pocket full of ecstasy he got from a source he usually doesn't know. Thing is, he didn't have the pills in a plastic bag because Rusty isn't very bright. So, the story goes that Rusty had his pocket full of special pills when he got chased down by some cops. In running from the cops, they chased him long enough that he sweated and got his pants all wet. These pills got wet and the drug in them washed into Rusty's skin and blood stream until he sort of OD'd on the drug. Now Rusty is always a little high and randomly hops sometimes when he makes eye contact with people.

• Do you want to have some fun at the expense of a few changelings? What if the real secret behind Dr. Michaels' miracle drug is that it's an extract from goblin fruit, a fairy food? This leaves a few questions, like how humans got their hands on anything from the Fae side of reality. What if the drug works on changelings? How would it affect a human soul moved into a changeling body? Would the taint of the other side follow a human soul from changeling body to mortal?

it would require that the character was either able to make it themselves or have a supply available. Considering those, the character creation would be as listed below with the mechanic for the drug with the following changes:

Defining Merit: None.

Weakness: Obviously, without the drug, these thieves are unable to operate, and therefore are severely limited in their ability. While the drug is not addictive, the high of being able to switch bodies can easily become so. Also, without a steady supply of the drug, the user is no different than any other mortal. Also, using this



drug as a way to permanently switch bodies is far from safe. If the user kills their original body when someone else is in it, she must immediately make a reflexive Composure + Wits roll. The character must also subtract the other person's Resolve from this roll. If the character wins, she gets to stay in the body she switched into. If she fails, the body's original inhabitant switches back and the character dies with her body. Also, if her original body doesn't actually die before the drug wears off, she returns to a dying body.

Character Creation: These thieves, like any drug user, come from any situation in life, any type or abilities they might have.

Concepts: Dealer, Devotees of Consciousness Expansion, Chemist, Meth Manufacturer

Death.Com

Somewhere there's a dedicated server connected to a Web site with no admin, no designer, and no way out. The site's alive, so the stories go, and it sucks people right out of their body and traps their soul on that server, maybe forever.

The truth is there might be something to the story because there is a Web site somewhere on the World Wide Web that does some strange things to the people who log in.

An e-mail arrives in a random e-mail inbox inviting someone to join a new community. Sometimes the e-mail says it's from a social networking site and that a high school friend wants to reconnect. Sometimes the e-mail says it's a porn site with free registration. Sometimes it's supposed to be a network of bloggers who will pay big bucks for more entries. Whatever the premise, the e-mail wants someone, anyone, to log into the site and stay a while. Most people never read it, the e-mail trashed long before it can do any damage. If a person does get as far as to try it out, they follow a convoluted URL that forwards them to the site.

The site is just a black page with a spot to input a username and password, both provided by the e-mail invitation. After the login, a blank screen comes up with a 90s style simple design with a blinking message that says 'please turn back now.' If the viewer clicks anywhere on the screen the real fun starts. The next page is black with white pixels to make it appear a dark gray. The viewer moving his cursor over the site will find that random pixels link to sound files, videos, or just text. They change from click to click.

The text and images, the sound files, they all show little glimpses into other people's lives, satisfying a voyeuristic urge to see what other people are doing and how they are living. The difference

between this piece of the Internet and standard weblogs, messengers and communities is that the tidbits of life seem posted without the source's knowledge. Some of the links are amusing slices of life; some are intimate enough to make the average viewer blush. Nevertheless, that voyeuristic thrill is the point and the more titillating the view the more seductive it is. The truth is the links seem so candid because they are the collected memories and events in the lives of the people trapped on a server in a computer lab somewhere in Silicon Valley.

Once a person has spent a significant amount of time on the site, at least half an hour, the danger begins. After this time, if a character wants to leave the site on his own and pull away from the computer, he must succeed in a Composure + Resolve roll. Furthermore, after an hour's time, and every hour thereafter, the server starts its assault on the character. In essence, the server itself rolls against the character, using the quality of the character's computer against her. Starting at the first hour, the server rolls three dice plus the equipment bonus of the character's computer, penalized by the character's Resolve in an extended roll occurring each hour. If the sever accumulates more successes than the character has permanent Willpower, the character's soul is sucked into the server and apparently lost forever.

From there, one of three things happens. In most cases, the body simply slowly dies with no consciousness to maintain itself. More rarely, another soul currently trapped on the server makes it's way into the body and starts life anew, with all the inherent problems that would follow being in a stranger's body. Rarely, a person having seen the transference secondhand, having been in the room but not viewing the computer, will report that something else came through that screen. Something replaced the soul in their friend's body, but whatever it was wasn't human in any way that can be reckoned, a monster in human form.

History in the Internet Age

The question remains, who designed the site and who built a server that can contain human souls. Sometimes there are no clear-cut answers to questions even as simple as that. What follows are a few suggestions for Storytellers to springboard from the real history of death.com.

When the dot com explosion happened and the new wave of potential opportunities seemed to pour from the wellspring that was the Internet, all things were possible. Silicon Valley was the New Jerusalem and all things were possible with enough faith in computers. Somewhere in the midst of all the faith and devotion were a group of MIT graduates with dreams of being the next Microsoft. They had, they

Digital Transference

When at a computer capable of connecting, the body thief can make a Resolve + Composure roll. The number of successes reflects the number of hours the character can stay in this new body. After being caught in the server, a displaced consciousness has little to no memory of her time outside of her body, other trapped consciousnesses surround her, mixing her memories and experiences with one another into a complicated network of lifetimes. If a character transfers to a new body while his old body dies, the exchange is permanent.

thought, the brilliance and drive to do it. They had the brilliance and drive to do something, but it wasn't what they bargained for. Three years into developing a server that was powerful enough to simulate full artificial reality, what they had instead was a server that could create and support a sort of miniature digital reality. Or so it appeared. That's when Frank, the youngest of the four, went missing and the other three started getting e-mails, strange e-mails inviting them to a Web site 'still under construction.' In six months time the team was gone, lost to their server with no way out.

No one built the server, it was found by a second-rate hacker who had been dumpster diving for computer parts outside the offices of a major computer manufacturer. He wasn't elite, he wasn't even all that bright, he was just in the right place at the right time. When he brought the server home, attached it to his system and turned it on, he had no idea what he had in his hands. First, and so he'll tell anyone who will listen, it built the Web site, then it used some kind of mind control powers on him and made him unable to do anything but it's bidding. You can find him on message boards and list servers sometimes, begging for help. He says his name is now only 'Admin' and he doesn't know how to stop.

There is an original Admin, like in the above story, but he wasn't some kind of innocent victim in an alien computer's conspiracy. Rather, he was a computer genius and natural body thief. After perfecting his abilities in the real world, he constructed a way to steal bodies across the Internet. It is his will and it alone that fuels the site functions the way that it does, but his reasons for creating such a trap are still a mystery.

Whatever truth a Storyteller chooses to use, they can still feel free to allow players the opportunity to base a body thief off the Web site storyline. Somehow, the character will have learned how to upload himself to the server in relative safety and snatch the bodies

A Virus Has Been Detected

- Some guerrilla marketing firm has been busy advertising death.com. From USB drives left in boxes for some store clerk to find, to phony Web sites full of hidden messages suggesting people visit the site. It all looks like some kind of Internet and real life scavenger hunt with message boards popping up describing this epic world wide hunt to explain what is really going on at death.com.
- An e-mail in a player's inbox says, "Visit death.com and then forward this e-mail to 10 other people or you'll be dead in a month." Most people delete those things, but when other people on the e-mail list, friends of the character, start dropping dead, the only question is, continue the chain or try to stop it?
- Several alternate planes of existence are known to mages, but one contained within technology presents an interesting dilemma. While using a Mind or Forces effect to scrutinize a computer connected to the Internet, a mage discovers the tortured dreams of the souls trapped in the machine. The story surrounding a rescue mission into the server might be quickly complicated when they discover there is a consciousness behind that hell, and worse still, mortals who can utilize it to achieve a sort of immortality.

of people logged into the site. Of course, this situation implies that the transference for both the body thief and her victim was only temporary, and so a character might feel compelled to continue to use the server to save the lives of those she encounters through it. In this case, the character would use Digital Transference as his method of theft.

Becoming a Ghost in the Machine

Defining Merit: None.

Weakness: Just like chemical body thieves need their drugs, a digital thief needs a computer at his disposal to make the transference. Worse yet, there's no way to be sure what body he will make contact with.

Character Creation: With computers and technology being at the core of this method, Mental Attributes are at the forefront, with Resolve being of particular importance to maintain control over the transfer without threat of being lost in the server.

Also, not surprisingly, Mental skills are important, as at least a rudimentary understanding of the use of a computer is necessary to get to the site to begin with. After the transference goes through, Subterfuge and Persuasion come in handy in case the thief runs into anyone else while in the wrong body.

Concepts: IT Specialist, Bored Computer Student, Computer Engineer, Public Librarian, Online Role-player

Mundane Merits for the Body Thief

The following Merits are mundane Merits that any character can possess, but they are of particular usefulness to body thieves. The Alternate Identity Merit (see p. 110) is another Merit that is common among body thieves.

Cultural Language (•)

Effect: Communication was not always as simple as signing into e-mail and clicking 'send.' In time before e-mail, even in times before standardized letter writing, body thieves sought ways to communicate with one another even over distance, since their practices could carry them almost anywhere. To reflect this, body thieves take this specialized Language Merit to reflect this form of communication that can only be understood by members of their society. This Merit muddles the thieves' language with secrecy, and any person trying to discern the actual meaning of a conversation or written communication suffers a two dice penalty unless they know the same cultural language. For the Archer family, it's merely a derivative of their cultural Shelta language. For the Club, it's a series of complicated metaphors often hidden in the text of school work or poetry. For those poor souls lost in the server of death.com, the Merit might reflect a deviant form of binary that once cracked, could allow her to communicate with the outside world and with it, a terrible warning.

Support Network (• • Social Merit)

Prerequisite: Status •+ in the group

Effect: With this Merit, the character has access to a number of likeminded individuals who share in a particular depraved act. This support network offers sympathy that most could not. This Merit allows the character to spend a Willpower point to gain the usual three-dice bonus on the roll to resist gaining a derangement, if the action causing the roll is acceptable to the members of the group.

Drawback: The group expects the character to act as support for other members, and the group may call her in to perform other perverse acts in kind, such as body disposal. This can lead a character to an even quicker path to moral degradation.

Supernatural Merits for the Body Thief

Most of the suggested societies listed above have defining Merits, which a character must possess to be a part of that society. However, any body thief can purchase any of these Merits. The type of thief in question similarly affects cost for activation of these powers. Mentally Talented body thieves must spend a temporary Willpower point to activate any of these powers. Magically Talented body thieves perform these Merits as rituals. They do not need to spend Willpower. However, each Merit becomes an extended task with a target number equal to the Merit's dots, and each roll constitutes 10 minutes of casting time, unless the Merit's description calls for longer periods. In the case of oddities in body swapping, the Storyteller should help determine what cost would be appropriate to the character, but spending Willpower would likely work as the best default.

Amulet (•• or ••••)

Effect: Each purchase of this Merit allows for the maintenance of one amulet at a time. Any number can be created, but only one can be active for every version of this Merit that the character possesses. The Merit comes in two levels, corresponding to the bonus it gives to the wearer. At two dots, it provides a +1 bonus to any single Attribute chosen by the caster at the time of creation. At four dots, this bonus increases to +2. This bonus cannot raise the character's Attribute above 5.

The character can sacrifice one point of the amulet's bonus during the amulet's creation to instill the amulet with one Body Thief Merit like Morality Sap or Emotional Urging. The character may only instill in an amulet Merits that she knows. If used in this fashion, the amulet is typically given to an unknowing target, who is the victim of this Merit for as long as he wears or touches the amulet. If the Merit has a variable effect, like Emotional Urging, the amulet can only enhance a single emotion, which must be determined when the amulet is created. The instilled Merit works normally, except that it affects the target for as long as he wears the amulet. If an amulet contains both a Body Thief Merit and an Attribute bonus, both of these affect the wearer.

The character can also sacrifice one point of the bonus to craft an amulet that allows a body thief using mystic exchange to remain in her current body even after the end of that ritual's duration. Characters who use this amulet instantly switch back to their original body one turn after the amulet is removed. A character can only benefit from a single amulet for each Merit or Attribute.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult, extended. Each roll represents one hour of work. The total number

of successes required depends on the level of the amulet. Two-dot amulets require only 10 successes and four-dot amulets require 20. Creating an amulet also requires an Intelligence + Crafts roll to create or modify a suitable object.

Duration: Permanent until destroyed. Note that this potentially increases the duration of any Body Thief Merit indefinitely. However, the effect ends immediately upon the wearer's removal of the item. The creator can also perform a short ritual where he makes an Intelligence + Occult roll and spends one point of Willpower. If successful, he can instantly cancel the effect of the amulet, regardless of how far away it is.

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The object being used as the amulet is rendered useless and the caster loses one point of temporary Willpower.

Failure: The creator fails to instill any power into the amulet

Success: The caster gains progress towards the amulet's creation.

Exceptional Success: Additional successes are their own benefit, making for a faster creation.

Emotional Urging (••••)

Effect: Every thief needs a con to keep their lifestyle going, and with it, their unending life. With practice and time, a good thief is able to manipulate the feelings of others around them. Time, conversation, or just sheer forces of personality are all tools to manipulate the feelings of others. In a blink of an eye or possibly a wink, the thief can push on the mild feelings of fear or passion and feed them, strengthen and empower them. Of course, this manipulation is not total. The thief cannot create emotions that are not already being felt by the target, but he can take those light feelings lurking and turn them to full blown wild fires. A body thief can't simply focus his attention and force a strange woman to be instantly in love with him. However, over a romantic dinner with quiet music and dim lights, a thief could talk his target into the faintest flutter of a crush and then use this Merit to build that flutter into a rushing heartbeat. Similarly, a Club member hoping to push her quarry to give up on life entirely can't just wish for it and have her quarry leap from a window. Rather, she'd have to wait until he was already feeling morose over a lousy test grade before using Emotional Urging to amplify the suffering to dangerous levels. The caster must be able to either speak to or touch the target or have a sympathetic connection in order to manipulate the target's emotions.

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Persuasion versus Composure

Duration: One day

Suggested Equipment: An item of emotional significance to the victim (+1 to +5, depending on relative importance)

Possible Modifiers: Target fulfilled Virtue within last week (-3), target fulfilled Vice within last week (+1 per, up to +3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power backfires; the caster suffers the full effects of a normal success.

Failure: The power fails. The target is immune to this effect for one day.

Success: The caster achieves more successes than the target. For the remainder of the night, the target's most powerful emotion at the time of casting amplifies dramatically, becoming a driving force in the subject's mind. If an opportunity to indulge in the emotion presents itself, the victim must reflexively spend one Willpower point and succeed in a Resolve + Composure roll to avoid indulgence. If this indulgence would result in lethal or aggravated damage, the subject need not spend the Willpower point and can avoid indulgence with the successful roll.

Each time the victim resists temptation, she gains a cumulative +1 bonus to her next roll to resist indulgence, up to a maximum bonus of +5.

Exceptional Success: As above, however, the victim must spend Willpower to avoid harm in their indulgence.

Luck Drain (....)

Effect: We make our own luck, which is of course an easy thing to say but not a rational thing to count on in the real world. Or is it? In the case of the body thief, relying on the good luck that flows naturally to any one person in any given frame of time isn't always enough. To the body thief who has developed the ability to drain the luck of others, the roll of a dice isn't up to chance like it is with the rest of the world.

This is handy because the risk inherent in stealing the bodies and lives of others grows exponentially with every passing year. Luck Drain ultimately comes down to robbing a victim of success on an action and taking those successes for themselves. Unfortunately, this ability does not work in conjunction with other body thief Merits or with any rolls to steal or borrow someone else's body. In addition, dealing with these kinds of forces can be dangerous; attempting to use this power more than three times a day results in a backlash that reduces the success category by one. A success becomes a failure while a failure becomes a dramatic failure. The caster must be able to either see the target or have a sympathetic connection to steal the target's luck.

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge versus Resolve

Duration: One day or until the effects are suffered and enjoyed

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails and the caster cannot use this power for one full day. In addition, the caster's next roll subtracts one success. This can turn success to failure. Also, if the roll fails, the caster instead makes a dramatic failure.

Failure: The power fails.

Success: The next roll the victim makes loses a number of successes equal to the caster's initial successes. The caster's next roll gains one success.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the caster's next roll gains three successes.

Morality Sap (....)

Effect: Traditionally, this fell power is a curse inflicted on a victim through some sympathetic connection. Although it is most useful to Magically Talented body thieves, any thief can make use of this power as it assists in lowering the victim's resistance to proposals of increasingly vile deeds. Someone who might scoff at petty theft could be talked into anything, even murder if this power is used sufficiently often.

There needs to be some kind of physical connection between victim and thief to make this power work. In the case of the House of Avalon, they create an amulet that is given to their would-be victim through which they cast their spells. In other cases, like a wild Mentally Talented body thief, he may need to steal strands of his victim's hair to sap away her morality.

Dice Pool: Wits + Manipulation versus Resolve + Composure (extended and contested)

Duration: Permanent. Each roll represents one week of effort.

Possible Modifiers: Victim is a relative (+2,) caster has high Humanity (-1 for each dot over five)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails. The subject is immune to the power for one year.

Failure: Add no successes to the total.

Success: Once the total number of successes exceeds twice the subject's Willpower, the victim loses one dot of Humanity.

Exceptional Success: No additional effect, beyond the additional successes.

Note: Consider the use of this power a sin against Morality 2.

Sleight of Hand (....)

Effect: The world is rarely what it seems, and it doesn't take several stolen lifetimes to see that. To body thieves who have manifested this talent the difference between what you see and what you don't see is just a matter of practice. The thief in question need only put her hands on a pair of inanimate objects, and

if the power activates successfully, one object appears to be the other and vice versa. For example, a clever thief puts his briefcase down on the ground between herself and another passenger on the train. With use of this power, her briefcase appears to belong to the man next to her, and his appears to be hers, then it's just a matter of knocking them both over, grabbing the one that appears to be hers and make off with the stranger's things. A young artist walks into a museum with a sketch pad under his arm, and with a little leaning on the wall, he switches his pad with a one-of-a-kind oil painting under his arm and he walks out without a single witness.

Beyond the specific needs of thieves like the Archer Family to have personal items of their targets, this ability has a myriad of uses. Stealing a wallet is small time, but being able to lift a laptop with a room full of people certain that the thief wasn't you can go a long way to setting up a new life in a new body. If it isn't nailed down and the thief has a good enough replacement, she can walk out the door with her prize with no one the wiser.

Dice Pool: Wits + Subterfuge, minus the highest Resolve of all witnesses

Duration: One scene

Possible Modifiers: Items are similar in appearance (+2), witnesses expect a trick (-2), each level of Size difference between the two (-2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails, and all possible witnesses feel something weird, as if they all were possessed of the Unseen Sense Merit for the turn.

Failure: No effect. The items remain as they were.

Success: The caster simultaneously touches two objects. If successful, the two items switch appearances. For the remainder of the scene, appearances suggest the two items switched places. Any mundane scrutiny will suggest that an item is the other. Only mystical scrutiny can pierce the temporary illusion. The only limitation is that objects gain no additional functions and are no more durable than they were before. A yardstick disguised as a rifle can't fire and is easy to break. At the end of the scene, the objects revert.

Exceptional Success: The items remain switched for one full day.

Steal Sense (•••)

Effect: With the right skill or ability, even the most intangible of things can be stolen. With this Merit, the body thief is able to reach out to a victim and rob them of sight, hearing, taste or any basic sense. In fact, in the case of knowledgeable thieves, even senses that are neither obvious nor mundane are fair game. Among all kinds of thieves, robbing a victim of their senses is a common practice since the benefits

for the thief are as strong as the hindrances to the victim. Among the Magically Talented, rituals that involve using puppets or dolls are common, whereas the Mentally Talented are considerably less flamboyant. The caster must be able to either clearly see the target or have a sympathetic connection to him in order to steal a sense.

Dice Pool: Wits + Empathy versus Resolve

Duration: One scene

Possible Modifiers: The sense is not one possessed by the caster (-2), the sense is supernatural in nature (-3)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails. Sensory overload causes the caster a -2 penalty on all perception-related rolls for the remainder of the scene.

Failure: The power fails.

Success: The caster achieves more successes than the victim does. Before the roll, the caster must select one targeted sense to steal from the victim. The victim loses the sense for the scene. The caster finds her perceptions heightened. When making any roll pertaining to that sense, the caster can substitute the victim's traits for her own and may roll all rolls with that sense twice, taking the best of the two results. If the sense is supernatural in nature, the caster must use her traits to utilize the stolen sense. This power can steal a person's Unseen Sense Merit for a scene. The caster must know that the victim has the Merit before the roll is attempted.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the stolen sense lasts a whole day.

Theft of the Sublime (•••••)

Effect: To the other denizens of the World of Darkness, this is possibly the most dreaded and dangerous power body thieves possess next to or possibly including their ability to swap bodies. With this unique ability, the thief is able to rob a supernatural being of the very talents that make them inherently what they are. A thief does not need to be intimately familiar with what it is the supernatural in question is capable of, it takes merely an estimate of what they should be able to do to draw out the gift. Witnessing the power in use and an Intelligence + Occult roll will suffice.

Manifestation of this ability among a society of thieves who recognize it for what it is tends to carry with it a certain amount of esteem as many consider it the pinnacle of their craft, magical or otherwise. Those aware of the power still fear those with it, as their own supernatural skills are not exempt from this theft, including the unique specifics of their own body swapping powers. The caster must be able to either clearly see the target or have a sympathetic connection to her in order to steal a supernatural power.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Occult versus Resolve + Supernatural Advantage

Duration: One scene

Possible Modifiers: The caster is familiar with the power targeted (+2), the caster has never seen the power before (-2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails; the victim is aware of the caster's intentions and identity.

Failure: The power fails.

Success: The caster chooses one supernatural power possessed by the victim. For the remainder of the scene, the victim loses access to the power and the caster gains access to it. If the power requires an activation cost (Vitae, Essence, Mana, et cetera,) the caster must pay this cost in Willpower. At the Storyteller's discretion, some powers may not be available to a body thief. Examples include powers that necessitate a dead body to function. As well, at the Storyteller's discretion this Merit may allow the theft of an inherent ability, such as a werewolf's regeneration. If there is a question as to what this power can or cannot work on, the default answer should be "no."

Exceptional Success: As above, but the power is stolen for one full day.

Unobtrusiveness (••)

Effect: Few thieves get far in their careers as the center of attention, doing their deeds in broad daylight with an audience. Some do, but that's another matter entirely. For the body thief, staying hidden and acting with subtlety can be the difference between escaping to the next lifetime and death or perhaps imprisonment as a lunatic. The thief who develops this ability has learned to excel in going unnoticed, blending and becoming a part of the background. This is not any form of invisibility, not even as much as the ability to create a fake invisibility by forcing others to ignore you. This power is simply the ability to be utterly uninteresting and avoid notice. Even on a successful roll, victims in the area will still be able to see the thief, they would simply think nothing ill of their presence. In a crowded restaurant, who notices the extra busboy rushing from table to table to keep things clean, and who would take notice of said busboy leaning over the table to take something from it? In a club full of club kids bumping into each other in a throng, what's one more club kid?

In essence, this is not so different from donning a good disguise and acting unobtrusive. Though this is every bit as supernatural ability as the others listed in this section, as such a Storyteller should take that into account.

Dice Pool: Resolve + Stealth

Duration: One scene

Suggested Equipment: Inconspicuous clothing (+1), a crowd (+1), bright lights (-1), clothing that doesn't fit environment (-2)

Possible Modifiers: Active pursuit (-2), Caster has Striking Looks (-1 or -2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails. The caster is unaware of the failure.

Failure: The power fails. The caster is aware that she has failed, and can attempt again.

Success: If successful, this power's successes subtract from any rolls to locate the caster.

Exceptional Success: In addition to the increased successes, the caster also enjoys a +2 benefit to any action where visibility may be a complication, such as pickpocketing.

Vitality Drain (••••)

Effect: This ability is the most primitive and primordial manifestation of the body thief's talent. It takes the stuff of life from the target and gives it to the thief, reflecting the parasitic relationship between thieves and their victims.

In the case of Vitality Draining, there is no one social group that prefers it, although many hesitate to use it as it tends to manifest in such a flashy and over-the-top-manner that it risks exposing the thief to unwanted attention from the common people and monster hunters alike. This is not a subtle power; the victim of this power grows noticeably ill or weak while the thief in question grows empowered. (A Wits + Medicine roll allows an observer of the power to notice something amiss.) In the cases of thief and victim who are already injured, wounds might exacerbate or deepen on the victim's face before closing up on the thief's face a moment after. The caster must be able to either touch the target or have a sympathetic connection to steal the target's vitality.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Medicine versus Stamina

Duration: One day

Possible Modifiers: Victim is sleeping (+2)

Roll Results

Dramatic Failure: The power fails and the caster takes one lethal wound.

Failure: The power fails.

Success: Reduce the victim's Health trait by one dot for the next day. The caster gains one dot of Health for the next day. The caster can only benefit from a number of extra Health dots equal to her unmodified Stamina at one time. A victim can only be victim to this power once at a given time.

Exceptional Success: As above, except the victim loses two dots of Health, and the caster gains two. This can exceed the limit a thief can benefit from by one.

Willpower Drain (•••••)

Effect: There is nothing to which a thief will not stoop when it comes to survival, and once one has tasted immortality, even with the limitations presented to the body thief, little seems unreasonable on the quest for unending life. With this power, a thief has mastered the ability to drain away the very will of their target, making them pliable and weak in the face of any other attacks the thief might later inflict.

In some cases, like in the case of the Seekers of Knowledge, this Drain is part of an act of devoted surrender to a greater cause, and indeed, a charming or charismatic thief can convince her target that being subjected to this assault is part of a higher calling or maybe simply an act of love. Not all practices of Willpower Drain are as seemingly benevolent. A thief could just as easily strap a victim down to a chair, pull a chair up across from her and start bar-raging her with this assault; this technique is rarely pleasant for the victim and it is common for other more mundane torture to accompany its practice. The caster must be able to either touch the target or

have a sympathetic connection with him to steal his Willpower. If this power is instilled in an amulet, the wearer also cannot regain any Willpower for as long as she wears the amulet.

Dice Pool: Intelligence + Presence versus Resolve + Composure

Duration: Instant

Possible Modifiers: Target believes she is willing (+2), no eye contact (-2)

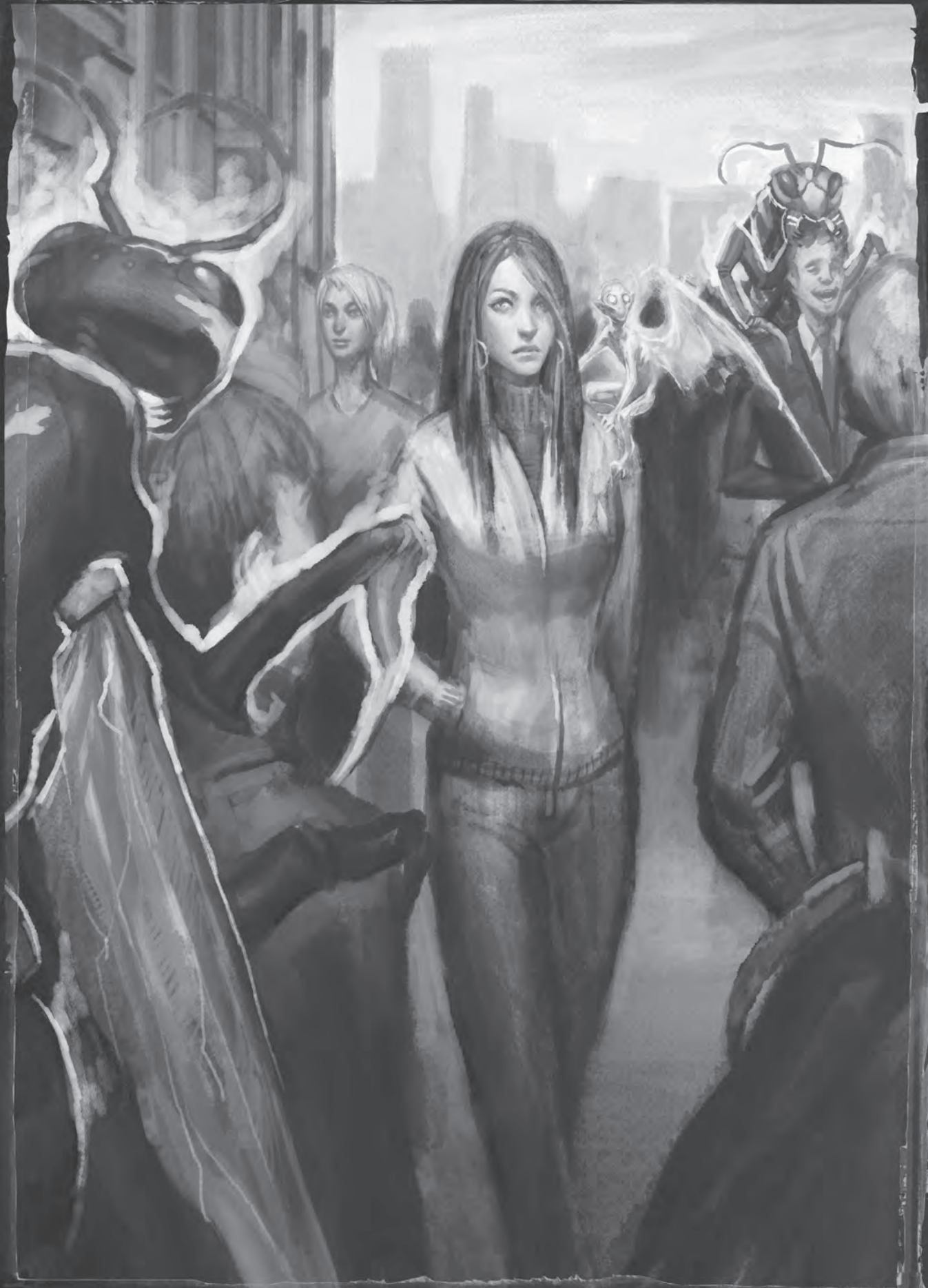
Roll Results

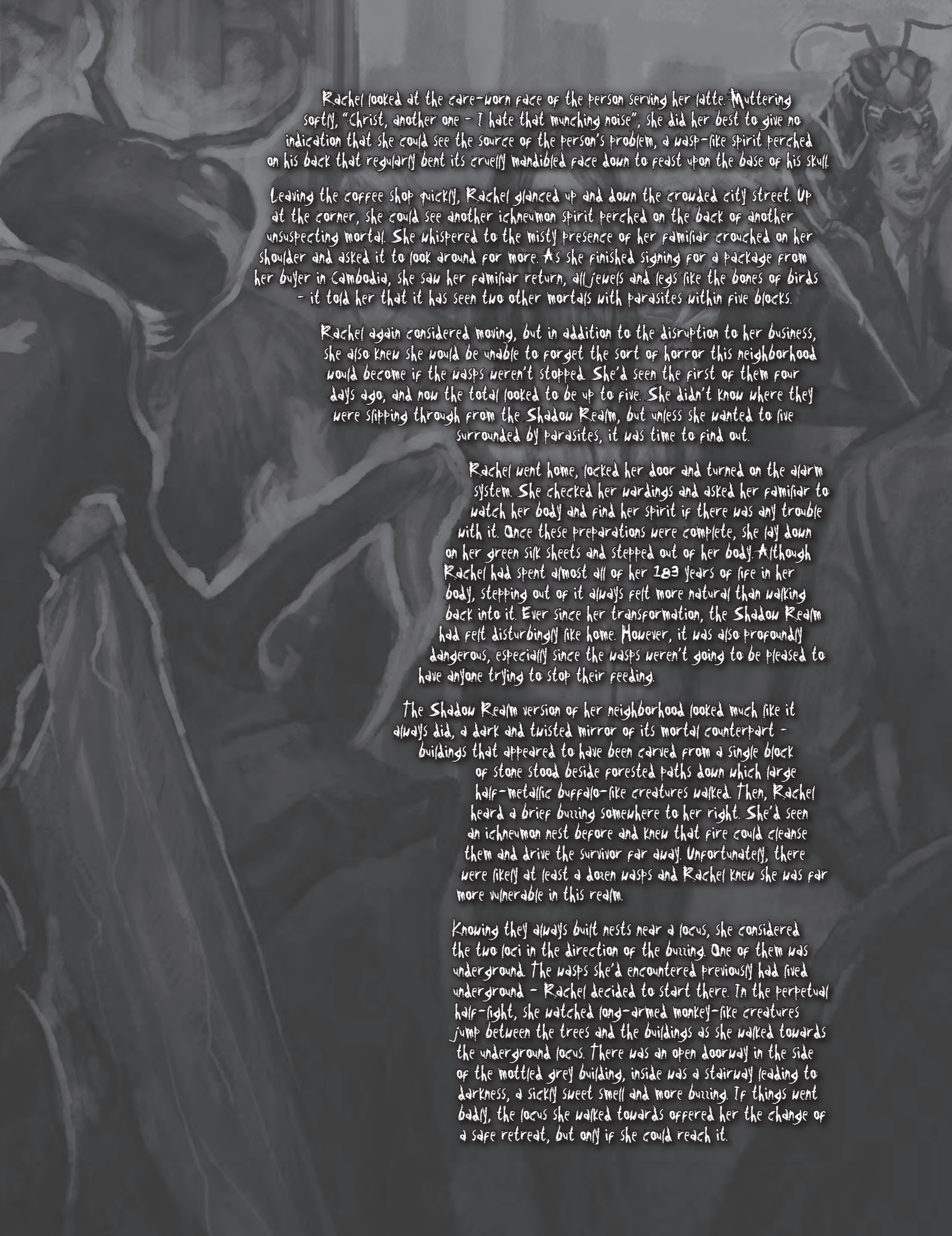
Dramatic Failure: The power fails and the caster loses a point of Willpower and cannot use this power for one full day.

Failure: The power fails.

Success: The caster achieves more successes than the target. For each success in excess of the victim's, the victim loses one Willpower point. If the target is reduced to zero Willpower with this ability, she becomes listless and devoid of all will or volition until she regains at least one point of Willpower.

Exceptional Success: As above, but the caster also gains one Willpower point, not to exceed his maximum.





Rachel looked at the care-worn face of the person serving her latte. Muttering softly, "Christ, another one - I hate that munching noise", she did her best to give no indication that she could see the source of the person's problem, a wasp-like spirit perched on his back that regularly bent its cruelly mandibled face down to feast upon the base of his skull.

Leaving the coffee shop quickly, Rachel glanced up and down the crowded city street. Up at the corner, she could see another ichneumon spirit perched on the back of another unsuspecting mortal. She whispered to the misty presence of her familiar crouched on her shoulder and asked it to look around for more. As she finished signing for a package from her buyer in Cambodia, she saw her familiar return, all jewels and legs like the bones of birds - it told her that it has seen two other mortals with parasites within five blocks.

Rachel again considered moving, but in addition to the disruption to her business, she also knew she would be unable to forget the sort of horror this neighborhood would become if the wasps weren't stopped. She'd seen the first of them four days ago, and now the total looked to be up to five. She didn't know where they were slipping through from the Shadow Realm, but unless she wanted to live surrounded by parasites, it was time to find out.

Rachel went home, locked her door and turned on the alarm system. She checked her wardings and asked her familiar to watch her body and find her spirit if there was any trouble with it. Once these preparations were complete, she lay down on her green silk sheets and stepped out of her body. Although Rachel had spent almost all of her 183 years of life in her body, stepping out of it always felt more natural than walking back into it. Ever since her transformation, the Shadow Realm had felt disturbingly like home. However, it was also profoundly dangerous, especially since the wasps weren't going to be pleased to have anyone trying to stop their feeding.

The Shadow Realm version of her neighborhood looked much like it always did, a dark and twisted mirror of its mortal counterpart - buildings that appeared to have been carved from a single block of stone stood beside forested paths down which large half-metallic buffalo-like creatures walked. Then, Rachel heard a brief buzzing somewhere to her right. She'd seen an ichneumon nest before and knew that fire could cleanse them and drive the survivor far away. Unfortunately, there were likely at least a dozen wasps and Rachel knew she was far more vulnerable in this realm.

Knowing they always built nests near a locus, she considered the two loci in the direction of the buzzing. One of them was underground. The wasps she'd encountered previously had lived underground - Rachel decided to start there. In the perpetual half-light, she watched long-armed monkey-like creatures jump between the trees and the buildings as she walked towards the underground locus. There was an open doorway in the side of the mottled grey building, inside was a stairway leading to darkness, a sickly sweet smell and more buzzing. If things went badly, the locus she walked towards offered her the chance of a safe retreat, but only if she could reach it.

Chapter Three: The Purified

There once lived
a man who claimed
to have discovered
the secret of

There once lived a man
who claimed to
have discovered the
secret of immortality.
A Daoist priest decided
to seek him out in order
to be his disciple.
When he reached
the immortal's abode,
he discovered that
the man was dead.
The priest was greatly
disappointed and
left immediately
in great despair.

Now why was
the priest disappointed?
Was it because
the man had departed
from this life?
But to become immortal,
one must first die.

— Traditional Chinese
folktale, translated by
Raymond Van Over

Traditional
Chinese folktale,
translated by

Raymond Van Over

Prolonging life beyond that of normal mortals is difficult and risky. It is also always extremely uncertain. Being shot or run over by a truck still leaves most would-be immortals exceedingly and permanently dead. In most cases, the ability to live for 500 years doesn't mean that the immortal isn't vulnerable to sufficiently bad natural disasters or any of the events that anyone who lives sufficiently long is eventually likely to encounter. Some who seek to prolong their lives look beyond methods of simply keeping their bodies young and attempt to find some way to transform themselves into something that is truly deathless. A number of would-be immortals consider vampirism to be such a state, but vampires remain exceptionally vulnerable to both fire and sunlight.

A few mortals learn some of the mysteries of the Shadow Realm and the spirits that inhabit it. Spirits are naturally ageless immortal beings that can also survive the destruction of their ephemeral bodies so long as they retain at least a small amount of the magical energy known as Essence. Mystics and scholars of immortality regularly study spirits, hoping to unlock the secrets of their immortality. Occasionally, a mystic either finds or rediscovers the secret of giving mortals something akin to the immortality of spirits. Those that attempt and survive this risky procedure become beings known as the purified.

The History and Mechanics of Purification

Becoming one of the purified is a complex process and always includes one crucial step — death. If the person has prepared herself correctly, the power of the ritual transforms her mind and her body. Once she is dead, her mind successfully makes its way back to her body. When her mind re-enters her body, she becomes one of the purified. In this state, her mind has been transmuted into a more rarified and enduring state, as well as being forever tied to the mysterious Shadow Realm. Even more importantly, her body has become ageless and can be easily re-animated by her mind if it is ever killed again.

Mind, Soul and Spirit

The process of becoming one of the purified involves a character projecting her spiritual essence outside of her body and having it transformed in the Shadow Realm. While this essence is referred to as the character's mind, it actually consists of her mind and her soul, both of which are transformed when she becomes one of the purified.



No records exist of the first instance of someone attaining this state, but it was almost certainly a fortunate accident. The simplest, if most unreliable method of Purification is almost certainly the way this process occurred the first time. The individual must first spend many months, or years practicing meditation and various other forms of mystical practice, which often include various sorts of Thaumaturgy (see **Second Sight**). Once the person is skilled in these techniques, they step into the Shadow Realm on a locus. This can be accomplished through the use of some external means like a powerful relic, the aid of a spirit or mage or simply by finding a verge that allows an ordinary mortal to physically walk across the Gauntlet between the mortal world and the various ephemeral realms.

The final part of this process requires the individual to die exceedingly swiftly while physically in the Shadow Realm. If everything goes perfectly, the person's body reappears, quite dead, in the mortal world and a few days later, the person's mind returns to her body, transformed by its experience. Then the individual returns to life and now has an immortal body. Unfortunately, in addition to this method almost always requiring the individual to commit suicide, it is also exceedingly risky. If the person has not prepared sufficiently, if they are not directly on the locus, or if in dying they accidentally return to the mortal world, this

ritual is actually nothing more than a complex method of committing suicide. It is very rarely attempted and succeeds far less often.

Two other methods of purification exist that are both far more commonly used. They are known as the *inner path* and the *outer path*. To use the inner path, the character must meditate and spiritually prepare himself for many months or years. Then, at least one assistant must begin special ritual preparations as the character is either dying or preparing to kill himself. After the character's death, the assistant must continue these rituals, painting symbols on the person's corpse, dressing it in special garment and placing the corpse in a locus. Once these preparations are complete, the assistant performing these rituals must meditate, pray or chant until the sun next sets or rises.

The outer path requires no meditation or spiritual disciplines, but the character must formulate and then make a special elixir, using various ingredients, including several deadly toxins as well as his own blood. Devising the correct formula requires months or years of work, and actually creating the elixir is almost as difficult. The would-be immortal must do both himself, although he can be assisted by others. Then, he must drink the elixir. This method allows for no missteps in the formulation and no trials runs. The elixir is a deadly poison as well as a catalyst to immortality.

The elixir is a toxicity 7 toxin that affects the imbiber within 5 minutes of drinking it, delivering the listed damage once a minute until the target is dead. The elixir poisons any who drink it, but if it is properly made and is consumed by the person who formulated and made it, then it also transforms the character's mind and soul as well as temporarily transforming the character's body into a locus. If the character is using the outer path, he need not have his body moved to a locus. If prompt medical intervention saves the character's life, the elixir has no supernatural effect upon the character; it must kill the imbiber to make him immortal.

Regardless of the method used, the result is the same. These preparations and rituals transform the character's mind from an ordinary human mind into something that is connected to the Shadow Realm and that has some degree of kinship with the entities that inhabit it. This transformation also changes the character's body, so that it now hovers between life and death. Until the character's mind returns, her body does not rot, but it also does not require food or water. If examined by a doctor, this body appears to have an exceptionally faint and slow heartbeat and to be in an exceptionally deep coma.

Once the transformation of the character's mind is complete, it is in the Shadow Realm and must make its way back to the character's body. The character's mind often ends up far from the locus where his body is located and must journey for many days. After their first death, the minds of the purified take at least three days to return to their body and may sometimes take several weeks, or on very rare occasions months or years to find their body again. The character's mind cannot see into the mortal world, but it can identify the locus where its body is located. The instant the mind enters this locus, it can easily enter his body and the character seems to miraculously return to life.

Once the character manages to return to his body, her body immediately comes back to life and during this process returns to the peak of health and fitness. In addition to instantly healing all injuries or illnesses, the character's body also now has a physiological age in its early 20s. From that point on, the body of the purified heals more rapidly than normal and completely ceases to age. The purified can also send his mind out of his body and must do so to gather Essence, which he needs to power his various abilities.

If the character's body is ever killed, his mind is again thrown out of his body and sent into the Shadow Realm. By entering any locus, his mind can now automatically reappear in Twilight at the site of his body and use Essence to repair it and return it to life. No matter how badly the body of one of the purified has been damaged, the character can repair and reanimate it with a sufficient expenditure of Essence. The bodies of the purified are truly immortal.

Loci

Loci (singular: locus) are places of spiritual power, where Essence — the food and fuel of spirits — is generated. Almost all loci are centered on some object, like a tree or building that has somehow accumulated spiritual power. Loci are much like watering holes for any spiritual fauna (both in Twilight and on the other side of the Gauntlet). Loci are rated from one to five dots, with four and five-dot loci being exceedingly rare and mostly found in remote and isolated corners of the world or at sites of great spiritual power. The rating of a locus determines not just its power, but also how large an area it affects. A one-dot locus affects an area only a few yards in diameter, while a five-dot locus affects an entire neighborhood, a lake or some similar-sized region. These effects include allowing spirits to hide in their area of effect and producing minor emotional effects in mortals who come within this area. Every locus also generates three points of Essence per rank per day. Spirits are attracted to loci, making them dangerous places to visit, especially since werewolves also often claim them as territory. For more information on loci see **Book of Spirits**, pp. 47-52 or **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 260-264.

Not only don't they age, their bodies also cannot be permanently killed.

However, the minds of the purified are considerably less resistant. When projected outside of their bodies, the minds of the purified can be killed. The character's mind reforms in time, but is exceptionally vulnerable during this lengthy process. Also, if the character's mind is ever drained of all Essence and then destroyed, the purified is forever dead. Both the bodies and the minds of the purified are no more resilient than those of an ordinary mortal. However, while they can be destroyed, purified can recover from almost any attack upon either, rendering them among the most resilient inhabitants of the World of Darkness.

The History & Society of the Purified

No one knows the origins of the first purified, but most of these immortals suspect that early shamans who had been working closely with spirits and the Shadow Realm first discovered their particular form

of immortality. Since verges and other weak-points in the Gauntlet used to be somewhat more common, most purified believe these early shamans and mystics could easily move between the mortal world and the Shadow Realm, both by projecting their minds into the Shadow Realm, and physically entering it through verges. Their explorations of the Shadow Realm and dealings with powerful spirits allowed a few of these early magicians to learn the secrets of purification. However, no one knows anything beyond legends and rumors about these first immortals.

The oldest known purified are only slightly more than 2,000 years old. A few purified claim to be older, but none are able to prove their claims and so most purified who encounter individuals claiming to have lived for 3,000 or more years assume they are either liars or delusional. Although they are almost impossible to destroy in the mortal world, almost all purified regularly travel out of their bodies and into the Shadow Realm. Here, they are far more vulnerable. Eventually even the most careful or paranoid purified is likely to encounter a powerful spirit or some other enemy who is both able to and interested in destroying them. Also, whenever they travel in this and other ephemeral realms, like Twilight or the Underworld, their enemies can capture and imprison the minds of purified and prevent them from returning to their bodies. Rumors abound of purified who have been imprisoned in this fashion for centuries or even millennia. Some purified and mystics who know of them believe ancient tales of djinn or similar beings who are kept in bottles may refer to mortal magicians imprisoning the minds of purified and forcing them to perform various services to obtain their freedom, or perhaps simply to avoid destruction.

The oldest written records of the purification ritual come from two sources: Egypt and China. Magicians from both cultures discovered this process some time during the Bronze Age. Ancient Egyptian mummification was clearly derived from the ritual for purification, but was a debased and fruitless process that did nothing more than preserve the corpse. Almost all of the ancient Egyptian purified were priests and magicians who reserved the accurate techniques of purification for themselves and a few of their most favored acolytes and companions. In China, the process of purification was derived from Taoist alchemy and is a direct outgrowth of the style of mortal magic known as Taoist Alchemy (*Second Sight*, pp. 94-97). Although most would-be Taoist Alchemists can perform no magic at all, and the vast majority of the rest only learn the secrets of mortal thaumaturgy, a few either discover the secrets of purification on their own or manage to unlock these secrets from hints found in the exceptionally esoteric manuals written by older Chinese purified.

However, Egypt and China are only the first of many places where clever or desperate magicians and

mystics discovered this process. Hints and rumors of the purification process can be found all across the world, from the hermetic papyri of Hellenistic Greece, to various forbidden yoga manuals from India and few of the most obscure Arabic magical texts. Today, new purified come from all across the world and the older purified who have survived to the modern day are an equally diverse lot.

This ritual sometimes fails even if all preparations are perfect and almost always fails if any of the preparations are done incorrectly. Because performing this ritual involves dying, the fact of these failures means that many occultists regard the purification ritual as utterly fraudulent. Also, because it transformed the magician's mind and allowed them to potentially avoid death forever, almost all religions considered this ritual to be blasphemous and utterly forbidden. As a result, the vast majority of the purified learned of this ritual through obscure hints in forbidden texts or from a mentor.

Mentors

Every century, a handful of daring mortals discover the purification ritual through their own researches. Others locate old books or bribe ancient spirits into revealing the secrets of purification. However, most purified obtain immortality because they are taught the secrets of doing so by an older purified or occasionally by a spirit who offered the secret of this ritual to them. This tutelage is exceedingly useful because the mentor can both explain the details of the ritual and, if the mentor has a physical body, he can also either perform the necessary preparations once the character has died or help create the elixir. Most who succeed in returning their minds to their bodies and actually becoming one of the purified learn this ritual from an older purified or a spirit.

The bond between a purified and a mentor who is also one of the purified can be powerful, especially since both individuals usually live for many centuries or potentially even longer. Purified are extremely selective about who they share their knowledge of immortality with. Most purified only ever help one or two mortals attempt to become immortal. In part, this is because all but the most inexperienced purified know that they are helping to create another immortal with whom they may have to interact for many centuries to come. Also, a significant percentage of those who attempt to become one of the purified fail. Even with the help of a mentor who has already attained this state, almost one in six mortals who attempt to become purified die in the attempt. Any purified who attempts to help someone else become immortal knows there is a good chance she is simply helping this person to commit suicide.

Other purified have far stranger mentors. Some powerful spirits understand the secrets of purification



and share them with mortals. Occasionally, a mortal mystic or magician bests a powerful spirit in some contest, saves the spirit from destruction or otherwise cause the spirit to owe them a large debt that the spirit repays by offering the gift of immortality. More often, a spirit offers knowledge of this ritual to a mortal occultist who has found a way to contact them.

While actual friendships between mortals and spirits are exceedingly rare, spirits can learn to respect and value mortal magicians; sometimes, a spirit and a mortal form an alliance that is mutually beneficial and lasts years or even decades. In such cases, spirits sometimes offer their mortal ally a chance for immortality in order to keep them around. In addition, most spirits understand that offering this to a mortal will cause them to feel deeply indebted to the spirit. The spirit not only gets to keep a valuable ally, but this ally is now both deeply indebted to the spirit and unavoidably involved in the complex politics of the Shadow Realm.

Other spirits seek pawns instead of allies and contact mortals who are either elderly or seriously ill. The spirit offers this mortal knowledge of the purification ritual in return for swearing allegiance to the spirit. Usually, these mortals have no knowledge of the supernatural. Some believe they are being given a gift by a divine being, but most are convinced they are making a contract with some demonic power, where they are trading their soul and their service for eternal life. Often, this later interpretation proves to be disturbingly accurate.

In a very few cases, spirits share the details of the purification ritual with mortals for no known reason. Sometimes, a spirit simply wishes a particular mortal to become immortal. Most purified suspect that spirits occasionally offer unsuspecting mortals this knowledge as part of some long range and highly esoteric plan.

The Society of the Purified

Purified are among the oldest beings in the World of Darkness. The eldest often become exceptionally strange and have increasingly little in common with mortals. Many younger purified believe that spending too much time in the Shadow Realm eventually changes older purified into something closer in mind and outlook to a spirit possessing a human body than anything that remotely resembles even an immortal human. A few of the younger purified even believe that many older purified are no longer human, and that somehow their minds have been altered or perhaps simply devoured and replaced by powerful spirits.

Regardless of the truth about their existence, the purified have no large-scale organization, but eventually newly created purified encounter one another in the mortal world or the Shadow Realm. More often, purified are introduced to each other by mutual acquaintances. Most purified know at least half a dozen others of their kind and some know several dozens or more.

In the mortal world, most purified are relatively cordial to one another, since they are well aware that they cannot do anything more than temporarily kill one another here. When purified meet in the Shadow Realm, the situation is somewhat different. Many purified either work for or have close alliances with various powerful spirits, and rivalry between powerful spirits is endemic in the Shadow Realm. Usually when two purified meet for the first time, each wonders what alliances or ties to powerful spirits the other has. Until they learn more, each wonders if they have met a treasured ally or a bitter enemy.

Recognition and Discovery

In the mortal world, purified must make a significant effort to find one another. They are outwardly indistinguishable from mortals. Unless introduced to one another by someone who knows that they are both immortal, the most common way for two purified to recognize one another in the mortal world is that one of them is careless and reveals personal knowledge of some long ago time. Others reveal themselves by reacting to the presence of a spirit or other being that ordinary mortals cannot see.

Purified with exceptionally keen memories occasionally encounter individuals they last saw many decades or centuries ago and thus learn that the person is immortal. Alternately, some purified seeking others of their kind place cryptic personal ads online or in newspapers, hoping that at least some of those who respond will be other purified. Like many other immortal or long-lived beings, most purified learn considerable caution and approach others of their kind with extreme care. However, in the mortal world they also know that the risk of anything more than temporary death is very low and so they can afford to take a few sensible chances.

However, in the Shadow Realm, the sight of another human form immediately means that the purified has encountered either a lost mortal, a magician capable of visiting the Shadow Realm in either mind or body, or another one of her kind. Since visitors from the mortal world to the Shadow Realm are rare, the odds of any human they see being another purified is relatively high. However, the risks of contact are also far greater. Not only can spirits capture or slay the mind of one of the purified, but almost all purified who spend large amounts of time in the Shadow Realm have close ties with several spirits and some work directly for exceedingly powerful spirits.

When one purified encounters another of her kind in the Shadow Realm, she risks meeting someone who is allied with the mortal enemies of her allies. Most purified who encounter one another in the Shadow Realm completely refuse to discuss their business in this realm or who they are working for or with. The vast majority of purified understand the reasons for not providing this information and regard anyone who asks such questions as dangerously rude.

This lack of discussion of activities in the Shadow Realm also extends to occasions when purified meet in the mortal world. Two purified who have known one another for many decades may have absolutely no idea of what spirits the other has alliances with or what the other does in the Shadow Realm. Discussions of activities in the mortal world are generally considered safe, but only purified who are exceedingly close friends or allies journey to the Shadow Realm together or discuss their activities there. While a number of purified have ephemeral sanctums or fortresses in the Shadow Realm, being invited to the sanctum of another purified is a far more intimate invitation than being invited into their home in the mortal world, and either giving or accepting such an invitation is a mark of great trust.

Relations With Other Supernatural Creatures

Like most other immortals and near immortals in the World of Darkness, the purified eventually run into a wide variety of other supernatural beings. Over time, it's almost inevitable that purified and other long-lived beings who live in the same city encounter one another. However, they often have little in common.

Supernatural Changes in the Purified

Purified cannot become either a vampire or a ghoul and can never Awaken as a mage. If a mage becomes one of the purified, she immediately and irrevocably ceases to be Awakened. Purified who were ghouls or wolf-blooded also lose their ghoul or wolf-blooded template upon becoming purified. Their blood also tastes inhumanly alien to vampires and provides vampires with no nourishment. The character also loses all psychic powers or thaumaturgy rituals upon becoming one of the purified. In addition, purified immediately become sterile and thus are totally incapable of either bearing or fathering children.

Ghosts

The one factor all purified more than a few decades old have in common is that they have buried many mortal friends, lovers and relatives. A few of these many dead remain as ghosts, a process made more likely because any ghost who was close to the purified in life has a fetter that remains in the mortal world. Some purified find ghosts to be both sad and disturbing, and so they avoid them. They take care to ward their dwellings against intrusions by former friends and loved ones and avoid visiting the underworld.

Others rejoice at having the chance to continue to spend time with their departed loved ones. Many purified welcome beloved ghosts who come to visit and take pleasure in the fact that they can touch them by visiting Twilight. A few purified become obsessed with one or more ghosts, learning to visit the underworld and spending more time with these ghosts than with the living. Some ghosts welcome these attentions, others are jealous of the purified and their immortality and this envy can easily turn to hatred.

Vampires

Most vampires have no interest in and no ability to interact with spirits or the Shadow Realm. Also, the blood of the purified contains no nourishment to vampires and they cannot be turned into vampires or ghouls. Without any ability to easily control, transform, or slay them, most vampires leave the purified alone.

However, the purified can be useful spies and occasionally possess information about other supernatural beings, so a few older vampires have contacts with one of the purified. Also, because they have little to do with vampiric power-struggles, occasionally an older vampire who is deliberately planning to enter torpor asks one of the purified to watch over her possessions and financial interests.

Werewolves

Relations between werewolves and the purified are often complex and occasionally violent. Both types of beings regularly go back and forth between the mortal world and the Shadow Realm and so encountering one another is inevitable. The nature of these interactions depends largely upon what the purified is doing. Some purified ally themselves with spirits. Those who have totems may get along well with werewolves, especially if a particular pack shares a similar or related totem. On a few rare occasions, one of the purified has allied itself with a pack of werewolves and even shared the same totem.

More often, the purified act as the servants for various powerful spirits. The relationship between these spirits and the werewolves is crucial to how the purified get along with werewolves. Such relationships can be anything from the purified acting as a mysterious messenger for one of the Lunes to the agent of a spirit lord that regards werewolves as its greatest foe and is intent on controlling or subtly infiltrating the mortal world.

Many werewolves distrust all purified and all are at least somewhat suspicious of immortal beings that operate almost as freely as werewolves in both the mortal world and the Shadow Realm. However, there are also purified who are allied to one or more packs of werewolves. A few purified were once wolf-blooded and learned about the Shadow Realm through their werewolf kin.

Mages

Few mages know about the purified, and most purified are more than happy to keep it that way. Most purified know of mortal magic (see **Second Sight**, pp. 68-121), but understand little of the mysteries of Awakened magic or the supernal realms. To the purified, mages are powerful and mysterious individuals with a strange mythology and powers well beyond those of the purified. The fact that even a moderately skilled mage can trap one of the purified out of his body or place his mind in a cage is more than sufficient reason for the purified to avoid these beings.

Most purified also know little of the Abyss or its inhabitants. The fact that some mages occasionally interact, willingly or not, with the terrible denizens of this realm is yet another reason that the purified avoid them. A few of the purified have studied mages and a handful have gotten to know one or two moderately well. However, most know little more than fearful rumors about mages. They keep their distance and do their best not to attract the attention of mages.

Purified Characters and Special Rules

The purified are characters who have consciously forsaken their mortality and who now live in a world surrounded by spirits and other intangible entities that the mortals around them cannot perceive. Although purified characters now inhabit immortal bodies, they had to die to accomplish this feat. If they are not careful, their humanity can slip gradually away as they spend increasing amounts of time in the company of various inhuman beings. This section presents rules for creating purified characters. These rules are for players who want to portray one and Storytellers who need an important addition to their supporting cast.

Special Concerns for Creating Purified Characters

For the most part, creating a purified character works just like creating any other mortal character with the **World of Darkness Rulebook**. Purified begin life as mortals, with the same spread of Attributes, Skills, Merits and advantages. They are subject to the same rules of Morality, and they're at least as open to gaining derangements as any mortal. However, they are also immortal beings with close ties to the Shadow Realm.



Creating a Purified Character

Use the character-creation rules from the **World of Darkness Rulebook** — summarized on pp. 34-35.

Add the purified supernatural template during Step Five.

Purified must take at least one dot of the Occult Skill.


Choose six additional dots in skills, including at least one additional dot of Occult Skill.

Choose four dots of purified Siddhi or Spirit Numina.

Continue on to Steps Six and Seven, choosing Merits and figuring out the character's advantages.

Add three additional dots in Merits (for a total of 10 Merit dots).

Purified use the Morality trait. Purified Morality starts at 7.



Step One: Character Concept

This stage of character creation represents the core of who and what the character is. All later decisions in the process of character creation should be based on this concept.

Many people want to live forever, but your character managed to achieve this feat. How did she manage to succeed where others failed? What drove her to kill herself in the hope of being reborn as an immortal? Her decision to become one of the purified was almost certainly a deliberate and conscious choice, unless someone or something tricked her into it. Also, regardless of her motivations, she spent a minimum of many months, and possibly many years learning various rigorous arcane mystical disciplines. She either meditated daily and studied the occult or she learned various alchemical arts and practiced distilling all manner of noxious substances.

She may have even learned thaumaturgy (see **Second Sight**). Then, she killed herself in a particularly exotic manner, drank a magical poison or took her own life in some other manner and made certain that someone would prepare her body using exotic and precise rituals. Which of these options happened to your character? Who helped her become one of the purified and why did they do this? If your character is not too old, the person or people who helped with her transformation may still be alive. Determining

her current relation to them will be exceedingly important. Alternately, perhaps she has an ally who is an older purified or a spirit that helped her transcend her mortality.

As with all supernatural beings, one of the key parts of working out the character concept for one of the purified is understanding who she was both before and after she became immortal. How did the character's experiences in the Shadow Realm change her? How many times has her body died since she became one of the purified? Also, you need to decide how she balances spending time in the mortal world with spending time in the Shadow Realm.

Steps Two through Four: Select Attributes, Skills and Skill Specialties

Purified receive the same basic spread of Attributes, Skills and Skill Specialties as every other mortal World of Darkness character. Because of their occult studies, all purified must take at least one dot in the Occult Skill. Your character may have also studied and prepared for her transformation in other ways, but to accomplish it at all, she had to have some knowledge of the occult.

Becoming Immortal

These rules are designed to create a character who has already become one of the purified and who has spent some time in this state, but is not either exceedingly old or exceptionally experienced at balancing his mundane and supernatural experiences. Such characters are assumed to be somewhat active individuals who are no more than 100 years old. Alternately, the character could be someone who is up to 200 years old who has either led an especially reclusive life or who has spent much of her time going about her daily life. In the latter case, it's worth considering what has caused the character to take up a more active and adventurous lifestyle. If the player and Storyteller wish to create a character that has either just become one of the purified or who is older and more experienced than this, see the sidebar on the following page..

Step Five, Six and Seven: Add Purified Template, Determine Advantages and Select Merits

Step Five represents the character becoming one of the purified. The character dies and is reborn as something more than mortal. In the course of her mind learning to find its way back to her body and in the subsequent

experiences the character has had, the character gains six additional dots in Skills, including one additional dot in Occult. The character is free to use the other five skill dots as desired. In addition, the character gains four dots in purified powers known as Siddhi, one dot of which must be spent on the *spirit projection* Siddhi (see p. 106). The other three dots can be from any purified power, or they can each be used to purchase one of the Numina available to the purified (see purchasing spirit Numina, p. 110).

Step Six, determining Advantages, proceeds as normal. Despite their now partially inhuman nature and their immortality, nothing in this step is any different from purified than for ordinary mortals. If desired, Storytellers may allow players with purified characters to trade dots of Morality for experience points during character generation. This trade-in reflects some heinous past behavior the purified engaged in and learned from, but which also scarred her deeply. If this option is used, players may sacrifice one dot of Morality for five experience points, dropping

Creating More or Less Experienced Purified

If the player and the Storyteller wish to create a character that has just become one of the purified, use the above rules, except that the character would only receive one additional dot in the Occult Skill, the spirit projection power (see p. 106), and the basic advantages of being one of the purified. This character would not receive any other dots in powers or additional dots in skills and would only start play with 7 dots in Merits.

If desired, the Storyteller can even start with role-playing the character's transformation from a mortal into one of the purified. If this is the case, then players must decide if the character uses the inner or outer method to become one of the purified. In the first case, the character must have someone to prepare her corpse and make certain that it is not moved from the locus where it resides. In the second, the character must make and drink his elixir and avoid having anyone attempt to revive him. In both cases, the character must avoid being autopsied or embalmed.

To simulate either procedure, the player must make an Intelligence + Occult roll to determine if the procedure was correctly planned and executed. Then, the Storyteller can play out the character having her mind show up in some random point in the Shadow Realm and having to make its way back to the locus where its body resides. The character's mind instinctively knows the direction and approximate distance to this locus. The disadvantage of actually role-playing out the character's transformation into one of the purified is if anything goes wrong, the character dies permanently.

Alternately, some players and some Storytellers will want to create purified characters who have either been exceptionally active or who are considerably older. One of the obvious appeals of playing an immortal character is playing someone who is exceptionally old. There are two ways to accomplish this.

The first option requires no modification to character generation; purified can be held captive in various ways, with the most effective method being imprisoning their mind in the Shadow Realm or perhaps the Underworld. This captivity can last for decades or even centuries, during which time the character will have little chance to gain experience. Alternately, an enemy could have destroyed the mind of the purified, which then took many decades or even several centuries to reform. In a few rare cases, some hostile spirit or magician might have placed the character's body in some form of magical stasis or sleep lasting many centuries. A character that suffered any of these fates could be many hundreds or thousands of years old, but may have only been free and active for less than a century, and so could be generated using the standard character generation rules.

Alternately, the character may have been active for longer than a century and will thus be more experienced than the purified generated by the above rules. The purified can be either individuals who have been exceptionally active, or someone who led a quieter life and who is quite old. The following are rough guidelines for experience points and age.

Average 200-year-old or less active 300-year-old purified: 50 experience points

Average 300-year-old or less active 450-year-old purified: 75 experience points

Average 400-year-old or less active 600-year-old purified: 120 experience points

their Morality as low as five (for a maximum of 10 extra experience points).

In Step Seven, in addition to the normal 7 dots in Merits, purified characters select 3 additional dots in Merits for a total of 10 dots of Merits. These additional dots reflect both the character's greater age and the wider extent of her experiences in both the mortal world and various ephemeral realms like Twilight and the Shadow Realm.

If desired, the player can decide which Merits the character gained before or after she became one of the purified. Because of the transformative effect of dying and becoming one of the purified, they can also gain Merits that are normally innate upon becoming purified. Also, purified have access to additional Merits not normally available to mortals (see purified Merits, p. 110). All Purified Merits automatically include the prerequisite: purified template.

Innate Abilities of the Purified

All purified gain certain innate abilities. The most obvious and important is physical immortality. When a purified returns to life, her body is always in the peak of health. Her body is in all ways identical in both health and appearance to the body of someone in her early 20s and does not age. Also, unless specially treated before the person's death, all scars, tattoos, piercings and other markings vanish without a trace, as the newly purified individual's body is rendered perfect and eternal. Purified who wish to keep a tattoo or a scar must spend a point of Willpower and draw a special sigil upon this mark, either upon getting the tattoo or injury or when becoming purified in the first place. If the character doesn't spend the Willpower, the scar, tattoo or other mark vanishes upon becoming purified or within a few days of getting it.

Healing

The character's body also actively attempts to return itself to its initial pristine state. Purified are immune to all diseases, gain a +2 bonus to resist all poisons, and heal significantly more rapidly than normal humans. They heal at a rate of one point Bashing damage every five minutes. They heal Lethal damage at a rate of one point every four hours and Aggravated damage heals at a rate of one point every 12 hours. Purified cannot take any Merit that speeds their healing, including *Quick Healer* (*World of Darkness*, p. 113).

Other Abilities

Purified also gain innate abilities relating to their new existence between the mortal world and the Shadow World. All purified can automatically see and hear any spirits, ghosts or other beings in Twilight. Not only can purified see ghosts and spirits in Twilight as easily as they can see ordinary people, they cannot choose not to see such beings. Also, because of the dual nature of their existence, any being in Twilight who sees one of the purified automatically

knows that the character can see and hear them. This ability often becomes an exceptionally mixed blessing. Spirits, and even more commonly, ghosts occasionally approach purified and ask, threaten or beg for aid.

In addition to being able to see beings in Twilight, purified also automatically know the inhuman language of spirits. They can understand and speak to all spirits as easily as they can understand and speak to someone fluent in their native tongue. The only limitation on this ability is that purified who speak to spirits while occupying their physical bodies must speak aloud, if only in a whisper. This speech sounds like complicated gibberish to mortals who overhear it, at best it sounds like the incoherent ravings of a lunatic. Purified who wish to avoid attracting attention soon learn to either only speak to spirits when no one else is around or to do so only in a whisper.

Purified also possess a version of the Unseen Sense merit that allows them to sense the presence of any phenomena related to spirits or the Shadow Realm, as well as the active use of all unseen forces. They can sense the use of all supernatural powers, but not the presence of a vampire or werewolf. A successful Wits + Composure roll also allows a purified character to sense the presence of any nearby loci or verges and what emotional resonances they have.

New Advantage: Chi

When they undergo the right of purification, these beings change their minds and their souls to be more like those of the inhabitants of the Shadow Realm, including the ability to manipulate Essence. As they gain in power and experience, the purified gain even greater power over Essence. As part of the purified template, all purified receive one dot of an ability known as Chi, which represents their connection to and power over Essence. Characters can acquire additional dots either by spending experience points or initial Merit dots (see above). Once play begins, additional dots of Chi can only be purchased with experience points.

Effects of Chi

Chi is rated from 1 to 5 dots. As a measure of the spiritual power of the purified, it has the following game effects.

- Chi is added to all rolls to resist all supernatural powers. Chi is a form of supernatural advantage.
- Chi determines how much Essence (see below) the purified can hold onto at one time and how rapidly the character can spend it. See the *Effects of Chi* chart.
- Chi is a measure of the character's power and status in the Shadow Realm. Spirits treat characters with higher Chi as if they were higher level spirits. Spirits with a rank lower than the purified's honorary level treat the character with deference and respect as long as they are not actively hostile to her. See the *Effects of Chi* chart.

Chi	Max Essence/ Max Essence per Turn	Effective Spirit Level
1	6/1	2
2	9/1	2
3	12/2	3
4	15/2	3
5	20/3	4

Essence

Because the purified have their minds and souls transformed into something more like a spirit, they also gain the ability to use Essence just like a spirit can. Using Essence allows the character to:

- Activate any Siddhi that requires Essence.
- Activate any Spirit Numina that the character knows.
- Spend one point of Essence to see from the mortal world into the Shadow Realm or from the Shadow Realm into the mortal world for one Scene.
- Spend one point of Essence to instantly heal one point of bashing or lethal damage. This Essence also instantly stops wounds from bleeding and the character's condition from deteriorating.
- Spend three points of Essence to instantly heal any aggravated wound.
- Spend one point of Essence to heal any single wound, of any sort, in the character's ephemeral body.
- Give Essence to a spirit or ghost to secure its cooperation or to pay for some service.
- Spending an amount of Essence equal to the character's Size allows the character to completely reconstitute her body from ashes or fragments of bone and rot.
- Spending five points of Essence allows the character to reanimate her dead body.

Regaining Essence

Like spirits, the purified cannot create Essence, but must obtain it, either by extracting it from loci or obtaining it from a spirit or another of the purified, either as a gift, or by stealing it from them. Purified can absorb Essence by going to a loci. However, they cannot do so in the mortal world. To obtain Essence, the character must leave her body and enter Twilight or the Shadow Realm. The character then rolls Presence + Wits and adds additional dice equal to the number of dots of the locus. The number of successes rolled equals the number of points of Essence gained.

The amount of Essence that one of the purified can absorb at one time depends upon their Chi. Purified who have additional dots of Chi can absorb additional Essence. Also, within 24 hours, one of the purified can absorb no more than 3 x Rating points of Essence from a single locus.

Purified may also attempt to steal Essence from spirits, ghosts or even each other by making a contested roll of Presence + Resolve + Chi against the target's Presence + Resolve or Power + Resistance + Chi. The winner of the contest steals a number of Essence from the loser equal to the successes scored by the victor. Purified must touch a target to attempt to steal Essence from it. Stealing all of the Essence from a spirit causes it to become dormant and unresponsive. Stealing all the Essence from one of the purified makes him exceptionally vulnerable. Purified can only steal Essence or have Essence stolen from them when they are projecting outside of their body.

Cheating Death and Returning to Life

In addition to healing more rapidly than mortals, the purified are also ageless and to a large degree immortal. Their bodies do not age, and if their body is killed, their mind is automatically sent into the Shadow Realm. Here, it can collect Essence and then use this Essence to gradually heal its body. So long as the mind of a purified still exists, its body literally cannot die. Even if his body is reduced to ash, with sufficient quantities of Essence, the purified can cause the charred fragments to reform and come back to life.

Restoring a body: By spending an amount of Essence equal to her size, the mind of a dead purified can transform the remains of a body that has been reduced to ashes or fragments of bone into a dead but entirely whole corpse. If the body is mostly but not completely intact, a lesser amount of Essence is required. A body that has been allowed to rot for a week would only require one point of Essence to restore. A restored corpse appears freshly dead, but will begin to rot if left. The character need not spend all of this Essence at one time, but her body is not fully restored until all of the requisite Essence has been spent.

Resurrecting a body: If the character's body has either been restored within the last day or if it is relatively intact and has not been dead more than a day, then the character can spend five points of Essence to restore her body to life. Also, if the character spends even one point of Essence on a fully restored corpse, it appears to be in an exceptionally deep coma. In this state, it will not rot and does not require food or water. The character's body remains in this state for one full month for every point of Essence spent on it. As long

as the character's body remains in this state, she can spend the remaining four points of Essence and restore it to life.

Once she has spent five points of Essence, the character is alive again and the character's mind instantly returns to her body. However, the character's

body returns to life badly injured. It has one Health point and the rest of his Health boxes are aggravated. Fortunately, it is also stable and the purified can either heal on his own within a few days or use further Essence or conventional medical treatment to further speed his recovery.

Difficulties in Returning to Life

When one of the purified repairs his body and returns to life, his body remains where most of the remains were found. If the character's body is at the bottom of a lake, when he returns to life, he can likely swim to the surface. However, if the character's body is buried in a coffin or lying at the bottom of the ocean, it will almost certainly die before the character can free himself. There are two ways around this problem. Most purified purchase the *ritual crypt* Merit (see p. 113) so that they can reform their body in a safe environment.

Characters who lack this Merit or whose crypt has been destroyed or despoiled have the alternative of seeking help from either spirits, purified or other supernatural beings. If the character purchases the appropriate Numina, he can even ask ordinary mortals for help. In such cases, the character typically restores but does not resurrect his body and then asks for assistance in moving it. Since he always knows the precise location of his body, he can easily direct his allies to the body so that they can hopefully dig it up or otherwise move it to someplace where the character can safely return to life. Most powerful spirits can easily move a dead body and so many purified have ended up owing such spirits substantial debts in return for moving their corpses from some problematic location.



Vulnerable Spirits

When the mind of one of the purified is separate from its body, it is relatively vulnerable. If the character's ephemeral body is killed, one of two things occurs. If the purified still possesses at least one point of Essence, his mind disperses, but eventually reforms. Depending upon a variety of factors, including both the ferocity of the attack, and various seemingly random features of the Shadow Realm, Twilight or the Underworld, the time needed for the mind of one of the purified to reform can be anything from several weeks to several centuries.

Purified whose minds are destroyed in the Shadow Realm usually reincorporate within a few weeks or months, while those whose minds are destroyed in Twilight or the Underworld reincorporate sometime between a few weeks and a few centuries. In all cases, their mind initially reforms as a small mote of awareness and must begin gathering Essence. Once it has gained an amount of Essence equal to its Willpower, the mind fully reforms and can then reform its body and reinhabit it. When the mind of one of the purified is destroyed, even temporarily, its body seems to actually die and begins to decay unless specially preserved. As a result, most purified whose minds have been destroyed must also rebuild their body from piles of corruption.

Final Death and the Purified

If the mind of a purified is destroyed when it possesses no Essence at all, or if an attacker can drain their ephemeral body of both corpus and Essence, then the purified actually dies and can never return to life. If this happens, its body decays normally. No one knows what happens to the soul of one of the purified after it dies. However, no dead purified has ever left behind a ghost, and there is no evidence that the soul of the purified ends up in the Underworld. Even powerful mages cannot summon the ghost of a dead purified.

Purified Siddhi

Purified can learn various powers. Because of their connection with the Shadow Realm, they can learn some Spirit Numina. In addition, they also possess their own unique powers, known as Siddhi. All Siddhi come in groups of three that must be learned in order. To learn a three-dot Siddhi, purified must first learn the one and two-dot Siddhi in the same group. Purified begin play knowing four dots of powers, which can be either Siddhi or Numina. In all cases, one of these powers must be the *projection* Siddhi *spirit projection* (see p. 106).

Most Siddhi cost one or more points of Essence to activate. If the Siddhi requires more points of Essence

than the character can spend in one turn, then the Siddhi requires multiple turns to activate. The roll to perform the Siddhi is only made and the effects of the Siddhi only manifest during the turn when the last point of Essence needed to activate the Siddhi is spent.

Mystical Connection Table

When purified use their connection to the Shadow Realm to bypass the normal limitations of distance, the most important feature of the location or person they are trying to observe or affect is how familiar the purified is with it. The actual distance between the target and the character is irrelevant. The only factor that matters is the type of mystical connection the character has with the target. It's far easier for one of the purified who is using such a power to spy on or affect objects in a location with which he is intimately familiar than to do the same with some location that the character has only had briefly described to him.

Dice Penalty	Magical Connection Between Caster and Target
-0	<i>Intimate:</i> The purified has a piece of the target's physical substance, such as hair, nail clippings or blood from a person or animal, a leaf or flower from a plant, or a sliver of material from an object or building. Alternately, the character knows the target intimately. Examples include close friends, beloved pets, prized possessions or locations like the character's home or a building the character has visited many times.
-3	<i>Known:</i> The character has a personal possession belonging to the target. Alternately, the character can see the location on live video or hear the target over live audio or the character spent time with the target or visited the location more than once, for at least a few minutes each time.
-5	<i>Acquainted:</i> The character has a photo or a detailed painting of the target or an object that the target once touched or that once resided in the target location. Alternately, the character once met or visited the target.

People, objects or places that are less familiar to the character lack a sufficient mystical connection for the character to be able to use this power to see, or visit them. The character cannot spy on a room that she has only heard a description of or affect a person that she briefly passed on a dark street.

The Gauntlet

The Gauntlet is the mystical barrier that lies between the mortal world and the supernatural realms of the Shadow Realm and the Underworld. The strength of the Gauntlet varies from one place to another. It is often very thin in lonely houses that are believed to be haunted and very thick on well-traveled and well-lit city streets. A very few exotic locations have no Gauntlet at all. These places are called verges, and most are temporary. They might appear at a certain time of the year, for only an hour, and then disappear until the day comes around again next year. It is important to remember that Twilight lies on the same side of the Gauntlet as the mortal world.

Gauntlet Strength

The Strength of the Gauntlet varies from place to place and increases the difficulty of passing through it or using abilities that make use of the nature of the various supernatural realms. The dice rating associated with every strength rating is applied to all rolls to mentally or physically cross the Gauntlet or to see or otherwise sense across the Gauntlet.

Location	Strength	Dice Modifier
Dense urban areas	5	-3
City suburbs & towns	4	-2
Small towns, villages, other built up areas in the countryside	3	-1
Wilderness	2	0
Loci	1	+1
Verge *	0	n/a

* The Gauntlet is nonexistent; any being, including mortals can pass in and out of the Shadow Realm freely, and sometimes inadvertently.

Any material thing that crosses the Gauntlet is transformed instantly to ephemera, the spiritual counterpart of matter. Stepping back over the Gauntlet to the physical world restores material things to matter. Of course, if a traveler was never physical to begin with (as in the case of a spirit), it must remain ephemeral in Twilight. The only way to avoid this is by using a supernatural power that allows it to materialize on the mortal side of the Gauntlet.

Experience Point Costs

Purified use the normal costs for purchasing new traits with experience points. In addition, purified can purchase Chi, additional Siddhi and Numina with experience points.

Trait	Cost
Attribute	New dots x 5
Skill	New dots x 3
Skill Specialty	3
Merit	New dots x 2
Morality	New dots x 3
Chi	New dots x 8
Siddhi	New Dots x 7
Spirit Numina	10
Willpower	8 per dot

Command

Spirits and minds are closely related, and some purified learn to enhance the power of their minds to influence spirits and eventually mortals. Because of their ties to the Shadow Realm, purified find influencing and controlling spirits to be considerably easier than influencing living beings.

Influence Spirit (•)

The purified learns to influence the emotions of spirits.

Cost: none

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Empathy + Chi

Action: Instant

The character can cause a single spirit to feel any desired emotion. This emotion isn't overwhelming, but a spirit that becomes afraid is more likely to either flee if threatened, just as an angry spirit is more likely to attack anyone who annoys it. If desired, purified can use this ability in conjunction with attempts to influence the spirit's behavior. At the player's discretion, each success on this roll can add one additional die to any Social roll he makes when dealing with the target. Alternatively, if this power is used to enhance the effect of existing circumstances, the character can subtract a number of dice equal to the successes rolled from any roll the spirit makes to avoid fleeing in terror or otherwise giving into any emotion that the character is enhancing, if that emotion is a reasonable response to current circumstances. This ability cannot be used to influence werewolves, other purified or any other being that is not a spirit. The character must also be able to clearly see the target to affect it. The emotions produced by this ability fade like any normal emotion.

Influence Beasts and Mortals (••)

The character learns to influence the emotions of both mortals and normal animals. This ability can also be used to affect supernatural creatures with ties to the mortal world, like werewolves, vampires or other purified. This ability can also be used to influence ghosts, because they were once mortals.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize + Chi

The character can now influence the emotions of mortals and similar beings using the same method and rules as for the previous *influence spirit* power, but using the above cost and dice pool. Also, the character can attempt to influence multiple targets with this roll as long as he is interacting with all of them as a group. If the character is speaking to a small group of humans, vampires or ghosts, facing off a pack of wild dogs or performing for a large audience, he can use this power on all of them at once. Attempting to affect multiple targets causes the roll to suffer the following penalty.

Suggested Modifiers for Additional Targets

Modifier	Number of Targets
—	1
–1	2 to 5
–2	6 to 10
–3	11 to 30
–4	more than 30, up to a large audience of several hundred.

Once the character learns this Siddhi, if he spends 1 mote of Essence, he can also attempt to affect multiple spirits at once. In all cases, character must be able to clearly see the target or targets to affect it and all emotions produced by this ability fade like any normal emotion.

Command the Rebellious Spirit (•••)

The character can use this ability to control both spirits and ghosts.

Cost: 2 Essence + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Intimidation + Chi vs. Resistance

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls Resistance automatically

Controlling a spirit or ghost requires a single contested roll between the character and that entity. The character makes the roll while issuing the command, with each success allowing the character to cause the target to perform a single action. Causing a spirit or ghost to flee or to attack a single obvious target only requires a single command. However, telling a spirit to travel to a distant location, steal a specific object and return with it would require three separate commands and thus three successes. How likely the entity is to agree to the order influences how difficult the roll is; asking a ghost to harm a friend or relative it cared for in life might cause as much as a –3 penalty to the roll, while asking a spirit associated with fire to burn down a house might give the character a bonus of as much as +3 to the roll. This control lasts for one scene, unless the character rolls an exceptional success. If that occurs, the control lasts for one full day. This ability cannot be used to influence werewolves, other purified or any other being that is not a ghost or spirit.

Piercing the Distance

The character learns to use his connection to the Shadow Realm to short-circuit distance, first with his perceptions and then with her movement. Using any of these three Siddhi requires an extended roll where the target number is five times the number of dots of the Siddhi being used. This power is also limited by how familiar the character is with the target. Seeing or even walking to a well-known location is relatively easy, while spying on a room the character has only seen once is far more difficult. All three of these Siddhi use the *mystical connection table* (see p. 102) to determine the difficulty of observing or otherwise interacting with a distant person or location. The player should also apply the dice modifiers for Gauntlet Strength based upon the strength of the Gauntlet at the target location. For example, all attempts to observe or travel to a location with a Gauntlet Strength of 4 suffer a –2 dice modifier. This modifier applies to attempting to observe or visit locations on either side of the Gauntlet.

In all cases, the character must concentrate to use this power. Any time the character experiences a significant distraction or attempts to perform any activity that is at all demanding while using this power demands another roll, with the appropriate modifiers for distraction. Failing this roll instantly ends the use of this power, and experiencing a dramatic failure on this roll results in some sort of serious problem like temporary blindness that lasts for a scene.

Distant Vision (•)

The character can see and hear events happening around the target of this power as if she were physically present in this location.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Wits + Investigation + Chi

Action: Extended (target number 5)

To use this power, the character must remain stationary and focus on the desired target. Many purified use objects like crystal balls or mirrors to help focus their concentration. Such tools are not necessary, but can provide up to a +2 bonus on the roll. While concentrating, the character may make rolls every minute. Once the character succeeds in this extended roll, he can see and hear the target. However, he must maintain his concentration to continue to use this power. The character can write or speak normally and can respond to questions, but cannot examine the world around him or take any physical action that is not both simple and very slow. This power can also be used in any realm. If the purified is in the mortal world, he can use it to look at a familiar location in the mortal world or a spirit in the Shadow Realm, just as one of the purified projecting in the Shadow Realm can use it to see a person or place in the mortal world.

Ethereal Presence (••)

Using this ability is almost identical to using *distant vision*, except that in addition to being able to simply observe and hear

the target location, the character can also create an illusory image of himself at this location. This image looks and sounds identical to the character and moves just like the character does. However, it is nothing more than a completely intangible image. Also, while it seems to move like the character, its feet don't actually touch the floor and it often floats a few inches in the air.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Presence + Expression + Chi

Action: Extended (target number 10)

To use this Siddhi, the character must go into a deep trance and make a roll every 10 minutes. While in this trace, he cannot sense his present surroundings, but can see, hear and even smell the location his image is in, exactly like he was there in person. The character can also speak normally and can talk to people and spirits in the location just as if he were physically present. However, the character appears in the target location as an intangible image that cannot touch anything. Also, nothing in this location, including spirits, ghosts or magicians, can affect this image in any fashion. The character can move the image at her normal Speed and in doing so can move through walls and other barriers as if they did not exist. As a result, the character can explore regions that he has never seen before by moving through a wall and examining them. However, whenever the character enters a region he was previously unfamiliar with, he must make another roll, with no modifications for lack of familiarity. Failing this roll instantly ends the current use of this Siddhi.

Once the character has projected his image successfully, he can make another roll to alter the appearance of this image. He can do anything from change how his image is dressed to attempting to look like someone else. Making this change requires another Presence + Expression + Chi roll. Attempting to disguise the appearance of his image as someone else also requires a Wits + Subterfuge roll to determine how accurately the character can alter his image. A failure on the first roll means that the character cannot alter the appearance of his image and must wait 10 minutes before attempting to change his appearance again, a failure on the second roll means the disguise is less accurate than desired. As with the Siddhi *distant vision*, purified can also use this Siddhi to project her image into realms other than the one she is currently in.

Walking the Hidden Shortcut (•••)

The character has now learned to walk from one location to another by stepping halfway into the Shadow Realm. This type of travel carries the character through the boundary between the mortal world and the Shadow Realm and greatly reduces distances. However, it is not particularly exact.

Cost: 3 Essence (+3 additional Essence and +2 Willpower if also moving a vehicle)

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Athletics + Chi

Action: Extended (target number 15)

To use this ability, the character may make one roll every hour. For the first hour minutes, the character must walk around the mortal world. He seems to be wandering

aimlessly, but he is actually seeking an entrance into the strange border-realm through which he travels. For all subsequent rolls, the character is in this nebulous in-between realm, where he cannot be seen or affected by residents of either the mortal world or any supernatural realm.

The character can take others along on his journey, but they must all maintain physical contact with him. Each additional person the character brings along costs another point of Essence. If desired, the character can even take an entire vehicle along with him. To do this, the character must spend an additional three points of Essence and two points of Willpower. Also, the size of the vehicle cannot exceed 18, all passengers must ride inside the vehicle and the character must be the person driving or piloting the vehicle. The character cannot simply be a passenger. When moving a vehicle in this fashion, the character can take as many other passengers with him as will fit in the inside of the vehicle.

Purified can use this power to move to any location, but the time needed to use it means that for traveling short distances it is often faster to use conventional means of travel. Also, purified can only travel to locations where they can pass through an opening like an open or unlocked doorway, a tunnel, a natural archway or some similar natural or artificial structure. As a result, the character cannot use this power to travel to a barren desert, the interior of a locked vault or any other location lacking any opening that is not locked or otherwise impassible.

Making at least one successful roll, but failing to achieve the required number of successes on the extended roll needed to use this Siddhi means the character re-enters the mortal world at some reasonably safe, but occasionally awkward location between where he left it from and his destination. The same happens to anyone who the character is bringing along on the journey who either breaks physical contact with the character or leaves the vehicle the character is driving.

If the character makes a dramatic failure on the roll needed to use this Siddhi, he finds himself, and anyone accompanying him, in an exceptionally awkward and utterly random location. The character could appear in the Shadow Realm, in front of the lair of a feared enemy, in the middle of a large lake, inside a maximum security prison, or in some equally problematic location.

Projection

The character learns to project his mind and soul outside of his body. When doing this, the character forms an ephemeral body that is completely solid and able to physically interact with the realm it is in as well as with objects and spirits that inhabit this inhuman world. Unfortunately, the inhabitants of this same realm can also physically affect the character's ephemeral body. Damage done to this ephemeral body has no effect upon the character's physical body and heals at the same rate as normal damage. The purified can spend one point of Essence to heal one point of any sort of damage to his ephemeral body. However, destruction of this ephemeral body either kills the purified or causes them to have to spend week or months reforming.

While the purified is away from her body, it remains alive but in a deep coma. If left for more than one full day, the coma deepens and can only be distinguished from death by a medical examination. When using this Siddhi, the character has no way of knowing the current state of health or any other information about her body. Should the character's body be completely destroyed while she is away from it, she will not be able to re-enter it and must first spend the Essence needed to repair and re-animate her body.

To return to her body, purified who are using any projection power need only find a locus. The location of this locus does not matter. Once the character's mind is in the locus, all she need do is to make a successful roll, and her mind instantly returns to her body. However, unlike mages, thaumaturges and other fully human individuals who find some way to project their minds into another realm, purified lack any sort of silver cord or other connection between their mind and their bodies. When they use this power, purified become mobile spirits who must make an effort to return to their body. Purified who use any projection power can be trapped in the realm they are visiting. If they are denied access to a locus, the purified cannot return to his body. Some purified have been captured and trapped in an ephemeral realm for decades or centuries.

When projecting into any realm, purified automatically bring along ephemeral versions of their clothes and the contents of their pockets with them. Characters who wish to take along ephemeral versions of large backpacks, large-caliber rifles or other large objects can spend one additional mote of Essence to do so. The largest object a character can take along in this fashion is Size 5.

If desired, the character can take along mortals or other beings native to the mortal world into the Shadow Realm, Twilight or the Underworld by spending one additional mote of Essence per individual. All of these individuals also enter the desired realm as ephemeral beings projected outside of their physical bodies. These "passengers" must all be in physical contact with the purified when they project from their bodies. When the purified returns to the mortal world through a locus, the ephemeral bodies of all of those that traveled with him must also enter the locus with him. Any who are not must find their own way back to the mortal world.

Purified can also bring people and objects back from the Shadow Realm or the Underworld. Bringing back any object up to Size 3 that the character acquired in the Shadow Realm or the Underworld requires the expenditure of one mote of Essence. The purified returns to his body to find this object in his hand. Purified cannot bring back larger objects, but they can return magically powerful objects, including both items enchanted with powerful magic, such as *fetishes* (see *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, pp. 204-209), *imbued items* (see *Mage: The Awakening*, pp. 84-85), or *relics* (see *World of Darkness: Reliquary*), provided the object is Size 3 or less.

Returning a mortal whose mind has become lost in some ephemeral realm only requires that the mortal's ephemeral body enter the locus with the purified when the purified returns to the mortal world and for the purified to spend one mote of Essence.

If both occur, the mortal wakes up in her own body, regardless of where her body is located. Purified can also return mortals who have physically wandered into the Shadow Realm or some other ephemeral realm through a verge. To do this, the purified must enter a locus with the mortal, spend one point of Essence and one point of Willpower and make a roll. If all this is done successfully, the purified wakes up in his body and the mortal finds himself standing in the mortal world in front of the locus.

Spirit Projection (•)

The character can project his mind into the Shadow Realm. All Purified know this power, having automatically learned it when they died and became the being they are now. Purified who did not learn this ability never made their way back to their body.

Cost: None

Dice Pool: Resolve + Investigation + Chi

Action: Instant

To enter the Shadow Realm, the character need only lie down and make a single roll. To return to her body, she must find a locus and make another roll. If the character's body is alive, she immediately returns to her body. If the character's body is dead, she appears in Twilight, hovering over her body. Unless the character also knows Twilight Projection, she cannot venture more than a few feet away from her corpse, but she may use Essence to repair it, return it to life, or return to the Shadow Realm to seek help.

Twilight Projection (••)

The character can project her mind into Twilight. Here, she can interact with both ghosts and spirits who are also in Twilight and can spy on the mortal world, unseen by anyone except supernatural beings and the few mortals who can perceive beings in Twilight. Because of the nature of their perceptions, all purified can clearly see and hear everything occurring in the portion of the mortal world corresponding to their location in Twilight, allowing purified who know this ability to be excellent spies.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Composure + Occult + Chi

Action: Instant

To enter Twilight, the character need only lie down, spend one point of Essence and make a single roll. To return to her body, the character can either find a locus and make another roll or simply fly travel back to her body and re-enter it. Purified in Twilight can also make another roll to move between Twilight and the Shadow Realm.

Underworld Projection (•••)

The character now learns to project her mind into the Underworld. While this mysterious realm is the natural home of ghosts, the partially inhuman nature of the character's mind makes the underworld an alien realm that it more difficult to enter than the Shadow Realm or Twilight.

Cost: 3 Essence

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Chi

Action: Extended (target number of 5)

Purified who attempt to enter or leave the Underworld must make an extended meditation roll with a target number of 5. The character can make one roll every 10 minutes to enter the underworld and one roll every turn to leave it. If the character is interrupted in the process of making these rolls, he must start again from the beginning. Because of the difficulty involved in leaving the underworld, most purified consider it an especially dangerous place to visit. The character can also move between the Underworld and either Twilight or the Shadow Realm, but doing so also requires the same extended roll, with one roll being possible every turn.

Shifting

The character can use her affinity to the Shadow World to move her body close to, and eventually into, Twilight. Instead of simply being able to send her mind into Twilight, she can also eventually learn to move her body there.

Tread Lightly /(•)

As the first step on learning to interact physically with the Twilight realm, the character learns to transfer a portion of her weight there.

Cost: none

Dice Pool: Dexterity + Athletics + Chi

Action: Instant

The character greatly reduces her weight for the next full scene. Although this reduction in weight does not allow the character to fly or even jump further than normal, but she takes only bashing damage from falling, regardless of the distance. In addition, she can walk or run over any surface, including water, tissue paper or thin panes of glass. She can also walk across mud, dry sand or any other surface without leaving tracks or getting her feet even damp. She can also climb up surfaces too fragile to support her normal weight. However, she cannot run any faster or climb any better than usual.

Breaching Barriers /(••)

The character learns to shift his body into Twilight for a brief instant. This allows the purified to walk through walls and similar barriers.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Wits + Larceny + Chi

Action: Instant

Briefly stepping into Twilight allows the character to walk through any barrier that is no thicker than one yard. He can step through a closed door, walk through a wall, or even jump from one floor down to another. When walking through a barrier, the character makes no noise and does not disturb the barrier at all. Instead, he vanishes for an instant and reappears just on the other side of the barrier. The character cannot use this power to pass through a barrier thicker than one yard. Attempts to do so automatically fail, leaving the character bumping his nose against the barrier.

Twilight Shift /(•••)

The character learns to shift her body fully into Twilight. By doing so, she becomes completely invisible and intangible, and can physically interact with all ghosts and spirits in Twilight. She can also use this power to gain access to the interior of almost any building by walking into it in Twilight and then shifting back to the mortal world inside.

Cost: 2 Essence + 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Athletics + Chi

Action: Instant

The character remains in Twilight for one scene, unless she decides to leave it earlier. Entering and leaving Twilight both take one action. Leaving Twilight requires no roll and no expenditure of Essence.

Spiritual Defense

The character learns to defend himself and others against attack by spirits, ghosts and other ephemeral beings. Unlike wardings, these Siddhi involve immediate actions purified can perform to drive away ephemeral attackers rather than creating a lasting protection.

Exorcism /(•)

The character can drive out a spirit or ghost inhabiting a person or object simply by touching the possessed individual. Exorcism can only be used to protect targets in the mortal world, since spirits cannot possess beings in Twilight or the Shadow Realm.

Cost: 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Chi vs. Power + Resistance

Action: Instant and contested; target reflexively rolls Power + Resistance

If the purified wins the contest, the spirit or ghost must instantly depart from the person or object it is possessing. The spirit cannot attempt to possess the same target again for at least one full day. To use this power, the character must maintain physical contact with the possessed object or person for one entire turn, if this contact is broken before the turn ends, the exorcism attempt automatically fails. When dealing with the Ridden (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 282-285 or **Book of Spirits**, pp. 166-191), the character can drive the spirit out of a Spirit-Urged or Spirit-Thieved host but not one of the Spirit-Claimed.

Touch of Death or Life /(••)

The character can either directly attack spirits and ghosts, damaging their corpus, or she can reverse this ability and heal their corpus. The character can use both facets of this Siddhi in the mortal world as well as in Twilight, the Underworld and the Shadow Realm.

Cost: 1 Essence + (optionally) 1 Willpower

Dice Pool: Wits + Medicine + Chi

Action: Instant

To use either ability, the character must touch the target. Usually, this means the character must enter melee combat with the spirit or ghost to harm it. When the character uses this ability to cause harm, spirits and anyone else with the ability to see into Twilight or the Shadow Realm sees the purified holding a glowing melee weapon of some sort. If the character uses this ability to heal, she appears to hold some sort of glowing rod. If the character uses ability on a spirit or ghost who is riding or otherwise possessing someone in any fashion, it harms or heals the spirit or ghost, but has no effect on the person who is possessed.

When used as a weapon, each success does one level of lethal damage to the target's corpus. If the character also spends a point of Willpower, this damage becomes aggravated. When used to heal, each success heals one point (of any type) of corpus damage.

Mass Banishing (•••)

Purified can learn to banish ghosts and spirits en masse as well as individually; this power only works on spirits and ghosts that are either in Twilight or that are physically manifesting in the mortal world. It specifically does not affect spirits who are possessing individuals, since they have a firmer connection to the mortal world.

Cost: 3 Essence + 2 Willpower

Dice Pool: Resolve + Intimidation + Chi vs. Resistance

Action: Instant and contested; targets roll Resistance automatically

The purified can affect every spirit and ghost within 20 yards. To use this spell, she must say a short chant loudly enough to be heard within this range. When the chant is concluded, every spirit or ghost within range must resist the spell or be banished back to their native realm. Banished spirits and ghosts return to the Shadow Realm or the Underworld and cannot attempt to return to either Twilight or the mortal world for one full day. This power also instantly ends all uses of the Reaching Numina that are within range or other Numina used by spirits or ghosts in another realm to affect the mortal world.

Summoning

In addition to visiting the Shadow Realm, purified can also learn to call spirits and potentially even ghosts across the Gauntlet to do their bidding. The difficulty of summoning a spirit or ghost depends upon the strength of the Gauntlet where the character is performing the summoning. Summoning spirits or ghosts always requires an extended roll where the target number is twice the spirit's highest Attribute — if a spirit's highest Attribute is Power 4, then the target number is 8. When making these extended rolls, the purified can make one roll every 10 minutes. The dice modifier for Gauntlet Strength is applied to each roll if summoning spirits from the Underworld or the Shadow Realm. Do not use this modifier if summoning entities from Twilight or at a verge.

Summoning Spirits (•)

Purified who learn this ability can summon spirits from the Shadow Realm to his location. If the spirit is capable of materializing into the mortal world, it does so; otherwise, it remains in Twilight at the desired location. The character can either summon a specific spirit or send out a general call to the nearest spirit of a particular type, such as tree spirits, or spirits of electricity. Alternately, the character can simply call upon the nearest spirit of the desired power level. When calling a specific spirit, this ability is limited by the fact that the spirit cannot travel farther than the maximum distance it is allowed to travel from its Anchor.

Cost: 1 Essence

Dice Pool: Presence + Persuasion + Chi vs. Resistance

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls resistance reflexively

The character can either ask for the spirit to appear, or he may make a contested roll and attempt to force it to appear. In the second case, the spirit appears, but it is not under the character's control. In either case, the character must either use the *binding the rebellious spirit* Siddhi to attempt to control it, or bargain with the spirit for its services. Most spirits are willing to appear if called, simply because most are interested in who might call them and seek to either gain some payment or wreak vengeance upon anyone who threatens them.

Summon the Wandering Shade (••)

Purified can use this power to summon ghosts either from Twilight or the Underworld. The character can summon a specific ghost or she can either ask for the nearest ghost to appear or the nearest ghost of a general type, like children or murder victims.

Cost: 2 Essence

Dice Pool: Manipulation + Socialize + Chi vs. Resistance

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls resistance reflexively

If distant, the ghost travels to the character as rapidly as it can. The ghost only materializes if it is able to do so. The ghost is not under the character's control. The character must either use the *binding the rebellious spirit* Siddhi to attempt to control the ghost, or bargain with the ghost for its services.

Call Spirit (•••)

The character can instantly summon any spirit she knows or any type of spirit with which she is familiar. The distance between the character and the spirit does not matter, regardless of where it was before, it instantly appears in front of the character. The character cannot use this Siddhi to summon ghosts.

Cost: 2 Essence + 1 Willpower (optional)

Dice Pool: Wits + Intimidation + Chi vs. Power + Resistance

Action: Instant and contested; target rolls resistance reflexively

The spirit appears the turn after the character performs this Siddhi. Use the mystical connection table to determine

the difficulty involved in calling a particular spirit. In addition to being able to instantly summon any spirit, by spending 1 point of Willpower, the character can cause the spirit to materialize, even if the spirit is not normally able to do so.

Warding

The purified learns to construct wards that protect areas against various sorts of creatures and powers. Creating any ward requires an extended roll, where the target number is five times the number of dots of the Siddhi being used. Thus, using *ward against the living* has a target number of 15. The character must always mark out or otherwise define the area he is warding.

There are also two sorts of wards: temporary and lasting wards. Temporary wards only require the character to either walk around the area she is warding or, if it is relatively small, outline it with her finger. When creating a temporary ward, the character makes one roll every turn to create this ward. Temporary wards last until the sun next rises or sets, whichever comes first.

Lasting wards require the character to mark out the warded area in some physical manner, such as with a fence with symbols painted on it or a line of chalk drawn on the floor. If anyone disturbs or makes an opening in this physical marker, or if it is washed away by rainfall or blown down by the wind, the warding instantly ceases to function. When creating a lasting ward, the character may make one roll every 10 minutes to create this ward. Lasting wardings continue to project an area for one full lunar month, or until the physical markers tied to the ward are disturbed, whichever comes first.

Regardless of their duration, wardings can be no more than 100 yards on a side. The character can ward most of a city block or a large house and yard, but the character cannot ward an entire shopping mall or other similar large and sprawling structure. Only one warding of each type can protect an area at one time. However, purified can ward an area with different wards at the same time. A character could simultaneously protect her home with both a *ward against supernatural beings* and a *ward against magic*. Creating a new warding automatically destroys any existing wardings on the area. Unless specifically described as otherwise, wardings are not mobile, although they can be used to protect the interior of mobile spaces like trailers, mobile homes or even cars. Creating a wearable version of any ward is also impossible.

Ward Against Supernatural Beings (•)

This ward is designed to prevent spirits, ghosts, and similar beings from other realms from affecting the warded area and anyone or anything inside it. There are two forms to this ward, and the character can only use one of these at a time on any single location. Locations cannot be simultaneously protected by both types of wards.

Cost: 2 Essence (+1 Willpower to create a lasting ward)

Dice Pool: Presence + Academics + Chi

Action: Extended (target number 5)

The first type of ward raises or lowers the Gauntlet for the warded area by the character's Chi/3 (round up). The only limitation on this ward is that it cannot raise the local

Gauntlet higher than 5 or lower than 1. This ward can only be created as a temporary ward.

The second type of ward prevents spirits, ghosts, and similar beings from outside the mortal world from entering the area. Any such being attempting to enter or to use the Reaching Numina to gain access to the warded region must achieve a number of successes on a Power roll in excess of a reflexive Presence + Academics + Chi roll made by the character. Even if they are in Twilight, spirits, ghosts and similar beings that fail to achieve the necessary number of successes cannot enter the warded area and must wait for one full day before trying again to do so.

Ward Against Magic (••)

This ward protects the space and people inside it from all forms of magic and other supernatural powers, including werewolf Gifts, vampire Disciplines, spirit Numina and all similar powers.

Cost: 2 Essence (+1 Willpower to create a lasting ward)

Dice Pool: Wits + Occult + Chi

Action: Extended (target number 10)

The character protects an area from supernatural effects used by anyone other than the character and up to a two dozen specific individuals named when the warding is created. Even if he is not present inside the warded area, the purified can reflexively make a Wits + Occult + Chi roll as contested roll against any supernatural ability used on anyone or anything inside the warded area. If the attacker does not win the contest by at least one success, the ability fails to affect everyone inside the warded area. In addition, even if the attacker wins this contest, subtract the successes rolled by the ward's creator from the total number of successes rolled by the attacker. This subtraction can transform an exceptional success into an ordinary success.

Ward Against The Living (•••)

This ward prevents all living or once-living creatures, including humans and animals, as well as partly human beings like werewolves and once-human beings native to the mortal world like vampires or other purified. The character can create a ward designed to only protect against certain general types of beings, like only vampires or only human children. However, it is impossible to ward an area against "enemies" or some other similarly vague category. Also, when creating this warding the character can specify up to two dozen named individuals who can freely enter and leave the warded area.

Cost: 3 Essence +1 Willpower (+1 additional Willpower to create a lasting ward)

Dice Pool: Resolve + Intimidation + Chi

Action: Extended (target number 15)

When any being of the appropriate type attempts to cross this ward, either to enter or exit the warded area, they must make a contested Presence + Supernatural Advantage (if any) versus the character's Resolve + Intimidation + Chi. Beings that do not win this contest by at least one success cannot enter or leave the warded area and also lose one point of Willpower if they fail. An individual can make no more than one attempt every scene to cross this warding.

Purchasing Spirit Numina

In addition to their own unique powers, their connection to the Shadow Realm also allows purified to purchase some Spirit Numina. While all purified must take one dot of Projection to learn Shadow Projection, they can use any or even all of their other three dots of Siddhi to learn Numina instead. These Numina function exactly as they do for the spirits, except for the Attributes that the character rolls. The Numina as well as the Attributes that purified roll are listed in the table below. Purified must learn each Numina from a Spirit of at least Rank 2, that possesses the desired Numina and is willing to teach it to the character. All of these Numina cost all purified a minimum of one point of Essence to use.

Purified Merits

The following Merits are available to all purified. In addition, purified can also purchase the *fetish* (see **Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 204-209), *imbued items* and *library* (see **Mage: The Awakening**, pp. 84-85), or *relic* (see **World of Darkness: Reliquary**) Merits, as well as the *totem* Merit (**Werewolf: The Forsaken**, pp. 186-194).

Purified can also possess the Allies, Contacts, and Mentor with spirits. However, the purified must purchase the Allies and Contacts Merits for specific types of spirits, such as city-spirits of a particular city, spirits of artificial devices, nature-spirits and other broad but distinct categories. Purified can also possess the Status Merit for being the servant or favorite of a powerful spirit, but this Merit has no direct effect upon their interactions with mortals.

Alternate Identity (●, ●● or ●●●)

Effect: As beings that live for centuries and can die and later return to life, purified regularly require new legal identities. All purified are assumed to have a single legal identity and need pay no Merit dots for this privilege. However, if the purified has lived in a single legal identity for more than two decades, your character has almost certainly begun to have to use various minor forms of disguise to change his appearance so that it better matches his legal age.

Having a second identity allows purified to have an identity that matches his apparent age and it also allows him to easily vanish if any legal questions arise surrounding his activities. In addition, if your character's body dies in such a way that others notice his death, he can use this alternate identity if there is no way for him to explain his perceived death. However, modern background checks, paper trails and bureaucratic scrutiny make acquiring a new identity far more difficult than it was in the past. Few characters have the skills to create a new identity for themselves. The vast majority must look for help, either from older and more experienced purified or from some mortal or supernatural source who is skilled in the various complex and highly illegal methods of acquiring such documents.

The number of dots spent on this Merit determines how convincing and in-depth the documentation surrounding this new life actually is. Alternate Identity (●) represents an identity that passes casual inspection, but not much else — a character can go shopping and get around in most daily situations, but any kind of trained scrutiny such as from a police officer or bureaucrat immediately identifies this identity as a fake. Alternate Identity (●●) creates an identity that will pass most forms of relatively cursory professional inspection, but cannot stand up to a sustained investigation. A police officer that pulls your character over will not automatically pick up anything unusual if she runs

Name	Attributes	Location
Blast	Dexterity + Weaponry + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 138
Camouflage	Penalty equal to Wits	Book of Spirits, p. 138
Commune	Presence + Investigation + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 139
Concealment	Wits + Stealth + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 139
Ghost Sign	Intelligence + Expression + Chi	World of Darkness, p. 211
Heal	Wits + Medicine + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 142
Left-Handed Spanner	Intelligence + Crafts + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 142
Omen Trance	Intelligence + Occult + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 144
Speed ++	n/a	Book of Spirits, p. 147
Telekinesis	Dexterity + Athletics + Chi	World of Darkness, p. 212
Wilds Sense	Wits + Investigation + Chi	Book of Spirits, p. 149
+: This power works in the vicinity of any location that the purified has slept in for one or more nights.		
++: This Numina only functions in Twilight, the Shadow Realm, or the Underworld, it does not affect movement in the mortal world.		

Purified and Totems

Purified may possess the Totem Merit. In a few cases, a group of purified, often including a new purified and her Mentor, have the same totem. However, more often purified do not share their totem with others. This limits their connection to their totem, since the character is the only one able to put points into this Merit. However, this also means that the connection between the totem and the individual purified is somewhat closer.

Unlike purified that become the servants of spirits (see p. 116), purified who take the Totem Merit have an alliance with a spirit who is not significantly more powerful than they are. Having a totem is considerably less problematic than serving a more powerful spirit and requires far less from the purified. However, totems offer the purified considerably less than more powerful spirits can.

the character's license plates or calls up his name in a database. However, if your character is arrested and the police begin a formal investigation his identity will quickly unravel. Alternate Identity (••••) represents an identity that is essentially as real as any identity can be — it takes a truly dedicated, competent and time-consuming search by trained professionals to uncover any hint that the purified isn't exactly who he claims to be, at least as far as his documentation is concerned.

This Merit may be purchased multiple times at multiple ratings, each time representing a different identity. Also, an identity may also be upgraded later with the appropriate in-game explanation and experience expenditure. In the case of certain Merits such as Resources or Status, it might also be worth noting to which identity these Merits are tied, since a character may not easily be able to access or maintain them if that identity is compromised.

Drawback: Although one-dot Alternate Identities require no maintenance, both of the more thorough versions do. If someone checks on a legal identity, they will immediately become suspicious if the person has no legal address or magazine subscriptions, pays no taxes and has no phone number. Similarly, if all of this data exactly matches your character's primary legal identity, many people soon realize both of these identities belong to the same individual. Therefore, your character must take time and spend money to maintain any two or four-dot Alternate Identities.

Having the identity make frequent trips to remote locations and similar inventive dodges can reduce the frequency of this maintenance. The amount of maintenance needed to keep a two-dot identity looking legitimate is fairly minimal, requiring only a few hours of work every month. However,

keeping a four-dot identity believable requires at least several hours of work every week. Failure to perform this upkeep on an identity causes it to be reduced to the next lowest level. However, alternate identities never fall lower than one dot. Paying Experience Points to upgrade an identity represents the effort needed to build it back up. Characters can also pay criminal organizations to maintain alternate identities, but doing so causes its own problems, including both the cost and the possibility of blackmail.

Chi (•••)

Effect: Your character gains an additional dot of Chi. All purified begin play with one dot of Chi. However, more experienced and powerful purified have more dots in Chi. During character generation, each additional dot of Chi costs the character three Merit dots. See *Effects of Chi* (p. 99) for more information about how this Merit affects your character. Purified characters can purchase this Merit no more than twice, for a total Chi of three.

Available at character creation only. Your character can only purchase additional dots of Chi as a Merit during character creation. During play, Chi can only be increased using experience points.

Dream (• to •••••)

Effect: Your character's ties to the Shadow Realm also gives her a connection to ancient truths that can be seen and comprehended only in dreams. She gains flashes of insight through reverie and visions, finding answers to questions she couldn't normally get by mundane means. This might be through the collective unconscious, universal mind, poetic reverie or even an imagined journey to a fictional dreamscape. Through effort of will, your character can channel this insight into action.

Once per game session, your character can use her Dream ability to gain a supernatural insight concerning a question or topic. Activating this ability requires at least one hour spent in sleep, meditation or an activity exclusively focused on accessing an altered state of consciousness. The Storyteller then rolls the character's Wits + Composure in secret. A successful roll results in one or more clues per dot of Dream.

The meaning of these clues is hidden behind allegory, symbols and archetypes. Dreams rarely answer questions directly, typically relying on symbolism and images to convey information. If one of the purified is seeking a specific person's location wouldn't see his address, but landmarks nearby could lead the way: a river, a tower or even the face of a man walking by at dusk. The answer has the potential to resolve the problem. It's a tool for the Storyteller to help drive events of the story.

Essence Reservoir (• or ••)

Effect: Your character has some talisman or other item that can hold additional points of Essence. The character must touch this item to put Essence into it or retrieve Essence from it. The amount of Essence your character can put in or remove from this item every turn is limited by both how much Essence

he can spend per turn and how much Essence the device can hold. A one-dot Essence reservoir can hold up to three points of Essence and must be at least as large as a small wrist watch or a large coin like a quarter. A two-dot Essence Reservoir can hold up to six points of Essence and must be at least as large as a large pocket watch or a cell phone. Regardless of their size, Essence Reservoirs can be made in any form, including being a working cell phone or watch. Essence reservoirs also exist in Twilight, the Shadow Realm and the Underworld. If the character is touching this item when he sends his mind into one of these realms, the item vanishes from the physical world and remains with him in the realm to which he travels. Also, as long as he is touching this item when he returns to his body, it reappears with him. Purified cannot create Essence Reservoirs, but they can bargain with spirits or some powerful mages who know the secret of their creation.

Familiar (•••)

Effect: Your character has a magical bond with an immaterial and invisible spirit from the Shadow Realm that aids him and which normally dwells in Twilight. These familiars can temporarily manifest like ghosts (see “Manifestations,” p. 210 in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*), but their ephemeral bodies are otherwise invisible and intangible to the physical world. A familiar must manifest or use Numina to affect anything in the physical world — except for its bonded purified, whom it can touch at will, just as the purified can always see the familiar. Although familiars normally exist in the Twilight Realm, they can accompany their masters into the Shadow Realm, or travel there themselves if their Numina allow it.

Familiar Traits

A familiar is considered to be the lowest rank of spirit (a “squire” or “lesser gaffling”, with a limit of 5 on all traits, and a maximum Essence of 10. The Storyteller designs the spirit’s traits. Each familiar begins play with at least one dot in each Attribute, with extra dots as listed below. For rules concerning spirits traits, including additional Spirit Numen, see p. 210-212 in the *World of Darkness Rulebook*, as well as pp. 317-322 in *Mage: The Awakening*, pp. 273-282 in *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, or pp. 130-149 in *Book of Spirits*.

Familiar Traits

Attributes: 3/3/2 (allocate dots in any order among Power, Finesse and Resistance)

Willpower: Equal to Power + Resistance

Essence: 10 (10 max)

Initiative: Equal to Finesse + Resistance

Defense: Equal to highest of Power and Finesse

Speed: Equal to Power + Finesse + “species factor” (same as its earthly counterpart)

Size: 5 or less (same as its earthly counterpart)

Corpus: Equal to Resistance + Size

Influence: 2 dots (choose one)

Numina: Choose one

Ban: The fetch has one Ban, chosen by the Storyteller pp. 320-321 in *Mage: The Awakening*, pp. 278-279 in *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, or *Book of Spirits*, pp. 135-137.

The character to which the familiar is bonded is considered to be its anchor to the material world, although there is no limit to how far a familiar can travel from the purified it is linked to. It also does not lose Essence for every hour it spends in the physical world or Twilight. It must follow all the other rules concerning Essence, however, including spending one Essence per day. If it is reduced to zero Essence, it falls into Slumber but it is not transferred back into the Shadow Realm as long as the purified-familiar bond still exists. Like other spirits, it can gain Essence by being in proximity to something that it reflects (p. 135, *Book of Spirits*, pp. 319-320 in *Mage: The Awakening*, pp. 275-276 in *Werewolf: The Forsaken*, or *Book of Spirits*, p. 135).

The purified and her familiar have an empathic connection; each can automatically feel the emotions of the other. However, supernatural effects that damage or manipulate the familiar through an emotional attack don’t damage or manipulate the purified to which it is bonded. Also, your character can use his familiar as a magical connection that is sufficiently close that there are no penalties to her Siddhi roll.

Improvement: To improve a familiar, the player of the purified must spend some of his character’s experience points on the familiar.

Locus • to •••

Effect: The character has claimed a minor locus (see p. 92). One dot provides your character with a one-dot locus, two dots provide your character with a two-dot locus. The addition of one dot to the cost allows this locus to be mobile. However, the object to which the locus is attached must be inanimate and can never be smaller than a large steamer trunk or some other object of at least Size 5. Loci do not combine, moving a one-dot mobile locus into the area of a three-dot locus does not temporarily create a four-dot locus. Instead, spirits and the purified can still draw Essence from both loci separately.

Few purified are powerful enough to claim anything larger than a two-dot locus, and any who try must deal with powerful and hungry spirits. Many purified put the locus in a ward (see p. 109) to keep out spirits. Also, most arrange to have it nearby, having their dwelling or place of work very near or even inside the area of influence of the locus. Owning a locus allows one of the purified to regain Essence easily.

Occultation (• to •••)

Prerequisite: no Fame Merit dots

Effect: Because of their connection to the Shadow World, some of the purified can effectively slip through the cracks of mortal society. Your character is also protected from all supernatural effects designed to spy upon or learn anything about her. When any magician or supernatural being attempts to use their power to learn anything about your character, subtract a number of dice equal to your character’s dots in this Merit.

Occulted purified mostly live on the fringes of mundane reality and the edges of mortal society. Mortals have trouble keeping track of their identities and activities. Records concerning them tend to get lost, and the authorities are challenged to investigate their activities. Since most mortals

find it hard to gather information about the character, they won't gather many details about him. This Merit also makes it harder for supernatural beings to research information about the character through mundane sources. Whenever someone makes a roll to gather information about your character, your Occultation dots are subtracted from the researcher's dice pool. This Merit is especially helpful for purified who are several centuries old and wish to conceal this fact.

Drawback: If your character ever becomes well known to the public (such as getting caught on camera and being shown on television night after night), he loses his Occultation until the public at large forgets him (which could take many years, depending on how famous or notorious your character became). Likewise, if he maintains a public persona at all among mortals, even to the degree of having several prominent or well-known friends, he cannot maintain his Occultation. The character must constantly cultivate this Merit, working to remain away from the attention of mortal society. It does not affect his standing among any supernatural beings he knows.

Ritual Crypt (•)

Effect: Your character has a ritually prepared location where her body can be made to reappear if it dies. Even if the character's corpse is largely intact, she must spend five points of Essence to cause her body to vanish from its current location and appear within the ritual crypt.

At minimum, this crypt consists of a bed, slab or other surface large enough to hold your character's body inside a room with doors and windows that close. This location could be anything from a deeply buried stone crypt to an ordinary

bedroom. Regardless of the crypt's appearance or location, the slab, or bed where your character's body reappears and all of the walls and doors of this room are marked with special sigils. If any of these markings are disturbed, the ritual crypt does not function and the character's body remains where it was.

Your character can only cause her corpse to reappear there; she cannot cause her still-living body to magically appear at this location. Also, even if the character's corpse is fully intact, it costs five points of Essence to move her body to the ritual crypt, because doing so involves destroying the body at its present location and then restoring her body to the crypt. All purified automatically know how to create a ritual crypt; possessing this Merit only means that your character has taken the time and effort to create one.

Drawback: If any of the sigils on the crypt are erased or damaged, the crypt does not function and the character cannot cause her corpse to reappear there. Destroying a character's ritual crypt is quite easy for anyone who can gain access to it. Doing so is a standard part of any attack upon one of the purified. Purified usually attempt to keep their ritual crypt secret from everyone and rarely visit it to avoid someone watching them finding it. Of course, this means that it may not be available when they need it. Creating a new ritual crypt requires one day of special preparations and the expenditure of another two Experience Points, to purchase this Merit again.

Shadow Sanctum (• to ••••)

Effect: Your character has a stronghold in the Shadow Realm where he can retreat from foes and regain his strength. The exact nature of this sanctum is up to you, it could be



a well-fortified building, a deep cavern, or something far stranger like a living hollow tree the size of a small apartment complex that is also an intelligent spirit who is your character's loyal friend and ally. All shadow sanctums are by their nature difficult for enemies to locate, with the basic Shadow Sanctum providing anyone attempting to locate it with a -3 penalty to all rolls to do so.

A one-dot Shadow Sanctum is a relatively small and spartan space, like a room in a cave or a small hut. The sanctum is relatively comfortable, but is both small and devoid of amenities. This Sanctum can be enhanced in three different ways that each increase the cost of the Merit by one additional dot. A Shadow Sanctum with all three advantages costs four dots.

The enhancements are:

- The sanctum is both larger and more comfortable. It can be as large as a large house or small mansion and contain light heat, running water, a well-stocked larder, some facilities for entertainment and various similar comforts.
- The sanctum is far more formidable. It now has a penalty of -5 to all roll to locate it and is also highly defensible. When locked up, which your character can accomplish in one turn, its walls have a Durability of 10.
- The sanctum becomes a spirit that is intelligent and loyal to your character. This spirit cannot move.

Sanctum Spirit

Attributes: 10 dots total (allocate dots in any order among Power, Finesse and Resistance, with a minimum of two dots and a maximum of five dots on any Attribute)

Willpower: Equal to Power + Resistance

Essence: 15 (15 max)

Initiative: Equal to Finesse + Resistance

Defense: Equal to highest of Power and Finesse

Speed: 0, this spirit is immobile and can never move under its own power.

Size: 20 (35 for a larger Shadow Sanctum)

Corpus: Equal to Resistance + Size

Influence: 2 dots (choose one)

Numina: All spirit sanctums possess the Innocuous Numina and one additional Numina*

Ban: The intelligent sanctum has one Ban, chosen by the Storyteller; see the familiar Merit for further information

* Shadow Sanctum Spirits cannot possess any Numina that allows it move or to travel to or affect the mortal world in any fashion. Common Numina for Sanctums are Blast, Harrow and Wild Sense.

A Life With Spirits: Playing and Story- telling the Purified

Part of being one of the purified is being innately tied to the Shadow Realm and its inhabitants. As they walk through their daily lives, purified can see and hear spirits and ghosts in Twilight as easily as they can see and hear the men and women walking along the street next to them. Also, most spirits,



ghosts, and other creatures in Twilight can sense that these characters can see and hear them. In the course of their daily lives, purified may be faced with angry ghosts asking for help or spirits they have encountered before calling in favors.

Their dual perceptions alone would cause the purified to have lives that were somewhat out of step with those of most mortals. Walking by a corner where a murder or a fatal car accident happened a few hours before, purified often see the ghosts, just as they will also see all manner of spirits clustered around sites of significant emotional power. Some especially sensitive mortals may feel a chill or a foreboding feeling when they walk by an old abandoned insane asylum or a prison with a history of especially high levels of brutality. However, one of the purified walking by the same locations would see dozens of hungry and terrible spirits clustered around these sites, feeding on the emotional residues of the horrors that once occurred there. Worse yet, while most mortals might notice that someone has begun acting a bit odd and may suspect a personal crisis or perhaps a substance abuse problem, if one of the purified encountered the same person they would instead see the horror of someone who is being ridden by and possibly even consumed by a spirit.

The everyday lives of the purified are touched with the supernatural in ways that most mortals cannot imagine. At night, in particularly terrible parts of a city, one of the purified may literally see more spirits and ghosts than mortals out on the street. Worse yet, because these beings can all sense the purified, many of the entities who have some agenda come to the purified to attempt to convince or threaten the character into helping them. Most purified soon learn to ward their dwellings and workplaces against such intrusions, but walking through partially abandoned or particularly crime-ridden parts of town can be distracting and on rare occasions actively dangerous for the purified. It is sometimes possible to convince spirits and ghosts to depart by yelling at them, but standing in the street yelling passionate gibberish at nothing that is visible to anyone around them is a habit most purified swiftly learn to avoid.

However, these encounters in the mortal world are only a small part of how the purified interact with spirits. Purified require Essence to use their special abilities as well as to heal rapidly and survive the death of their body or the destruction of their mind. The easiest ways for them to obtain it are to either make a deal with a spirit or venture out of their bodies and into the Shadow World. The Shadow Realm and its inhabitants are not merely intrusions into the lives of the purified; they are an essential part of their existence.

Their interactions with spirits are as often almost as important a part of the life of one of the purified as their interactions with mortals. In a very real sense, the purified live in two separate worlds and in doing so they risk losing touch with the mortal world and being drawn into the brutal politics and deadly predation so

common in the Shadow Realm. Balancing their two lives is made more difficult by the fact that there is no shortage of spirits who are interested in the mortal world and who seek to get the purified to help them manifest there even to possess mortals. Purified who refuse to help out such spirits risk making powerful and immortal enemies, while those who go along with such requests gain easy access to Essence and powerful allies, but their Morality will rapidly drop, leading to both insanity and an increasing disconnection from humans and the mortal world.

Occasionally, every purified is in the wrong place at the wrong time and must deal with the death of their physical body. Because all purified can heal their bodies and return them to life, physical death is merely a temporary inconvenience. However, the process of returning to live involves spending many days or even weeks in the Shadow Realm with no chance of escaping back to the mortal world.

In this state, purified characters are at the mercy of mighty spirits and all but the most powerful must rely upon a mixture of guile, and the various alliances and perhaps even friendships with spirits and other immortals they have built up over the years or centuries of their existence. To ensure their protection during this vulnerable time and to access to adequate supplies of Essence, a number of purified have sworn allegiance to various powerful spirits, becoming their agents in the mortal world.

Because they are relatively vulnerable in the Shadow Realm, there is also no shortage of purified who have had their minds temporarily destroyed. While they can even recover from this sort of terrible attack if they are not simultaneously deprived of all Essence, the process of recovery is slow and difficult and during the early stages of their recovery they are exceptionally weak and fragile beings who are easy prey for all but the weakest spirits. Most purified who face this situation either rely upon existing alliances they have made with powerful spirits or are forced to make deals with such spirits. Often these deals come with a rather high cost that the purified must later pay. Occasionally, purified whose minds were not merely slain but devoured or otherwise destroyed in a particularly terrible or thorough fashion take years or even decades to reform; during the first stages of this recovery they may even temporarily forget that they are anything other than a native of the Shadow Realm who is attempting to recover its previous power.

Losing Connection to Humanity

Older purified tell stories of others of their kind who either gave up their human bodies and became fulltime residents of the Shadow Realm, or who grew to have far more in common with spirits than with mortals. While some still walk around in human bodies, their attitudes

are little different from those of spirits possessing mortal bodies. Becoming overly attached to the Shadow Realm is especially easy for purified who have suffered the destruction of their minds and had to reform from tiny motes of Essence. In addition to often taking several years and potentially even several decades or centuries to recover and return to their body, during this time, their physical body died and was likely buried. When the purified returns to the mortal world, she must face the fact that all of her human companions now think she is dead, and if her recovery took sufficiently long, many decades may have passed and most or all of the mortals she once knew are either dead or quite elderly. This type of disconnection from the mortal world often sends purified back into the Shadow Realm, where the beings they know are also immortal.

Possible Roles of the Purified

Everyone who becomes one of the purified not only wanted to live forever, they also worked hard to attain this goal, risking death to do so. However, this is a goal that all purified have already attained. Upon returning to their body for the first time, purified can look forward to centuries and possibly even millennia of dwelling in an ageless body that will never get sick and which can come back to life after being killed. At this point, the question of what the character will do with their long and potentially endless life becomes increasingly important. While some lose themselves in the pursuit of hedonism or depravity and others live aimlessly from one day to the next, many attempt to find some sort of purpose for their continued existence. Over time, some purified find that purely self-serving reasons for existence begin to pall. Also, being able to see both the scope of human history and the interactions between the inhabitants of the Shadow Realm and the mortal world give many purified a reason for existence. Both when playing one of the purified as a character and using them as an NPC in a chronicle, one of the most important factors to consider about them is what drives them now that they are immortal.

Another important fact to consider about any of the purified who have been immortal for more than a few decades is that they have had to change their identity one or more times, becoming someone else to continue to fit into mortal society. They may also have suddenly lost everything. One stray bullet or even a perfectly ordinary car accident can end the character's life at any time. While such events do no lasting harm to one of the purified, if the character's death is noticed by others, she must choose another identity. One of the most important truths that most older purified learn is that they must always be prepared to start over.

Purified can also use death as an escape. If one of the purified is suspected of some crime, the investigation ceases if the suspect dies. Some particularly daring purified have become experts at suicide, often dying several times a decade and occasionally dying more than once a year. However, death eliminates the character's mortal power base, and unless the character also plans well ahead, it also eliminates most of her wealth. If they die in too obvious a fashion and without having prepared for this eventuality, purified can go from positions of wealth and power to poverty and obscurity overnight. Deprived of their identity and all money and property associated with it, the least fortunate are left with nothing but the clothes on their back — clothes that they may have been buried in. Almost every one of the purified who is older than a century or two has endured at least one period of desperate poverty.

Careful purified, which generally means all purified who have been immortal for more than a few decades, learn to keep caches of money and useful items in places to which they have easy access, but where others will not find or disturb it. A number of purified create their ritual crypt in a remote location like an isolated cabin, where they also keep alternate identity documents as well as cash and valuables.

However, continued survival or even continued wealth and comfort are insufficient for many purified. Most of those whose desire to cling to life was sufficiently strong that they were willing to forsake a portion of their humanity and risk visiting the inhuman and deadly Shadow Realm, are interested in more than simply attaining material comforts. Many purified end up falling into one of four roles.

Spiritual Agents in the Mortal World

The Shadow Realm is an intensely hierarchical environment, with the most powerful spirits controlling many of the weaker ones. It is exceptionally easy for one of the purified to become a part of this hierarchy. Almost all purified are powerful enough to avoid becoming the thralls of the weaker spirits. However, the more powerful spirits are little different from gods and these gods enjoy having servants in the mortal world. More importantly for the purified, these gods are also willing to reward such servants in all manner of useful ways. Clever and ambitious purified often end up as the agents of spirits of Rank 5 or higher.

Spirits this powerful can grant their agents almost any benefit that one of the purified could imagine, but only do so if they consider their servant to have earned the desired reward. In addition to giving their servants access to truly vast levels of wealth, these spirits can bend dozens of mortals to the character's will, construct luxurious mansions for them in the Shadow Realm and give them a dozen powerful and loyal spirits as retainers. Add in helping the purified

with difficult projects like creating a magnificent work of art, deciding the fate of a vast metropolis or influencing the destiny of a nation and purified who attract the attention of a sufficiently powerful spirit often have great difficulty refusing an offer of alliance or employment.

However, such deals always come with a price. Although some purified delude themselves into thinking they have made some sort of partnership with a powerful spirit, in reality this relationship always has a strict power dynamic — the spirit gives orders and the purified is expected to follow them. Some powerful spirits are willing to negotiate with their agents as to payment or details of a request, but many simply expect their servants to carry out their wishes, regardless of the nature of these wishes.

Many of these actions are unobjectionable. Spirits often wish purified servants to either undertake missions in the Shadow Realm or to perform exotic but harmless rituals or various other eccentric actions in the mortal world. A spirit might ask its servant to light a candle at every street corner in a five-block radius of a specific locus or to create and display large posters with specific images on them.

Because of their status as beings halfway between humans and spirits, purified are also often used as messengers to other spirit courts or as agents to help expand the domains and powers of various powerful spirits by expanding the spirit's domain in the mortal world. The purified agent of a city spirit may be asked to attempt to make certain a proposed bridge is built or a large and prominent building is saved from demolition. Similarly, purified who are allied with wilderness spirits may be asked to either prevent the construction of a dam or to help remove one that is already in place.

However, not all such requests are so benign. Conflict is rampant in the Shadow Realm; purified agents of city or wilderness spirits could equally well be asked to destroy a building belonging to a rival spirit or to pollute or divert an enemy spirit's river. Also, some purified are asked to become far worse than destructive terrorists. Many spirits enjoy possessing or feeding upon humans, while others find them to be exceptionally useful pawns for their plans. Hoping to obtain vast wealth and power, ambitious purified can easily find themselves acting as judas-goats, leading unsuspecting mortals into traps where they are forcibly devoured or transformed into spirit-urged or spirit-thieved thralls. Others are assigned to various verges and are ordered to lure or simply capture and transport unsuspecting humans into the Shadow Realm.



Only the most heinous and depraved purified knowingly agree to work for spirits who start off asking them to perform such tasks. However, some spirits understand humanity to at least a limited extent. These spirits do not mention such desires when making their original bargain with the purified. Instead, they initially order the purified to perform unobjectionable services for several months or even several years. During this time, the spirit also offers the purified generous rewards. In time the spirit begins giving increasingly hideous orders. At this point, some purified are indebted to the spirit, while others are loathe to give up the rewards they have gained and some understand that refusing these orders after lengthy service will greatly anger the spirit, who could easily capture the character's spirit and torture it for many centuries. Purified who spend a great deal of time in the Shadow Realm dealing with spirits can very easily allow their own humanity to slip away or forget that they are dealing with utterly inhuman creatures who have no qualms about treating humans with the same callous disregard that they treat other spirits.

Protectors of Humanity

When spirits and humans come into contact, humans rarely walk away unscathed. Although werewolves work to keep hostile spirits from invading the mortal world, most care little about humanity and many regard them as little more than potential prey that they must protect from other predators. Although purified have sacrificed a portion of their humanity to attain their present state, many retain close connections to humanity and some devote themselves to protecting humanity, or at least some portion of humanity, from intrusions by spirits, ghosts and other ephemeral beings.

Most often, this protection consists of attempting to watch over a town or some portion of a city. These purified look for spirits attempting to take over or negatively influence mortals, while also keeping watch over mortals who are dabbling with or wandering unknowingly into contact with the Shadow Realm or its inhabitants. Because they can see into Twilight as easily as they can look across the street, purified can easily notice any intrusions from the Shadow Realm and with their various abilities, they can defeat or drive off all but the most powerful spirits. As a result, they are well suited to protect mortals from spirits. Almost all purified also regularly visit the Shadow Realm and many would-be protectors make alliances with various minor spirits who can report any unusual events in the Shadow Realm. As a result, these protectors are also in a position to learn about mortals who stumble into the Shadow Realm or are abducted there.

Powerbrokers

Compared to vampires, werewolves or mages purified characters don't have large amounts of raw power. However, they are exceedingly difficult to destroy and they can both spy upon the mortal world with great ease by entering Twilight and make all manner of alliances with spirits by visiting the Shadow Realm. Over time, some purified make many contacts with both mortals and supernatural beings and in doing so learn many secrets and much esoteric information. They often become individuals that other supernatural beings seek out if they require information or a way to contact someone who can perform various specialized services. Some purified find wealth and security buying and selling information and magical artifacts or brokering deals between those who require various unusual services and the individuals who can provide these services.

Other purified work to obtain positions of power and authority within the mortal world. Their long lives and ability to spy on the activities of unsuspecting mortals gives them a great advantage in obtaining information that can be used to blackmail important mortals. Also, their contacts with spirits give the more unscrupulous purified a great advantage. Many spirits enjoy controlling or influencing mortals. Purified can help spirits to enter the mortal world and direct them to control or possess various mortals. By transforming mortals into spirit-ridden, spirits also help transform mortals into the pawns of the purified. In this fashion, an ambitious and completely amoral purified can attain a position of significant power with relative ease. Purified who are sufficiently careless can, depending upon the type of power they seek, end up in legal trouble or being hunted by assassins. However, it is exceedingly easy for one of the purified to arrange to die in some obvious fashion, thus ending all such threats, as well as any temporal power the character has accumulated.

Explorers of the Shadow Realm

The Shadow Realm is an exotic, wondrous and deadly place. To the vast majority of mortals and to most supernatural beings living in the mortal world, it is either completely unknown or a mysterious realm where legend and lies mix indistinguishably with truth. Some of the most daring of the purified seek to explore the Shadow Realm, attempting to map its more remote corners and make contact with the most powerful and exotic spirits dwelling there. Some purified find amazing and strange items that they bring back to the mortal world. Others obtain knowledge known to no one else in the mortal world.

Although most werewolves would not deign to seek advice about the Shadow Realm from anyone

not of their kind, mages and mortal magicians often pay dearly for the information the most successful of these explorers have accumulated. However, as with all forms of exploration, these journeys can be exceedingly risky. In addition to the possibility of death or even complete and final destruction at the hands of ravenous and previously unknown spirits, spending too much time in the Shadow Realm can be dangerous in and of itself. Purified who come to care more about the Shadow Realm than the mortal world sometimes “go native”, becoming increasingly like spirits and less like mortals. No one knows if these individuals ever truly become spirits, but some abandon their physical bodies and never leave the Shadow Realm.

Characters

While few mortals become purified, most of those who do survive for centuries or millennia and anyone who explores the supernatural aspects of the World of Darkness long enough may run into one of them. Here are a pair of purified that characters in the World of Darkness might encounter.

Rachel Cartwright

Quotes: *So, what is it that you are really looking for – no, don't tell me yet, I can often be more help if I figure it out on my own.*

Leave my shop immediately. If you don't, you shall most surely regret not doing so.

Description: Rachel is a tall, slender, rather plain looking woman who appears to be in her mid 20s. She has sandy brown hair, pale blue eyes, and a small dusting of freckles on her face and arms. She usually wears small round wire-rim glasses and dresses in expensive but understated clothing, most of which is in warm earth-tones. Her otherwise non-descript appearance is offset by the fact that Rachel always wears one or more large pieces of Far Eastern jewelry made from silver and various semi-precious stones.

Background: Rachel Cartwright was born in 1825, in Boston. Her mother was a wealthy woman who died when Rachel was 12 and her father was a noted archeologist. Rachel was educated in New York and London and also traveled with her father on several of his expeditions. She grew fascinated with Egypt and India and helped with his research. In her studies, she encountered hints of a ritual that made the subject both immortal and perpetually young.

When her father began to grow old, she began researching this ritual in earnest. Once she completed her researches, she presented her results to her father. He was skeptical and also considerably less enthusiastic about the prospect for immortality than Rachel was. Having no desire to ever see herself grow as old and decrepit as her father, Rachel offered to perform the



ritual first and thus prove that it worked. Her father was initially appalled at the idea of his daughter committing suicide. However, when it was clear that she would attempt the ritual with or without his aid, he agreed to help her.

Fearing that she had merely taken her own life, Rachel's father performed all of the necessary rituals and then prayed. After 10 days, when she had not yet returned to life, he grew convinced that she was dead, and in his grief, his heart failed and he died. Two days later, Rachel returned to life as one of the purified, finding her father beside her body, stone dead. Rachel was consumed with grief for several years, but eventually grew fascinated with the strange new world she inhabited. Determined to continue her research, she began learning as much about the supernatural as she could. She initially began these studies with the hope of finding some way to return her father to life, but both the seeming impossibility of doing so and the growth of new interests have largely banished these thoughts from her mind.

Storytelling Hints: For the last century and a half, Rachel has worked as an information and artifact broker for the supernatural community. She runs a shop selling antiques from the Far East to wealthy mortal buyers. Supernatural patrons who understand her actual business can also buy and sell everything from maps of remote portions of the Shadow Realm to ancient grimoires or various items imbued with powerful magic. Her prices are high but fair and she refuses to sell anything to any

mortal or supernatural being who offends her sense of honor and decency. However, she has a vast store of information at her disposal and so her services are much in demand. Although she never gives anything away, if someone who she likes is truly in need, she will occasionally sell them what they want or need for the cost of a later favor.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 4, Wits 4, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 2, Dexterity 3, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics (History) 4, Computer 1, Crafts 1, Investigation (Artifacts) 3, Medicine 1, Occult (The Shadow Realm) 4, Politics 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 1, Stealth 2, Survival 1, Weaponry 1

Social Skills: Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 2, Persuasion (Bargaining) 3, Socialize 2, Streetwise 1, Subterfuge 3

Merits: Allies, Contacts (antique dealers, spirits, supernatural community), Dream 2, Eidetic Memory, Essence Reservoir 2, Familiar, Languages 2 (Hindi), Languages 2 (Latin), Languages 2 (German), Resources 4, Ritual Crypt

Willpower: 5

Mortality: 7

Virtue: Prudence (during her long life, Rachel has learned to be very careful and to avoid making rash decisions)

Vice: Greed (Rachel has trouble resisting attempting to acquire rare artifacts or unique knowledge. She is especially interested in rare or unique books)

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 10

Chi: 4

Siddhi: Command 2, Piercing the Distance, 2, Projection 3, Summoning 2, Warding 3

Numina: Commune, Omen Trance

Essence/per Turn: 15/21 (including her Essence Reservoir)/2

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Dmg	Size	Range	Clip	Dice Pool
Lt. Pistol	2 (L)	1	20/40/80	17+1	7

Karl Gorkinski

Quotes: Yes, burning down those rare trees would definitely put that development project back on schedule. Don't worry; I'll take care of that.

I don't care if you don't have a reservation for me, I phoned one in three hours ago. Do you know who I am? I either want a table for three within the next three minutes or I want to talk to the owner.

Description: Karl is a thickly-build dark-haired man of medium height. He looks strong and powerful



and usually appears at least somewhat intimidating unless he is making a special effort not to do so. However, few people take him for a thug because he dresses well and has a taste for ostentatious and obviously expensive suits and watches. Karl takes up a lot of personal space and moves with the easy confidence of someone who is used to being in charge of any situation in which he finds himself.

Background: Born in 1916, in a tenement in Chicago's South Side, Karl had an innate ability to communicate with spirits. Listening carefully, he learned secrets about others that he used to his advantage. As a teenager, he began making deals with spirits. He would perform various services in return for help winning at gambling or similar forms of aid.

Eventually, Karl grew interested in politics and made a close alliance with a powerful local city spirit — the spirit of the city's commerce. The spirit provided him with information, including everything from blackmail on Karl's enemies to news of various problems that no one else had noticed. In return, Karl worked to expand the city's wealth and commerce. Karl had a long and successful life as a local politician who seemed to always be "in the know". However, when he began to grow old, Karl grew afraid and asked the city spirit to extend his life. The commerce spirit explained the purification ritual to Karl in return for the promise of Karl's continual service. Karl has had to change his identity several times over the past 93 years, but always becomes either a local politician or bureaucrat or a local wealthy business leader.

Storytelling Hints: Karl continues to serve the local commerce spirit, but has also made alliances with other powerful spirits. At this point, Karl spends a moderate amount of time projecting his spirit into the Shadow Realm, and has acquired a lavish mansion there. To maintain his standard of living in both the mortal world and the Shadow Realm, Karl performs various services for these spirits. While he avoids outright murder or similarly heinous crimes, he is not above stealing objects for these spirits or performing acts of vandalism or similar non-violent crimes.

Karl increasingly considers himself to be something more than human and as these thoughts grow, his willingness to intimidate, threaten and even harm ordinary humans increases. Many of the spirits he is allied to do their best to feed his feelings of superiority, knowing that in a few decades they may have an agent in the mortal world who is willing to do literally anything for the right price.

In public, Karl does his best to appear both busy and important and reacts badly to perceived slights. He enjoys the company of wealthy and powerful people and the attentions of individuals who seem appropriately deferential. However, for the past decade he has been focusing more of his attention on the Shadow Realm and his allies there.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 2, Wits 2, Resolve 3

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 2, Stamina 3

Social Attributes: Presence 3, Manipulation 2, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Computer 1, Crafts 2, Investigation 2, Occult 3, Politics (Local) 3

Physical Skills: Brawl (Brass Knuckles) 2, Drive 2, Firearms 2, Larceny 2, Stealth 1

Social Skills: Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 2, Streetwise (Rumors) 2, Subterfuge (Lying) 2

Merits: Contacts (lawyers, local government, local business), Language 2 (Polish), Resources 4, Ritual Crypt, Shadow Sanctum 3, Status 2 (city government)

Willpower: 5

Mortality: 5 (Narcissism)

Virtue: Fortitude (Karl does not shy away from difficult challenges)

Vice: Pride (Karl has become increasingly convinced that he is better than the mere mortals around him and that his worth and right to exist are both far greater than theirs)

Health: 8

Initiative: 5

Defense: 2

Speed: 10

Chi: 3

Siddhi: Projection 2, Summoning, 1, Warding 2

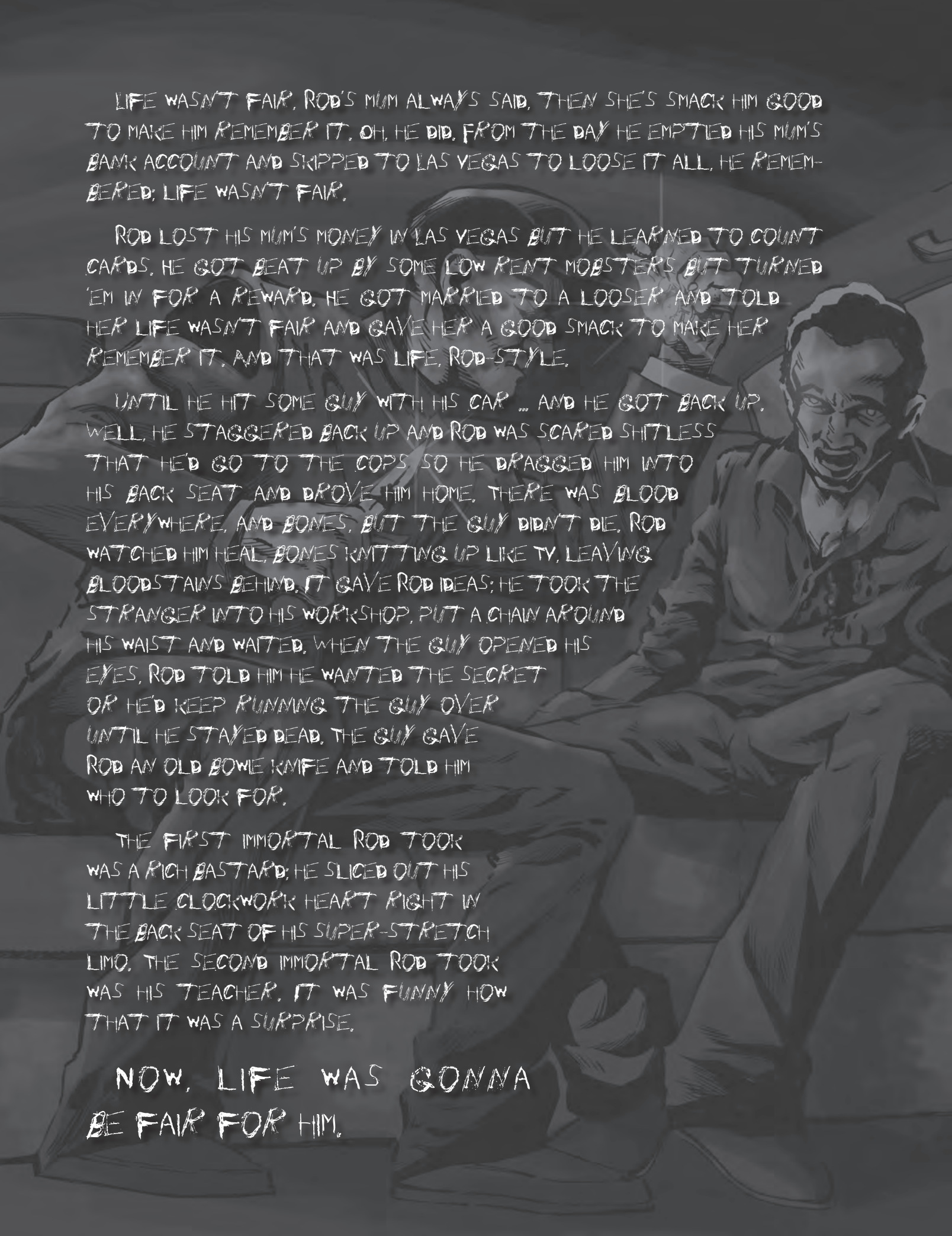
Numina: Blast

Essence/per Turn: 12/2

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Damage			Dice Pool	
Blast	+2L/point of Essence			8	
Type	Dmg	Size	Range	Clip	Dice Pool
Lt. Pistol	2 (L)	1	20/40/80	17+1	6
Type	Damage		Size	Dice Pool	
Brass Knuckles	1 (B)		1	7	





LIFE WASN'T FAIR, ROD'S MUM ALWAYS SAID, THEN SHE'S SMACK HIM GOOD TO MAKE HIM REMEMBER IT. OH, HE DID. FROM THE DAY HE EMPTIED HIS MUM'S BANK ACCOUNT AND SKIPPED TO LAS VEGAS TO LOOSE IT ALL, HE REMEMBERED: LIFE WASN'T FAIR.

ROD LOST HIS MUM'S MONEY IN LAS VEGAS BUT HE LEARNED TO COUNT CARDS. HE GOT BEAT UP BY SOME LOW RENT MOBSTERS BUT TURNED 'EM IN FOR A REWARD. HE GOT MARRIED TO A LOOSER AND TOLD HER LIFE WASN'T FAIR AND GAVE HER A GOOD SMACK TO MAKE HER REMEMBER IT. AND THAT WAS LIFE, ROD-STYLE.

UNTIL HE HIT SOME GUY WITH HIS CAR ... AND HE GOT BACK UP. WELL, HE STAGGERED BACK UP AND ROD WAS SCARED SHITLESS THAT HE'D GO TO THE COPS, SO HE DRAGGED HIM INTO HIS BACK SEAT AND DROVE HIM HOME. THERE WAS BLOOD EVERYWHERE, AND BONES, BUT THE GUY DIDN'T DIE. ROD WATCHED HIM HEAL, BONES KMITTING UP LIKE TV, LEAVING BLOODSTAINS BEHIND. IT GAVE ROD IDEAS; HE TOOK THE STRANGER INTO HIS WORKSHOP, PUT A CHAIN AROUND HIS WAIST AND WAITED. WHEN THE GUY OPENED HIS EYES, ROD TOLD HIM HE WANTED THE SECRET OR HE'D KEEP RUNNING THE GUY OVER UNTIL HE STAYED DEAD. THE GUY GAVE ROD AN OLD BOWIE KNIFE AND TOLD HIM WHO TO LOOK FOR.

THE FIRST IMMORTAL ROD TOOK WAS A RICH BASTARD; HE SLICED OUT HIS LITTLE CLOCKWORK HEART RIGHT IN THE BACK SEAT OF HIS SUPER-STRETCH LIMO. THE SECOND IMMORTAL ROD TOOK WAS HIS TEACHER. IT WAS FUNNY HOW THAT IT WAS A SURPRISE.

NOW, LIFE WAS GONNA BE FAIR FOR HIM.

Chapter Four: Immortal Lives

Storytelling Rare or Unique Immortals

When using any of the immortals in this chapter, remember that all of these beings are quite rare. In your particular chronicle, some may be utterly unique and others may not exist at all. However, if you like, some may be as abundant as werewolves or vampires. Pick and choose the ones you want to have and ignore the rest. These immortals can appear in only a single scenarios or their presence can make a major impact on your entire chronicle. Consider them as tools that you can use to personalize your world.

Because they are so rare, it's also important to realize that most supernatural beings will know little or nothing about any of these immortals. Even when evidence of their existence exists, they will often be confused with more familiar beings. Although Harvesters (see p. 139) can be a threat to any of the long-lived inhabitants of the World of Darkness, most vampires who have heard of them likely assume that they are nothing more than another sort of mortal hunter. One of the advantages of using any of these immortals in a scenario is that they are sufficiently mysterious that none of the characters are likely to know more than the vaguest rumors about them.

One who contends
with immortals lives
a very short life.

— Homer

Lesser Immortals

There are great monsters in the world, creatures who live on blood, those who take the form and ferocity of animals, creatures of beauty and terror whose origin is beyond the understanding of mortal men. They have great power and many look on human beings as nothing more than fodder for their hungers and their games. But humanity is not without ambition of its own. There are humans who seek out supernatural power, who try to imitate the vampires or the werewolves. There are also mysteries hidden among the great mass of human nature. A few become more than human — immortals. Some come to eternity through years of study and sacrifice, some are born to it and others are chosen by spirits and other, stranger powers. A few hunger so desperately for immortality that they hunt down those who have gained it before them. All have their strengths and weaknesses, they all live their lives — hiding away or flaunting their differences — in the surge and ebb of mortality, no longer part of the human world that gave them birth.

The Visitors

Daria was seventy-seven and three months (and twenty-eight) days old and she'd never felt like this.

The thump of club music, the dense humid air – she'd clubbed before, loved the way the boys and girls would dance for her, buy her drinks, and think she was just another pouty-lipped seventeen year old sneaking where she didn't belong – were nothing to the singing hum, like god's music, in her veins. Daria was in love.

She'd never met the woman before, never even seen her, but at first glance there'd been a rush of color and sound, bright as pain and glorious and a shuddering craving that made her mouth water and her Visitor dance for joy. In the wide pupils of the girl across the room; dark and sulky, shrugging off a boyfriend as she stood, Daria saw the same thing. Love. More than that. It felt like she'd die if they didn't touch.

They could barely wait until they found a back hallway and Daria ignored the other grouping couples as she pulled her beloved stranger into a shadowed corner. She wanted privacy, she wanted this beautiful woman all to herself. This close, their hands already slipping up fabric to touch electric flesh, Daria could hardly think; it felt like the top of her head was going to fly off into the night sky. It felt like her Visitor was twisting through her brain, sending shocks of pleasure, of pain, of sheer disorientation through her until Daria staggered, bracing herself against the gritty wall and pulling the other woman into a kiss. At touch of mouth to mouth they both froze, eyes going glassy, paralyzed like insect victims of parasitic wasps.

Daria was right. The top of her head did come off.

Background: The Visitors bring great gifts to their chosen human companions; immortality, health, a swift acting mind and the benefit of their wisdom. Visitors have no names for themselves or their home dimension — each calling itself only 'Visitor' and accepting whatever nickname their host might apply with distant humor.


They have forgotten what they were before and know only that they are here, messengers from the great Universe, to transform humanity into something better. For some Visitors, this goal is genuine, and they gift their host with unaging beauty, intellectual strength, health and unique, usually non-violent gifts such as empathy, healing, the ability to interpret dreams and other amazing skills. However, at least as many are hostile predators. They believe their destiny is to thwart the bright destiny of humanity and instead enslave them, turning mortals into nothing more than cattle. The gifts they bring to their hosts are dangerous and cruel, the dreams they bring, nightmares. The two factions of Visitors wage an unknown war with the future of humanity at stake. So they believe. All Visitors believe they know best for humanity, and even those who believe they are trying to help the mortals around them usually care more for their lofty goals than the happiness or occasionally the lives of individual people.

The Visitors' goals and supposed origins are entirely imaginary, created from humanity's fantasies

and the nightmares of the nuclear and space age; that somewhere out there, among the stars, are other intelligences much vaster than our own who come to Earth with grand plans of a new golden age or a future of warfare and colonization. The fact that the Visitor's beliefs are unreal doesn't affect their power or their self-proclaimed goals and it is patently impossible for humans — ignorant and un-evolved as they are, to convince the Visitors of the error of their beliefs. Second generation Visitors' beliefs, created from the post Cold War culture are less grandiose, more selfish, less monolithic and based on the darker era of gritty horror films and the Reagan years. With the increasing popularity of time-travel shows, some Visitors explain to their hosts that they are time travelers sent to the past to bring about a bright new future.

Visitors are relatively social, as immortals go, but their alliances are very fluid. Their supposed grand plans are based not on any actual alien civilization but on the human imagination of their hosts, which can vary widely. In the sixties, more than a few communes and cults (some still going strong) were started by a handful Visitors and those that survive to this day are where the few second generation Visitors can be found. Visitors may also band together to defend themselves against their 'enemies' — Visitors whose grand designs conflict with their own. There are factions and alliances, most with exotic names and complicated codes and top-secret gifts they share with their chosen hosts. These organizations are sometimes spread out into the real world, to unsuspecting and uninfected mortals, who are used as both cannon fodder and prospective new hosts.

Description: Unlike true spirits, Visitors have physical form and are capable of flesh and blood reproduction — in fact, that is one of their driving goals, to create more of themselves. In their natural form, before they find a host, Visitors are found in inclusions within trinitite, the radioactive green glass trinitite found at above ground atomic test sites. Their physical forms live in this glass as minute white thread-like worms. A few people who handle this glass, or the bare sand within the blast radius, may be infected with a larval stage Visitor. For some unknown reason, only a relatively small number of people can play host to a Visitor. Visitors do not need broken skin to pass into a host, they can project themselves from their cocoon into flesh and blood. From there, they travel through the blood stream to the brain stem and use the same method of projection to pass through the blood/brain barrier. It's a painless process and the only effects a host might recognize are increasingly vivid and fascinating dreams of distant shores and brave new worlds. In this tiny, larval stage, Visitors are unintelligent and helpless, nothing more than a form of thread-worm and of little interest to anyone except knowledgeable seekers of immortality.



Once within a host, the larval Visitor begins to grow, not only physically, but mentally as well — at first, they are only dimly self-aware though the effects of their pretense are felt immodestly by the host in a sudden sense of well-being, incredible health, an increase in charisma and a newfound clarity of thought. Within two years, that initial phase is followed by increasing communication with the Visitor, as it begins to reveal itself and the new stage of human evolution it represents. Because they are physical beings, Visitors must consume food to survive and their source of food is their host. As larva, they feed on blood, as mature Visitors, lodged in the brainstem, they feed on their host's brain. The consumption is not noticed because the Visitors replaces the lost brain functions; regulating body temperature, heartbeat and other basic activities. This also means a mature Visitor cannot be removed from their host without killing them; at this stage, they can also be detected by advanced medical scans since the brain looks atrophied. Should a surgeon open up the skull of a host, a mature Visitor can be seen as a near transparent coil of tendrils winding through their host's brain, iridescent and indescribably, terrifyingly, beautiful.

Mature Visitors are both a source of power for their hosts but they are also a great danger. The drive to reproduce is strong in mature Visitors. When two meet, there's a small chance that they will be genetically compatible and, therefore, strongly attracted to one another. When that happens, Visitors are no longer wise companions but powerful possessing entities — with only one goal; to reach their mate and breed. The host is flooded with endorphins and various other complex chemicals and they often hallucinate as the Visitor communicates with their potential mate via pheromones released by their host and through subtle mental communications their host can only perceive as vivid synesthesia. The two Visitors seek each other out and, if possible, minimal privacy. A dark alley or a closet will do because actual mating takes only a few moments.

The Visitors bring their hosts into close contact, usually some form of embrace and then paralyze them. Unable to move, senses confused, the hosts are helpless as the two Visitors both leave their host's brains in order to reach their mate. Both Visitors, the actual physical creatures within the brains of their host, releases proteins to soften the skull of their host and creates an opening large enough to extend part of their body out into the hostile air. Once an opening has been created, usually in the top of the skull or the thin bone of the temple, a translucent mass swells forth, reaching across the gap between the two hosts towards a similar tendril. The two touch, wind together and exchange genetic material in a rush of satisfaction. Visitors are hermaphroditic, each will shed eggs into their hosts' bloodstream once they are ready. Once the mating is

completed, the Visitors return to their hosts and release them from their paralysis. Such mating has many risks for both the Visitor and the host; the Visitors are not designed for exposure to the open air, too much time is harmful to them. Most die in the attempt, and their host dies soon after, a mindless husk. Even if the Visitor survives, the hosts have a hole drilled in their skull, and the Visitor's mating frenzy can damage the host's brain. Less than one in four hosts survive such a mating. The drive to reproduce however, is strong enough that the Visitors are willing to take those risks. The Visitor's eggs can grow as easily in a corpse as a living body, which is fortunate, since that's mostly what's left after such a mating. In a living body, the eggs pass on to any children the host has or any young children the host touches. Those who grow in corpses attempt to pass into anyone who touches them.

Origins: The Visitors are primarily found in North America and their known history extends no farther back than the mid-twentieth century — 1945 to be exact. They, however, claim ancient and distant origins (or that they are projections from a golden future sent to the past to save humanity from itself) and a grand or terrible plan for the human race. Humans who have gained their immortality from Visitors are the youngest of all immortals — none are older than about eighty years, including their time as a normal human.

Visitors are semi-physical creatures. When the first atomic bomb went off, the power warped nearby nature spirits. These bombs tore through the spirit world, just like it did the physical one, and some spirits trapped in the blast radius were transformed by the power — combined with the fears and imagination of humanity at that time — into the Visitors. The Visitors, however, neither know, or would believe this. They are unshakably sure that they are sent from distant worlds of space and time, to save or damn the human race.

At first, there were only a handful of Visitors spreading out from White Sands, New Mexico but over the years, they have slowly increased in number both through continued discovery and by actual reproduction. A very few Visitors can also be found around Hiroshima, Nagasaki and in several testing areas in Russia. However, these visitors remain hidden and their goals are so far unknown.

A very few, younger Visitors are descendants of the original ones, born when two possessed hosts meet. Their goals are often narrower, geared towards their own survival and the survival of their host — their gifts are often weaker as well. As of yet, there are no third generation Visitors. Children of female hosts whose Visitors have mated always have a Visitor because the larva pass through the placenta during pregnancy. The two grow up together, and their understanding of the world is very, very different from others. In those rare cases, there is no true separation between 'host' and 'Visitor'

rather one strange, not quite human, child adrift in the human world.

Story Hooks

Brave New World: Global warming, mass extinction, poverty, nuclear war. The world is at a tipping point and it is finally time for the Visitors to take a hand in human affairs. A tiny handful of Visitors have banded together to create a new civilization in the rural green forests of western Washington state. They have selected a special few humans, in addition to their hosts, to become the saviors of humanity and have isolated them from the pitfalls of the world while they teach them. To outsiders this is simply one of many end-of-the world cults and in many ways this is accurate. However, not all of their 'chosen' have come willingly and what sort of gifts they are receiving from the Visitors is unknown. When one of the player's loses a son to the cult, it's off to the wilderness to see exactly what is happening out there — and what sort of brave new world the Visitors have planned for humanity. In this adventure, the Visitors should be truly, alien and what room there might in a world of their design for other immortals is open to question.

Bright Destiny: After a strange childhood, a dozen children are just reaching adolescence; they are the children of female hosts, each of them joined before birth to a Visitor. Strange as children, intelligent, observant, sometimes frightening, they all ran away on the same day. They're heading towards White Sands, where the first Visitor appeared. What is it they seek and what will happen when they find it? The players need to find these children, hopefully before they complete whatever plans they have, and try to understand what they need and what they seek. Movies such as 'Children of the Damned', 'The Omen', 'Escape to Witch Mountain' and "The Midwich Cuckoos" are all excellent inspirations for this sort of story.

Cure-All: Some Visitors are here to help humanity and what better way than to defeat illness and pain? A healer has finally come, a true healer, capable of curing disease, bringing sight to the blind, and hope to the hopeless. They make no claim of godhead, nor demand any faith of their patients but that hasn't stopped cults from gathering around to worship the healer as a sacred gift and others determined to expose them as a fraud. When another Visitor comes to the players for help, claiming the healer has much more sinister motives, it seems like a battle for good and evil has begun. Here, the players will face two factions of Visitors. Determining which one to believe is only the first step as human worshippers begin to fight each other over imagined truths and more profound omens; strange weather, disturbing animal behavior and a new disease also rise up to trouble the situation.

Character Traits

Immortal Visitors are mortal humans paired with an inhuman intelligence. The two do not merge (except in the case of second generation Visitors) but share mind and body. The host controls the body but the Visitor can provide gifts and alien insights, it's in the best interests of both to cooperate. In general, Visitors are intrinsically positively inclined to their hosts, even if they hate the rest of the human race. All Visitors can exert at least some influence over their hosts' emotions, allowing them to convert all but the most determined hosts to their cause.

Common Virtues and Vices for the Visitors are; Faith, Hope and Justice and Pride and Wrath. All Visitors have an extra dot in Intelligence and the sorts of Merits they have are usually Mental. Common Skills include Persuasion and Oratory, Healing Wounds, Solving Enigmas and high levels of Science (with specialties like 'alien science' or 'temporal physics').

Aspects

Immortality: Visitors do not age and they are immune to all natural illnesses and diseases. They heal about four times as fast as a mortal human and regrow lost limbs and organs. A lost limb regrows in two to six months, a destroyed organ in two months. However, if the brain is destroyed, a Visitor is truly killed for the worm within dies.

Neural Net: Mature Visitors are capable of communicating with each other over long distances, they claim it is the necessity of interstellar existence and that they are all connected by a vast network of subtle intelligence. With Neural Net, a Visitor can exchange images and sensory information (but not language) with a fellow at a range of up to 100 miles. This communication is not dependent on the host, in fact it often happens when they are unconscious or asleep, giving the host vivid and intense dreams.

Overshadow: Even the most hostile of Visitors hopes to get along with its host. However, they do have a final recourse for a dangerous or uncooperative host. They can take control of a sleeping or unconscious host. The Visitor — instead of being a passive voice in the mind — takes control of the body. When a host is overshadowed, they are unconscious, unaware of their actions and the Visitor cannot access whatever skills or memories the host might have. Visitors can control the host's body for up to six hours. Visitors must wait until the host is asleep or unconscious before they use this ability. Also, if the host takes any Lethal or Aggravated damage, she can make a Resolve + Composure roll to wake up and instantly throw off this control.

Numina: Some Visitors provide their hosts with Spirit Numina. The hosts must spend Willpower instead of Essence to power these Numina. The only Numina

Visitors can possess are Blast, Dement, Firestarter, Hallucinations, Heal, Left-Handed Spanner, Omen Trance, Telekinesis and Telepathy (see Book of Spirits, pp. 138-148) or Phantasm & Telekinesis (World of Darkness, p. 212). Visitors never possess Numina that allow them to visit or interact with the Shadow Realm. Also, many Visitors lack any of these Numina and none have more than two or three.

The Patchwork People

On their golden anniversary, William bought his wife something very special and he didn't regret it. They'd been together since high school, the Homecoming King and Queen, close as peanut butter and jelly; William and Lauren. College, marriage, careers, three children, two houses, a luxury yacht and the world at their feet. He didn't mind the silver in their hair, or the stretch marks on Lauren's belly from their children or the glasses they both started to wear. But when she fell, the first time, and broke her hip, when she started to get a little forgetful — when he realized that they were getting old, that they would die ... that Lauren might die before him. It was like someone had opened the door to hell. He hired the best doctors, paid for the best care but no one could promise him she wouldn't die. He spent thousands on Chinese medicines; scorpions and fossils, he hired Reiki therapists and quacks. And then he found the right kind of doctor, one who could promise him forever with Lauren ... for a price. William didn't regret paying it. Anyone, anything, so that Lauren would never leave him. She could never die.

They didn't need the yacht and William didn't regret selling it, or the second house, or half their investments. And when he swept Lauren away on a special vacation to Sulawesi he didn't regret lying to her.

Sulawesi was beautiful and the resort luxurious. Lauren loved the natives; the maids and the sweet faced men who served them drinks. She didn't ask any questions when William brought the physician around or submitted to all the tests, and he ignored the unease in her beautiful blue eyes. Six months later, they went back to the resort and this time everything was ready.

"William?" Lauren asked that night, lying in the bed that couldn't quite hide its true nature as a hospital bed. "Is there — am I alright?"

He bent and kissed her. "You're perfect," he promised. "I'm just taking care of you."

He didn't regret it when he stood in the observation booth above the surgery bay and watched them wheel in a young woman and noticed the restraints on her arms. He didn't regret it when Lauren looked over with horrified realization, just before the anesthesia took effect. He didn't regret it when one set of monitors shrilled alarms ... then grew silent.

He didn't regret it. He didn't regret it.

But when Lauren woke up her eyes were brown. William wondered if he should have regretted something.

Background: Frankenstein was fiction, born of a woman's clever understanding of human fears of

— and fascination with — death. But the feeling is real; the drive to live, no matter the cost combined with the fact that money can, actually, buy almost anything has resulted in the existence of the Patchwork People. They are not called that to their face, of course, for they hold too much power and influence to tolerate insults but that is an apt description for what they are.

The Patchwork People have only been possible since the advent of modern medicine — the mid 1800s. Perhaps the first amoral physician who created the first Patchwork Person got his inspiration from Mary Shelly's work. Others who are more knowledgeable suspect that the inhuman Created (see Promethean: The Created) somehow provided an inspiration for this form of immortality.

The first Patchwork People were horrific experiments and, unlike the modern day, not members of the ultra-wealthy, but poor people who few would miss. When medicine merged with the drabs of mystical knowledge — especially Alchemy — those early experiments at least succeeded. Only the wealthy and powerful could afford the treatments offered by the rare physicians who knew the secrets of preserving flesh. Ever since the first efforts in London and India, physicians with specialized skills and a talent for surgery have offered the gift of endless life and health for a price. Many such doctors use the pseudonym Dr. Frankenstein when practicing their bloody treatments.

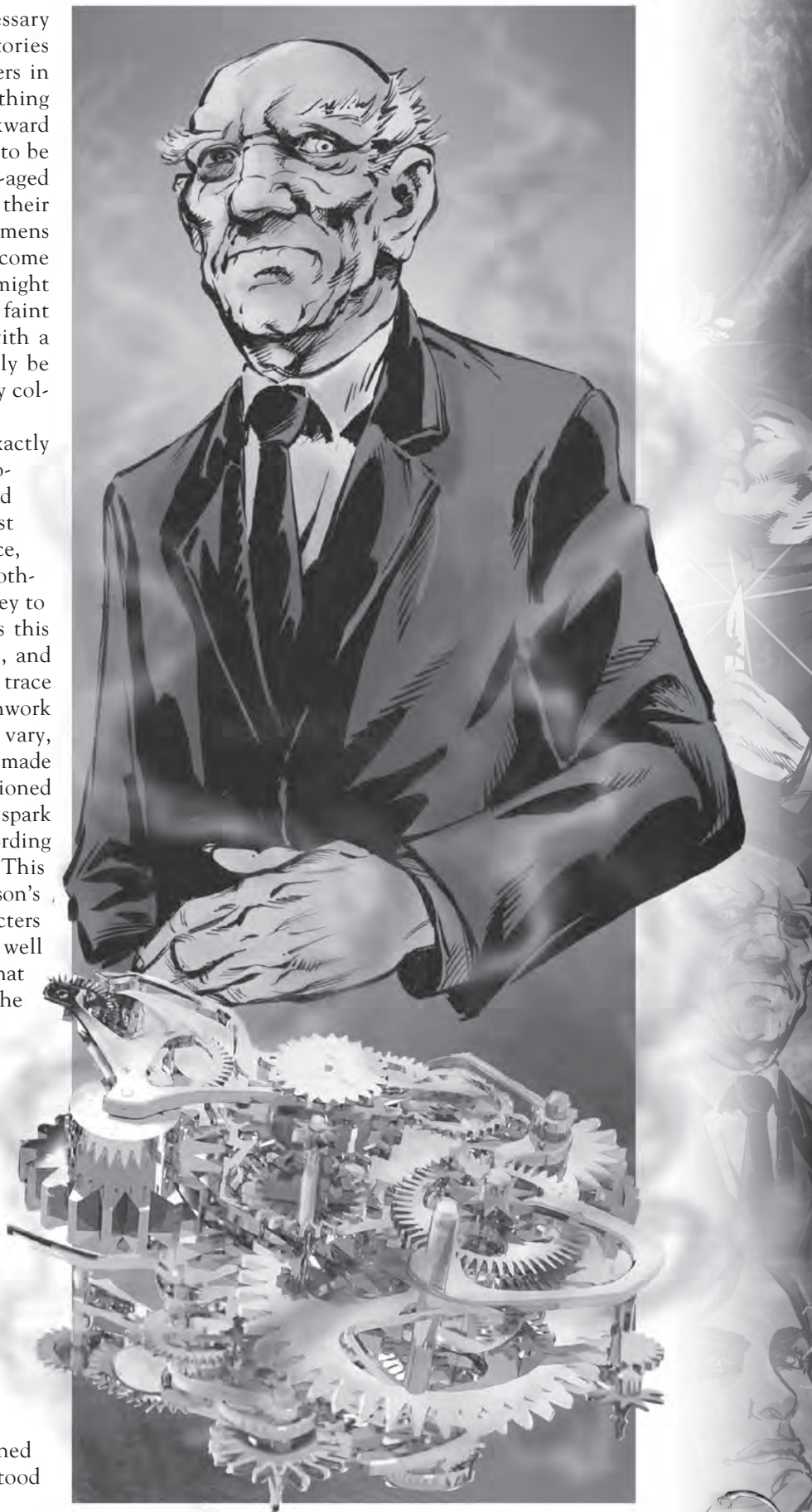
The early Patchwork People were clumsy, awkward and probably hideous to look at — a price some felt was worth paying in order to avoid death. As medicine has improved, however, Patchwork People are nearly as normal as those who live — and die around them. The Patchwork People are dependent on highly trained physicians and the complex network of the modern medical system; few of them are doctors themselves — these immortals have to purchase their eternity with credit cards and cold hard cash, not magical knowledge. Ultimately, it is the doctors who hold the power and secrets of this form of immortality. Because of the terrible crimes committed in order to become a Patchwork Person, the network of contacts used to find the right sort of doctor is highly secret and the clinics where the treatments are performed hidden away in third world countries with bribable judges and flexible legal systems. Whispers travel among the ultra-wealthy about 'life extension treatments' and 'rejuvenation therapy' but it takes money and determination to follow those rumors to the doctors who can truly cut away age and infirmity and death itself. Then it takes more money still, to keep it.

Description: The Patchwork People are not common, the costs to become one are high and continue throughout their existence. Also doctors who have both the knowledge and the willingness to perform

the myriad of medical treatments necessary are few and far between. For all the stories and movies about frankenstenian monsters in the world, the Patchwork People look nothing like that; they have no visible scars, awkward bodies or dull, rotting flesh. Most appear to be very healthy (and very wealthy) middle-aged or older men and women, the only hint of their nature might be the complex medical regimens many of them are on — and that has become commonplace nowadays. Some of them might have mismatched eyes, or the occasional faint scar, or come home from a ‘vacation’ with a differently shaped face but that can easily be dismissed as cosmetic surgery or hidden by colored contacts.

However, the Patchwork People are exactly that; a cobbled together assortment of stolen organs, grafted muscles, expensive and repulsive glandular extracts and — most important of all — a ‘pacemaker’. The device, hidden away behind medical titanium, is nothing like an actual pacemaker, and is the key to the Patchwork People’s immortality. It is this object that only a few doctors can make, and they guard the secret fiercely. Its origins trace back to the 1820s and without it, the Patchwork People die. The details of the pacemaker vary, depending on the particular doctor who made it but they all include a strangely old-fashioned looking clockwork gear that generates a spark that resembles but is more refined (according to those who make it) than electricity. This pacemaker lies beside every Patchwork Person’s motionless heart. Prometheans and characters familiar with these unnatural beings may well see similarities between the esoteric spark that powers this device and the Pyros used by the Created. Some of the Created tell stories of an incident almost two centuries ago, when a mortal captured one of their kind and forcibly extracted the Pyros from it. No one knows what would happen if one of the Created acquires one of these pacemakers, but some of them want to acquire one.

This pacemaker provides the key to the immortality of the Patchwork People, but they also require more than that. The clinics where Patchwork People go for their treatments harvest organs, healthy young skin, new bright eyes, and other bits and pieces of human flesh for their clients. Hormonal extracts and other substances whose function is undefined in the public medical records are understood



and used by the doctors who create these medical immortals. Much of the medical technology, if released to the general public, would revolutionize health, wellness and life extension all over the world. However, since so much of it is based on either horrible medical experiments on unwilling subjects or outright theft of organs from living donors, anyone who revealed the secrets would be vilified as a modern Dr. Mengele. Since many Patchwork People are wealthy and influential, they are quite capable of quashing any investigations into the 'rejuvenation clinics' where bloodstained cells and horrible secrets hide behind expensive stationary and well-funded publicity campaigns.

Origins: The idea of using the healthy and poor to ensure the life of the wealthy and old is an ancient one and played out every day all over the world. The earliest example of the medical techniques used in the modern day can be traced back no farther than 1820 and Dr. De Sanctis' dread reanimation chair. From that moment in history, a few doctors became fascinated with the idea of using esoteric energy and young organs to maintain life. Greed, curiosity and fear kept the technology advancing through the decades. Some of the early development of organ transplant can be traced to a secret Patchwork doctor who added to the repertoire of treatments used to serve the demands of a wealthy clientele who wished to remain eternally beautiful and alive.

There were several Patchwork clinics in the old Soviet Union, it was a nearly open secret and government funding allowed great progress in techniques. More than a few political prisoners ended their lives on the surgery tables in those clinics and no doubt the Communist Party Rulers found it privately amusing that the blood and bones and lungs of their opponents were now being used to support the lives of the very people they despised. There are a few clinics left, after the fall, and they are controlled — like so much else — by the Russian Mob.

Patchwork process depends consistent on access to healthy 'donors', most of whom are anything but willing. Many Patchwork doctors find it easiest to locate in countries where the rule of law is easily influenced by the vice of greed. Around areas where a Patchwork clinic is located, young people go missing with dismaying frequency, never seen — except perhaps in color of a wealthy tourist's eyes or the new shape of their hands.

Story Hooks

Missing Persons: Utah is beautiful country and it draws in all sorts of beautiful people for the skiing season; young instructors, snow bunnies, older ultra wealthy tourists enjoying the services of the high prices chalets and a whole host of chauffeurs, maids, cooks, doctors and others who serve the idle rich.

Over the past few years, though, a few of the young people who hit the slopes during their vacations never return. The local sheriffs dismiss most of the cases as the inevitable result of kids ignorant of the dangers of the Utah landscape but when a self-storage unit by the airport was mistakenly opened up to reveal dozens of carefully frozen organs and tissue samples, it was clear something else was going on.

In this story, the players are part of a small team who suspects more than an average serial killer at work. Investigating this case will pit them against a great deal of money and influence — and if any are young and healthy, they may have worse problems.

Clockwork Heart: It's a bit of historical fancy but two people so far have died over it. An auction house is selling a medical oddity; a clockwork heart, still ticking away after over half a century sitting in a dusty cabinet of curiosities in someone's attic. It has drawn bidders from all over the world and the original finder of the object died of an odd poison three days ago while the appraiser who investigated it died as well.

Why is this particular clockwork so precious to the Patchwork doctors and how has it continued to function, without care or the support of a body, all these years? In this story, the players have to delve into the secrets of the Patchwork medical techniques to understand what the pacemakers really do and what spirit might still be animating the antique clockwork.

Character Traits

The Patchwork People are immortals who use the bodies of others; organs, flesh, limbs and gland to live forever. They depend on a secret cabal of physicians who study the preservation of the body, using both the most advanced medical discoveries and ancient understanding of the energy of life. The virtues and vices common to Patchwork People include: Fortitude, Prudence and Greed, Pride and Envy. Almost all Patchwork People have a low enough Morality that they don't worry too much about the fact that their lives require a continuing series of gruesome murders.

The sorts of Merits and Skills they possess are generally social and mental ones such as: Allies, Contacts, Fame, Holistic Awareness or Status. All Patchwork People are members of the ultra wealthy and must have five dots in Resources. Many have some medical knowledge, in order to find and understand what the Patchwork doctors are offering. They are immortal but dependent on specialized medical care to remain so and do not age and are immune to disease. Most are capable of swift healing (see: the Quick Healer Merit) but a few of the oldest barely heal at all — damaged body parts must be replaced.

Aspects

Clockwork Heart: Called a pacemaker in modern terminology, this device is central to the continued

existence of the Patchwork People. Usually hidden beneath modern plastic or titanium, this device itself has changed little since its invention in the 1800s. It's a collection of tiny gears of silver and gold, measuring out tiny pulses of living energy; like electricity but much more refined. It is this energy, more than anything, that is stolen from the unwilling donors who end their lives in secret clinics. One of the advantages of having a clockwork heart is that possessors no longer need to sleep and they are immune to unconsciousness; they do not need to make a reflexive Stamina roll when all Health boxes are filled. More importantly, the clockwork heart allows their bodies to accept tissues from any donor, with no chance of rejection.

Replaceable: The cobbled together eternity of the Patchwork People has its price, and more than in simply money. Eventually, the stolen organs and bizarre glandular extracts used to preserve life wear down and need to be replaced. This is both a problem and an advantage for the Patchwork People, once they begin their path, are always tied to the doctors who keep them alive but it has its advantages in the freedom to replace weary bones with new ones, boring brown eyes with stolen green ones and weak limbs with strong, swift ones. The only thing that must remain original is the brain and spinal column and the clockwork heart; everything else is replaceable. Patchwork People can, after a weeks stay in a special 'rejuvenation' clinic leave with a whole new face, healed body, and benefits to strength and dexterity. What sort of benefits and looks they receive depends entirely on the donor they took the limbs and organs from; one reason that the young, fit and healthy are in demand by the doctors who run the clinics. Most Patchwork People have a bonus point in each Strength and Dexterity and at least two dots in the Striking Looks Merit. All Patchwork People must go to a clinic for a 'tune-up' at least once every decade. They stay a month and have old body parts replaced with new ones, among other things. The cost of the visit ranges in the half-million dollars and up, depending on the age of the Patchwork Person. Missing a visit causes the Patchwork Person to suffer one point of damage, starting with Bashing damage, every month they are late. This damage can only be healed by going to the appropriate sort of clinic.

Wardens

She used to rage against her eternal imprisonment, especially through the fifties and sixties, when the simple, mortal people around her looked to the sky and dreamed of other worlds. When others dreamt of colonization and their children's future as astronauts, Brianna had to content herself with Asimov, Norton, Le Guin, Verne and lying beside the highways, looking up to the stars.

She wondered if someday, one like her would be bound forever on some canyon on Mars, walking the dusty emptiness of the moon in those white suits, or perhaps farther still on some alien world, under emerald skies, living forever amid exotic creatures and adventure. The anger passed, as had the bewilderment, the grief, the loneliness until Brianna returned to contentment.

She had half a continent to call home, could walk from the Mississippi River to the Pacific along a trail that had opened the American west. She could watch the cities grow up around her, or young saplings in the great national parks rise to majestic adulthood. She also watched the years bury the bones and traces of her family and friends. She made new friends, along the Oregon Trail, park rangers and hobos, bike enthusiasts and a few criminal types — those she took care of herself, if they dared to ply their trades on her trail. She learned to live off the land, or out of garbage cans, to fight, to sing, and always walked.

In all her walking, in hungry years and beautiful ones, in summer and winter, Brianna never found the answer. Why did she not die with her family, beside that Indian graveyard? Why did the years pass her by? Why couldn't she leave the Oregon Trail?

Background: Wardens are more common than many think and they are found all over the world — though their limited freedom does mean they are often unknown until someone stumbles across their territory. Their source and origin is lost in prehistory and their immortality has a high cost.

Wardens can live forever — they are also unnaturally durable — but only so long as they remain within their own special territory. They are bound to, and gain their powers from, a particular physical place. Often these are ancient sacred sites; Stonehenge, the chalk drawings of Dover, the pyramids of Egypt or the temples of South America. Sometimes they are places of great natural wonder; mountaintops, thundering waterfalls, sometimes something as small and unnoticed as a particular valley. Lately, as the centuries pass and the world changes, there have been new Wardens, bound not to natural wonders or mystically powerful creations but rising out of the chaos of great cities; London, Beijing, Rome and New York all have Wardens of their own. Wardens are drawn to defend their territory and are often touchy about the presence of other immortals within them. Most are too weak to defeat the greater monsters like vampires or werewolves but they can be a valuable ally in a concerted attack against even those deadly creatures.

Description: Human at birth, unremarkable in nature, anyone can become a Warden. They do not need to be great magicians, wealthy, of special bloodlines or even aware of the possibility of either immortality or a strange world beyond the average day-to-day of paychecks and paperwork. What a mortal needs is a passion for place, an empathy for the special locales,



a love of mountains, grand central parks or a long forgotten temple. Without this reverence for place, it is impossible for the mystical nature of the world to enter and transform what was human into something much more.

Lost hikers, park rangers, hunters and photographers have all been chosen as Wardens. Also, druids and neo-pagans, Grateful Dead followers and bomb-making hermits. Cab drivers and city tour guides, social workers and policemen may be chosen in cities grand enough to have protective spirits. Wardens can, and often are, chosen at random for it is the subtle, not quite comprehensible spirit of a mystical site that ultimately chooses and all that searching mortals can do is present themselves as worthy seekers and hope.

Although becoming a Warden is not under human control, it is possible to increase the likelihood of being selected by a spirit of place. Becoming familiar with an essence rich site is the beginning, understanding not only its public secrets — those things found in books or gossip — but also the progress of the seasons, the way the sun rises across the rooftops of Harlem, the sound of the water at midnight in a sacred stream. It takes patience to learn these things and to woo the essence of the place but it is possible that one night, the mind's eye will open to the truth around and a human will leave their mortality behind to enter an eternal communion with a greater power.

A very few Wardens have their gift passed onto them from a predecessor but even so, the inheritor must meet the requirements and peculiar approval of the sacred site they will be bound to. Most are chosen without their knowledge or consent and are often completely ignorant of their purpose or the mechanism of their newfound power. Dreams and portents, things that are generally dismissed in the modern day, are the only announcement of a Warden's rebirth to their new, potentially everlasting, life.

Much more brutally, it is not impossible to steal a Warden's place. A similar familiarity with a site must happen first. Then, the usurper must weaken the Warden's claim by weakening the place they guard. However, they must do so without either destroying the magic in it, or revealing their hand. Using pawns to defile a spiritual site is a common way to attack a Warden's territory. Once the usurper has proven a Warden's inability to fulfill their duty, an open challenge can be issued inside the borders of the location. In order to retain their place, and their powers, the Warden must answer. From there on, it is a simple battle of strength; it can be physical, mental, magical or all three at once. The winner of such a challenge is likely to bring the favor of the territory onto them. The loser dies, unnaturally aged and withered. Their strength and life goes into the place they protected or attempted to steal, healing most of the damage that was inflicted during the conflict.

The duties of a Warden are to protect and guard the site they are tied to. Because of their physical limits — their inability to travel beyond the mystical borders of their territory, Wardens are the least organized of the immortals. They often live in solitude, or share a day or so with a passing stranger. For those tied to distant, forgotten shrines, this is unavoidable. Those Wardens bound to cities, to walking trails or to relatively popular areas may be more sociable but are dependent on their friends coming to them. Wardens do not function in groups or families nor do they generally feel the need to participate in the various immortal factions that exist in the world. So long as their territory remains safe, they are content to leave everyone else alone.

Origins: Wardens are mortals who have drawn the attention of powerful location spirits (Book of Spirits, pp. 95-96) who choose them for this life. Whether it is a subtle natural affinity for a particular place or a need for a sacred defender, powerful areas occasionally chose a mortal protector — and tie them to the source of their immortality. The first Wardens were able to speak openly of their calling and shamans and priests knew the secrets of speaking to these location spirits. However, this knowledge is now mostly lost and now Wardens exist in secret.

New territories and new spirits develop all the time, as cities spring into existence, grow and begin to take on a unique character — one that eventually develops into a spiritual force. This spirit may, particularly if its function is closely tied to human existence, develop the need for a Warden. The pattern for choosing one is set in the nature of humanity and the world. Potential Wardens begin to dream of life in the shadows, of singing streams, of the living city around them. In these visions, they may face increasingly difficult challenges until they either fail or satisfy the spirit's needs.

Story Hooks

Trespassing: Something is disturbing the peace of a Warden's territory, this presence defiles the landscape, steals bits away, leaves trash and has begun to actively destroy parts of what the Warden is bound to defend. However, he can't find the attacker, worse yet, the Warden's territory is fairly small and the enemy flees after harming the site. The players are asked to help a not terribly powerful Warden defend what is his from a seemingly invisible attacker.

Multiple Choice: An ancient Shinto shrine has been imported to the United States to be rebuilt in a museum's courtyard, however this shrine comes with an animating spirit and it seeks a Warden. Several people in the area are drawn to the shrine and the winner will gain significant power, as well as significant limitations. One of the prospective Wardens is a player character's close friend or relative. The players

are involved in a mystic process and they can either impede the spirit's choice and ensure their friend remains free, or assist the process to give their friend a form of immortality.

Character Traits

Wardens are a limited type of immortal, bound to a single physical location, and gaining their powers from it. They are magically attuned to their territory, similar to the way a ghost is bound to a fetter. If they leave their territory they immediately start to age at one year per hour. They are also wracked with pain when they are away from their territory. This pain begins as a dull ache and grows steadily worse. Wardens away from their territory suffer the equivalent of a -1 wound penalty that increases by an additional -1 every hour they are outside this area. Their maximum penalty is -3, but it remains for the duration of their stay outside the territory. Also, they lose all of their special abilities when away from their territory. Their special abilities return and both the age and the pain fade at the same rate that they appeared once the Warden is back within her territory.

Their likely Virtues and Vices are; Fortitude, Prudence, Charity and Envy, Sloth and Wrath. They have an extra dot in each of Resolve, Strength and Stamina. Likely Merits include; Unseen Sense, Direction Sense, Fleet of Foot, and Allies.

Mind's Eye: Wardens are capable of sensing the entirety of their territory. This allows them to pinpoint enemies, danger as well as ensure they are familiar with their own home. By expending one point of Willpower, they may move their 'mind's eye' away from their body and search — as if suspended in mid-air — through their own territory. This ability works only within their own territory and not an inch past it.

Natural Affinity: Wardens are part of the mystical nature of their territory and all creatures who call it home know this. Wardens within their territory are safe from all forms of animal aggression and attack. They can approach otherwise wild animals without fear, encouraging them to move or helping ones that are injured or trapped. Wild animals will not flee from the presence of a Warden, continuing to behave as normal, as if the Warden were not present.

Wardens also have a minor ability to shape the local environment of their territory. By spending a point of Willpower, they can create positive or negative environmental modifiers to their abilities or the abilities of others. The maximum value of this modifier is equal to the Warden's Presence. A Warden could call shadows to hide himself or cause the undergrowth to slow the progress of a pursuer. However, Wardens can only affect their local environment — meaning they cannot affect anything more than a dozen yards from their current location.

Physical Prowess: All Wardens gain a +1 bonus to all three Physical Attributes when within their territory. This bonus can raise these Attributes above five.

Regeneration: Wardens do not age and they are immune to illness and disease. In addition, they heal quite quickly; 1 point of bashing damage heals every eight minutes, 1 point of lethal damage heals every four hours and 1 point of aggravated damage heals every day. They can regrow limbs and organs; a lost limb regrows in one month and an organ in a week.

Reborn

Gwyneth grasped the chair leg with plump fingers, struggling to get her feet under herself, the floor slick under her pink slippers. The world was huge around her, huge and frustrating, and she hated this part; when she couldn't walk, she couldn't talk and the people around her hauled her around like package, dressed her up in ridiculous clothes and gibbered at her as if she were some kind of pet. She thrust her butt in the air, standing straddle-legged, then gasping then laughing in triumph when she straightened her legs and was finally on her own two feet!

Wobbling, legs already trembling under the weight of her body, Gwyneth looked around from her new vantage. She could just barely look over the edge of the chair seat and the tables (and doorknobs) were still beyond her clumsy reach. It was a start, though, another start.

"Where did she get too now?" Mother's voice was like storm in the air, enormous. The heavy tread of her footsteps thudded across the floor and Gwyneth looked up to see her mother, expression transforming into indulgent joy at the sight of her. "Gerald!" she cried, "Oh, come quick – Gwyneth is standing!"

"What a good girl you are, baby," Mother said, rushing over, bending down to give Gwyneth an inane grin and pat her head. "So smart. Isn't she smart, Gerry?" she said over her shoulder, scooping Gwyneth up despite her attempts to cling to the chair and her freedom. Mother's big hand patted her back as she set Gwyneth against her shoulder, carrying her across the floor like a giant, before strapping her into her high chair and picking up a spoon dripping with green, mush.

"Open wide, baby," Mother crooned. "Tasty peas!"

Background: The path of reincarnation is not an easy one and those who seek to become Reborn must master their inner self, come to understand their greatest hopes and fears, and — finally — let go of the compelling illusion of physical reality.

For some, meditative techniques and yogic mastery of body and consciousness are the path to becoming Reborn. For others, their path involves forbidden rites, vast excesses of debauchery and inventive tortures inflicted both on themselves and on both willing and unwilling subject. Perhaps as proof that the world defies all easy explanations, some Reborn simply occur. The individu-

als continue to be reborn from one lifetime to the next despite making no effort to do so. A few Reborn claim they can project themselves into the past, or the future, or other worlds unimaginable to the unenlightened mind. Some believe they are gods. Some believe they have seen true godhead.

The Reborn, for all they have no physical traits in common are one of the most organized of the immortals. Some can be found in monastic communities all over the world, from silent nuns, to esoteric sects of whirling dervishes. Entire religious systems have developed around the Reborn; avatars, ancestor cults and more all begin with the idea that the human spirit endures the death of the body and the Reborn are the validation of that belief.

Others form secret cults where they continue their debaucheries from one lifetime to the next. Communicating using cryptic phrases in newspapers, or now on web pages, these debauched reborn find one another from one lifetime to the next and then resume their activities. These cults master their minds by indulging in grand excesses as well as inflicting hideous torments on one another and also on unwilling victims.

Even naturally occurring Reborn who must make no such effort occasionally meet others of their kind. When they do, most do their best to arrange some way to meet in another lifetime, arranging a place to meet on a certain day every year or some similar cue. A few of these Reborn seem eternally bound together — often as determined rivals, deadly enemies, devoted lovers or occasionally mixtures of all three. When one is born, the other or others will be born within a few years and usually in the same city or local area.

Ascetic Reborn sometimes have congregations who support them from one lifetime to the next. More worldly Reborn often do their best to insure their next life is not hampered by poverty. Some hide keys to safety deposit boxes. Others leave instructions to a lawyer to give an inheritance to anyone who says or writes the correct code phrase or simply bury wealth for them to dig up in another lifetime.

Description: The Reborn have chosen a unique method of immortality; true reincarnation. The Reborn understand that their existence lies not in their bodies but in their minds and spirits. They do not fear physical death, knowing that if they continue their efforts, they will be reborn for dozens or even hundreds of lifetimes.

Reborn live full, human lives; they are born, they grow up, they have families of their own and they die. The difference between the Reborn and everyone else on the street is that — they are born, live and die over and over and over again. Not only that, they remember their past lives so the thread of their existence is unbroken, despite the many different faces they may wear. Some regain a portion of their memories soon

after birth. For most, memories begin to filter into their childish minds beginning at around five, often as confusing dreams. Many Reborn develop sudden skills that no child should have such as the comprehension of languages long dead, they write and read very early, play music, or simply seem to have a profound — often mistaken as sacred or spiritual — understanding of those around them.

In this modern era, instead of being revered as immortal goddesses or bodhisattvas, or feared as unkillable monsters they are often mistaken as mentally ill and the Reborn may run afoul of the modern pharmaceutical industry. One of the important skills the young Reborn must learn, and often relearn, is to hide what they are until they are no longer at the mercy of the well-meaning but less advanced adults around them.

The memories of the Reborn are the key to their continued existence. Their memories hold the keys to their own immortality. Those Reborn who must work for their reincarnations retain knowledge of the mental and physical techniques they must master before they die again, if they wish to continue on the wheel of reincarnation. Most Reborn aren't able to fully comprehend their previous lives' teachings until they are in their teens, at the earliest, and for many Reborn, re-mastering those skills takes years. Reborn who must work to gain another lifetime are always vulnerable in their childhood and often their young adulthood; if they die before they have prepared themselves for reincarnation, they will truly die and the long record of their memories will be lost. Young Reborn are often drawn to organizations and activities that will help speed their learning process. Some seek out everything from marital arts to Catholic monasteries, to psychic training, while others experiment with powerful hallucinogens and various forms of self-mutilation, including radical body modification, as paths to unlocking and using their memories.

A few Reborn write down their own techniques — in a subtle fashion — and publish or preserve them, in order to speed the process of re-learning the secrets of reincarnation. Such literature is usually coded or obscure, drawing on ancient techniques and symbolism to describe things that are beyond the comprehension of the average mind, or modern languages. Such are hinted at in the Tibetan sand paintings (and the Navajo ones), the complicated symbology of the Tarot and spiritual Alchemy, the mystical visions of Catholic monks, the Kabbalah and other images found all over the world. Other Reborn spread their knowledge in dark fictions about monsters in human form and the horrors they perpetrate. These stories appear in novels, stories, and more recently comics and movies. All of these images are compelling for a reason; every reincarnation carries a risk that the Reborn will forget who they truly are and they persistently seed

human culture with images and symbols that will jog their memories.

Origins: The oldest organized records of the Reborn are in Tibet, in the oral records of the ancient monasteries. The vision quests of Siberian shamans can also open the road to reincarnation as can the shamans from the jungles of Central and South America. These three sources are the most widely known, but most Reborn suspect that naturally occurring Reborn are as old as humanity and that both ascetic and debauched Reborn both learned to emulate this form of immortality millennia ago. Today, people all over the world, every day, claim memories of past lives, of histories as slaves, queens and kings. Some of them are lying, most are deluded but a few are Reborn just regaining their deeper memories.

Story Hooks

Lost Tome: A child seeks out the players and begs their help for he is — or so he claims — a Reborn, whose memories are incomplete. He needs his recorded wisdom to master the skills he needs to insure further reincarnations. Unfortunately, the book he needs is locked away in a museum. Also, he is not the only one seeking the old manuscript, in fact, another claimant arrives — arguing that the manuscript, and its secrets, rightfully belongs to her. The players in this story need to decide if they will help the Reborn — and which one?

Great Teacher: The path of enlightenment isn't easy — until now. A great teacher has arrived to reveal the secrets of eternal youth, health, wealth and beauty to the world. They claim they are immortal, Reborn to reveal the secrets of the universe to anyone who is willing to pay for a week long retreat where they will learn at the Teacher's feet. It's true that those who come away from the retreat are different but are they really learning the secrets of immortality? This could be a true offer, or it could be a half-truth, where the teacher seeks immortality and uses the students as tool, drugging them insensibly as he inflicts various exotic torments on their bodies and brains.

Character Traits

With the exception of naturally occurring Reborn, at the very beginning of their cyclic lives, all of these characters had to learn how to maintain mind and memory through multiple lifetimes. They spent years in ascetic contemplation or vast debauchery, pursuing strategies and training their spirits for the transformation to come. Regardless of their methods, their success can only be measured years later, when their memories begin to return — or not. The techniques they use involve a powerful understating of their own body and consciousness so most Reborn are self-aware personalities, with few illusions about human nature — especially their own.

Common Virtues and Vices are: Charity, Faith and Fortitude and Envy, Pride and Wrath. They are likely to have an assortment of mental advantages, Merits like; Eidetic Memory, Holistic Awareness, Language, Unseen Sense and all Reborn automatically possess Meditative Mind.

Akashic Records: It is a myth that reflects a greater truth; the idea of a great repository of all human knowledge. The Reborn sometimes claim they are the librarians of this mystical work and thus have access to information and knowledge as few others do. Once per day, Reborn can make a meditation roll and spend one point of Willpower to gain up to three dots in any skill. This skill lasts for one scene and cannot raise any of the character's skills above three dots.

Mortal: Unlike other immortals, Reborn age, fall ill, take wounds and die like any other mortal. It is not their bodies that are eternal, but their minds and spirits. They have no particular physical advantages.

Understanding: The Reborn know a great deal about human nature, having plumbed the depths of their own in order to achieve immortality. This skill serves them well when dealing with others. By making a Wits + Empathy roll and spending one point of Willpower, a Reborn gains an immediate and somewhat detailed understanding of a detailed understanding of a target's current emotional motivation (rage, fear driving them to aggression, selfless love, ambition beyond the bounds of morality, etc...).

Eternals

"Go," Tiffany hissed, teeth chattering audibly in his ear, "just go!"

And Andy went, crashing through the French doors, glass scattering like ice across the expensive Persian rug on the other side. The rain whistled through after them, bitterly cold, making Andy shudder and his hand shake as he swept the room, gun out. It was his father's gun, just like he was wearing his father's old military coat, sleeves drooping over his knuckles – he had it for luck. He knew he looked stupid but that didn't mean what he was doing wasn't deadly serious. Lives were at stake. One life; Gail's.

"We could get arrested," Andy protested feebly, far, far too late as he stumbled forward, glass crunching under his sneakers.

"Breaking and entering," Tiffany said contemptuously as she stepped over the frame to join him, a can of kerosene sloshing in her hand. "Is worth it, isn't it? For Gail?"

"Yeah," Andy swallowed, "okay." He was a hero. He had to remember that, so he made himself walk into the house and ignored the way his stomach ached with terror.

Professor Hannigan's house was nice, normal and if Andy hadn't seen what he really was for himself, he'd never have believed Tiffany. But he knew the truth, they knew the truth. The professor was a monster. After a moment, Tiffany fumbled out her flashlight and they could see the dining

room table, polished and bare and the glint of broken glass scattered over it. Gail had sat there, Andy thought sadly, while the professor stole her life. She'd trusted him, they all had, the kind man who tutored dumb kids like them. All the while, sucking away their life and strength, leaving them with nothing just so he could go on. They'd trusted him but now Andy and Tiffany knew and they were going to fix everything, save Gail's life and destroy the monster.

Telling himself that didn't make Andy feel braver. "You sure he's out?"

"Yes," Tiffany repeated and stepped ahead of him, making Andy hurry to catch up. "But he's going to come back if we don't get going – come on, Andy."

He ended up following Tiffany as they searched the house, going from room to room looking for the picture. Hannigan had lots of pictures; he was an art history professor, they'd discovered.

'Perfect for someone who lives forever,' Andy remembered Gail telling them from her hospital bed, 'He knows all this stuff, 'cause he lived it.' She hadn't had any hair, by then, and wore a really stupid looking knit cap, with her eyes so big and scared underneath. Andy's hand firmed on his dad's heavy gun.

There were fancy pictures of buildings, landscapes and twisted trees, naked men in his bedroom –

"He's a pervert too," Tiffany hissed angrily as she played the light over the black and white photos. They didn't look too perverse to Andy, not much different from underwear ads, but being in the professor's bedroom was kind of ... well, Andy didn't really think it mattered if Hannigan was queer or not. It was the soul sucking monster part he was worried about.

Most of the pictures were prints behind glass but some were real portraits, oil paintings, charcoal sketches, something that Andy thought looked like a Picasso – it was brightly colored anyway.

"This one? Tiff – what about this one?" Andy asked, stopping in front of portrait in the hallway. If you came in the front door, it would be the first thing you'd see. In it a lonely looking man sat on a bed, smoking and looking out a window to something no one could see. Maybe nothing. "Can't see the face but the hair is the same color. And Hannigan smokes."

Tiffany came back to stand next to him, squinting up at the picture. In the light from their flashlights, Andy could see she was just as pale and terrified as he was. He moved to press his shoulder to hers, not feeling braver, exactly but – not so alone. She swallowed, then nodded. "This one."

Andy paused before reaching up and pulling the picture down from the wall. It crashed to the floor, glass breaking and they jumped back. Nothing happened. No explosions, no jets of black fire, no ravening creatures. "Hurry up," Andy breathed, hugging himself as Tiffany upended the can of kerosene on the picture. It seeped past the cracked glass, and soaked into the carpet around it. She dug out a lighter shaped like a panda and clicked the little flame to life.

"For Gail," she said, looking up and meeting Andy's eyes.

He nodded, swallowing hard. "For Gail."

Tiffany dropped the lighter and the picture and the floor around it whooshed into fire.

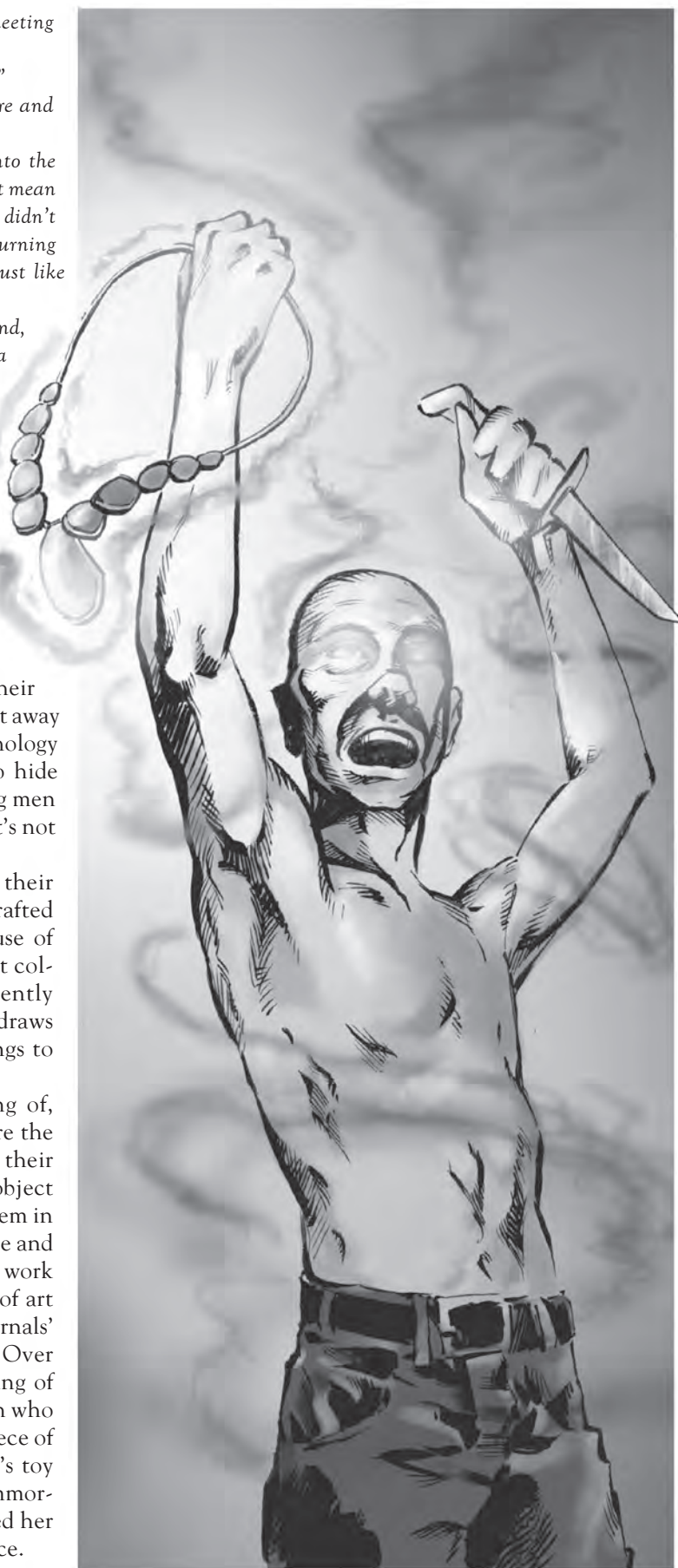
They ran, barreling out the front door, into the darkness of the quiet suburban night. They didn't mean it but Hannigan's entire house burned but Andy didn't care. Somewhere, Professor Hannigan was burning and melting and dying, just like his picture, just like the movie. Gail would be safe.

But a week later, Gail died of leukemia and, when Andy saw Professor Hannigan driving a moving van out of town — packed with what little had survived the fire — he knew they'd made a horrible mistake. They hadn't saved Gail and maybe Professor Hannigan wasn't a monster after all. They had certainly overlooked the etched jadeite plaque sitting on the professor's mantle.

Background: The Eternals are neither physically without a heart, nor are they cruel monsters. They gain their nickname from their method of immortality for the Eternals have removed their living essence from their body and hidden it away somewhere safe — their anchor. The mythology of the Eternal is world-wide, giants who hide their hearts in a maiden's hair, vain young men whose portraits age while they live on ... it's not difficult to find mention of the Eternals.

The unifying factor for all Eternals is their dependence on some object — some crafted object — for their immortal life. Because of this, most Eternals are either artists or art collectors; to make the choice to permanently tie your life to a work of art really only draws the sort of person who values those things to start with.

An attraction to and understanding of, art and objects is the first step. From there the Eternals must find the key to transferring their spirit from their own body to a chosen object that will become their anchor, holding them in the living world. This choice is irrevocable and permanent, so most Eternals chose their work very carefully. Usually, they chose work of art reflects some deep-seated aspect of the Eternals' personality, dreams, hopes or memories. Over the centuries, it can also reveal something of the Eternal's true age and origin; a woman who works in a brokerage firm whose prized piece of art is a thousand year old Chinese child's toy certainly suggests when she started her immortal life and possibly something that moved her to search out immortality in the first place.



Eternals often find each other in art shows and galleries, supporting various favored artists and bidding against each other for particularly wonderful pieces of work. Other Eternals may take an archeologists path and seek out great works of the past — that they may remembered personally. The majority of Eternals are wealthy, or at least well off, partly due to the advantages of immortality regarding investments but also do to their tendency to collect art works — and therefore be able to buy and sell them wisely. Some become museum curators, or art house owners, a cover for the single, most precious piece of work in their long lives. Eternals are sometimes considered the most shallow and flighty of immortals; interested in little beyond their own definitions of beauty and a lifestyle lived among the famous, the faddish and the pretty. It's not entirely true for the Eternals can be found in any part of the world, pursuing any goal or life they wish. However, Eternals are one of the more flexible of the immortals, not linked to a place, or another person, not dependent on human blood, or life force (gothic movies aside) or anything beyond the object they have chosen as the home of their spirit.

Description: Eternals choose their immortality. They have to work for their long, durable life. However, once they have achieved their goals, they are one of the most difficult of the immortals to kill. Becoming an Eternal requires occult knowledge or the favor of an existing Eternal to guide a newcomer through the process. It also requires a hand crafted work of art, Eternals cannot transfer their life to machine made goods.

The sort of object can vary widely but, unlike the fairy tales, it must be a human created item; a carving, a painting, a mask, a weaving — it can be anything but it must be made. No Eternal can imbue a natural feature or object like a rock, or a bit of landscape. However, the carvings on Mt. Rushmore or the great stone Buddha's of Afghanistan are both options for extremely arrogant Eternals. They also cannot use a natural, unmodified object like hair. Any crafted object can be chosen as an anchor, the most recent Eternal myth of note involved a portrait, but the more durable the object, the better chance it has of surviving over the centuries. Most thoughtful Eternals chose stone sculpture as the receptacle of their mortality.

Any object used by an Eternal must belong to them, it cannot be stolen, or 'found', there must be no question as to who owns the item because ritual confusion can mean failure when the Eternal attempts to move their mortality into it. Once they have their item, free and clear, the aspiring immortal needs to transfer their own mortality — their death — from their body into the work of art. The types of rituals vary from bloody events full of knives and suffering

to more discrete ones that favor poisons or elegant suicide in baths of warm water. The only constant is that, at the end of the ritual, the Eternal must die. It is at the point of death that an Eternal is born, they shed their own death, diverting it into their anchor and live — potentially forever. No death from then on will touch and Eternal, not violence, disease, aging, nothing can kill them.

So long as their treasured art survives; for Eternals are forever bound to their work of art, and survive only as long as it does. Should a fire destroy an Eternal's painting and she too will burst into flame and die, should a hammer shatter an Eternal's statue, he will die with his limbs broken and crushed. Even normal decay; a woven basket that holds the life of an ancient Eternal will eventually rot away — and so with the Eternal bound to it. An Eternal can perform their ritual only once, they cannot hop from anchor to anchor and therefore the choice they make is a critical one. This is why stone, jewels and gold are favorite receptacles for Eternals — they endure.

Origins: The origins of the Eternals are unknown, they are certainly as old as settled civilization and possibly as old as humanity. There may still exist an Eternal whose death remains bound in a sturdy flint hand axe that is older than agriculture. From these ancient days, Eternals have spread across the world, both following and nurturing some of the more civilized aspects of human culture; art and the creation of art and the nurturing of artists.

The interest Eternals place on art and craft is a likely source for the idea of creating art for money, rather than ritual purpose, and the idea of collecting and valuing it for its own sake. More than a few museums, were begun by Eternals and a handful are still run by or maintained by the same Eternal who may have started it as a simple cabinet of curiosity centuries ago. For some Eternals, having their anchor safely locked away behind the expansive security of a museum is the best way to defend themselves from enemies, others constantly guard against well-intentioned efforts to have their anchor donated to a museum for the illumination of society.

Story Hooks

Hostage: Eternals do not place too much worth on flesh and blood, but they'll do anything to keep their own anchors safe. Should an Eternal lose their anchor to another, they are at this person's mercy. The players are asked to guard an Eternal's anchor from rescue while the thief arranges to force a particular service from the Eternal who owns it. The Eternal is not without resources and the players will face other immortals — allies of the Eternal — who want to get the innocuous bit of carved stone back, and punish those who have taken it.

Auction House: It's one of many auction houses in the city but the antiquarian who runs it is not one of many. An Eternal who uses her own past as a source of information on goods that she sells and buys owns it. Recently, the things she's sold have had unusual and dangerous effects on their buyers. It needs to be stopped and, if she's doing this intentionally, so does she. The players in this story will have to deal with mystic artifacts and their effects on their purchasers. See *World of Darkness: Reliquary* for ideas for the sort of objects being sold.

Character Traits

Eternals transfer their own mortality to an anchor, an object of art, and so long as that anchor survives, so do they. They are among the more durable of the immortals, not easy to kill but not particularly powerful otherwise.

Common Virtues and Vices for the Eternals are; Charity, Prudence, Charity and Envy, Greed and Pride. Their Merits are likely to focus on mental and social areas: Language, Unseen Sense, Eidetic Memory and Contacts, Fame, Resources or Status.

Immortality: Like most immortals, Eternals do not age and they are immune to all natural illnesses and diseases. They also regenerate slowly, healing one point of Bashing damage every two minutes, one point of Lethal damage every 8 hours, and one point of Aggravated damage every day. They also regrow lost limbs and organs as well, regrowing a lost limb in two months and a destroyed organ in weeks. They even recover from death, coming back to life weak and injured, but alive no more than a day after being killed. However, if their anchor is destroyed, Eternals instantly die in a fashion that echoes the destruction of their anchor. If their anchor is damaged, the Eternal suffers a similar level of damage that cannot be healed except by repairing this object with either powerful magic or skilled and patient hands.

Reinforce: This ability is a side effect of their Eternals attunement to objects. They can increase the durability of any object they work on, using this technique. If they craft and object with their own hands, they may make a Presence + Crafts roll and spend a point of Willpower to permanently endow it with two additional points of Durability. If an Eternal only repairs or cleans an existing object, she can make the same roll and pay the same cost to permanently add one to the object's Durability. This ability can be used on everything from jewelry to doors to cars, but can only be used once on any object. Eternals always use it on their Anchor.

True Worth: This ability is limited but useful. By making a successful Wits + Crafts roll, an Eternal can tell the approximate worth of any object they can touch (in whatever monetary systems of value they are currently

using), they can also tell the approximate age (within a decade or two) and instantly tell if something is a fake or forgery.

Harvesters

"This is like an on-line dungeon crawl."

"Shut up, you idiot," Matt hissed. "Who knows what he can do?"

Dorian shut his mouth and crouched down even smaller, watching the warm yellow light spilling out of the crooked kitchen window and onto the sparse city snow. Matt had gotten him into this, promised him ... well, forever. Matt knew what he was doing – so he said – and Dorian had watched him heal from a wound that should have put him in the hospital. That was enough to make a believer out of him; if Matt could heal a wound like magic, then Dorian could have the same thing, he could live forever, never grow old, never get ugly – just like Peter Pan. Dorian still remembered how he'd cried when Wendy and the rest left Neverland – who wouldn't want to live forever? All they had to do was find the right sort of monster.

So, they hunted and Dorian learned more about birth and death records than he'd ever wanted, discovered just how much information was sitting on the Internet waiting to be cherry picked and finally they were in New Jersey, of all the stupid places to find an immortal, watching some retired cop cook his dinner. "Some immortal," he couldn't help but grumble. "What's the fucking point of living forever in New Jersey?"

Matt shot him a poisonous glare but didn't respond. "Still got the taser?"

Dorian nodded, tightening his grip on the clumsy handle, then had to scramble after Matt as he went to the front door and knocked. Dorian crouched down beside it, hand sweating on the taser's grip.

The door creaked open, "Hello?"

Dorian lunged forward, jabbing the taser into the man's leg. And missed.

Matt shouted above him, stumbling back as the man lashed out, nothing like a dodgy old man and it was like some freaky horror movie as he picked up Matt, throwing him against one of the porch pillars. Dorian screamed as he heard the crunch of bones and screamed again, like a rabbit, when the old man picked him up, hand like a vice around Dorian's neck. Flailing, Dorian cried, babbling for mercy and jammed the taser clumsily one last time at the man's arm. Gunshot crashed in his ears at the same time and suddenly he was dropped like trash, gasping for breath while Matt staggered over, gun in hand.

"Shit, you stupid bastard," Matt snarled, kicking Dorian, "can't you do anything right?"

Sorry, sorry!" Dorian cried but he couldn't look away from the old man. His blood was running backwards, back into his body like a reverse film. The smell of cumin and pepper drifted out into the cold air, turning acrid as the man's dinner started to burn. "Is he –?"

"Yeah, hurry up and drag him inside," Matt said. "We have to get started."

Dorian gingerly grabbed a leg, the old man just groaned as he hauled him inside then hurriedly began to wrap him up in duct tape — using the whole roll — until he looked more like a bondage mummy than a man. "Now what?"

Matt turned around, unfolding a leather case; surgical tools glinted in the low light. "Now we look for the jewel of immortality."

Dorian eyed all the knives and saws and swallowed. "Where - where is it?"

Matt nodded down at the man, with a twisted grin. "Somewhere inside him."

Background: Becoming immortal is hard, harrowing, time consuming work but the rewards are, for almost anyone, well worth it. However, the desire for reward — without the work — drives everything from petty theft to murder and those who search for immortality are not immune to this vice.

Why not, instead of spending years learning to meditate in chilly stone temples, simply take advantage of the work of others? The clever, brave and quick can sidestep years of effort by the simple application of decent identity tracing and a quick hand with a gun or knife. Harvesters are born from human laziness and greed.

Harvesters may make all kinds of excuses; they are more deserving, they are stronger, that they only

hunt evil, but at the heart of it all is the selfish desire to gain something without paying a just price for it. Some Harvesters assuage their guilt by using some modicum of their stolen power to protect mortal humans — many see themselves as defiant warriors and focus their hunting on the Blood Bathers, Body Thieves, Patchwork People or even Vampires. But when all is said and done, Harvesters are the ones who steal what others gain.

Harvesters are the scavengers of the immortal community and can be found anywhere there are other immortals, drifting on the edges of various communities, hiding their goals and true natures. They haunt the Internet, religious communities and scholarly conventions — anywhere that immortals gather. Here, they stalk their prey and prepare an appropriate attack. Most Harvesters specialize in one sort of immortal because the techniques of finding them and dealing with their abilities can vary widely but all Harvesters are opportunistic; given the chance they will take whatever immortal they can. They can't afford to be picky.

Because of what they are and how they survive, Harvesters are despised by pretty much all other immortals who learn of their existence. They are sometimes used as pawns in the long feuds and strategies of other immortals but there is — understandably — no trust in them. Blood Bathers are the only group of immortal



known to occasionally include Harvesters in their entourage; gruesome murder isn't something that's likely to bother a Blood Bather, after all. A few Hunters are actually Harvesters — their Vigil is nothing more than a cover for their quest for eternal life.

Harvesters also have their own networks; trading information back and forth between each other for mutual gain. A Harvester who prefers to hunt Purified may hear rumors of a Reborn and send that information on to a Harvester who hunts that sort of immortal in expectation that their courtesy will be reciprocated. Harvesters are generally nomadic, traveling to locate their prey, sometimes banding together to hunt down an immortal and sharing resources and strategies. They usually hunt in pairs or small groups; the technique used to steal immortality from other immortals can be shared among more than one Harvester. For some Harvesters, hunting immortals is a calling, passed down from mother to daughter, father to son and they often believe they are freeing the world of monsters with natures even worse than their own. While the Harvester community is loosely knit, partly as a defense, it is robust and the exchange of hospitality and information is something almost all Harvesters honor.

Description: Harvesters are no different from any other minor immortal, sprung from the vast mortal population they have found their way to cheat death, and further, to cheat the challenges that come with the quest for immortality. They are not particularly powerful, as supernatural creatures go. However, unlike most immortals, they often hunt together.

Harvesters hide who they are since discovery can easily mean death at the hands of any other immortal who recognizes them but they have one, inescapable, marker of their true nature. In order to 'harvest' another immortal, a Harvester must have a tool to do so — their scythe. All Harvesters have an item, imbued with some of their own essence, which they use to steal the immortal nature of their prey and channel it into their own body. This object can vary but it is usually a weapon and frequently (but not always) a knife. Theft of the scythe does not harm the Harvester but it does end their ability to steal the lives of others. Destroying it also causes the Harvester's true age to swiftly catch up with them. With it, they are a significant threat to the immortals of the world. Because a Harvester's scythe is such a notable part of their nature, and their weakness, they make efforts to disguise them. Many look very common; a hand gun, a shotgun, a buck-knife, even letter openers, switch-blades, necklaces that can become garrotes, canes that are clubs and so forth. Only the most arrogant, or ignorant, Harvester makes a showy tool that will betray them to their prey and all Harvesters make certain to use sturdy tools.

Origins: Harvesters have their own mythology and they trace their origins back to Imhotep, an Eternal of great wisdom and power. Imhotep was the designer, the master architect, whose works of massive temples and giant sculpture were intended to endure for eternity. Imhotep crafted huge black basalt statues in his own honor and imbedded one with his own essence, becoming an Eternal.

But, all that time, working at Imhotep's side for all those years, overlooked and unrewarded was a simple stonemason. Without the brilliance, money, respect or influence of Imhotep, that ancient Egyptian still shared the same ambition — to live forever. However, Imhotep refused to reveal the secrets of Eternity to his servant. So, with a knife in the night, immortality was stolen. Harvesters have been stealing every since and the knife remains the classic symbol of their kind — and treachery. Since then, stories of the scythe and alleged techniques for creating it have spread across the world.

In reality, these techniques are worthless. There are only two ways to become a Harvester, the would-be immortal can either find an existing scythe or they must want one sufficiently hard that the knowledge how to create it comes to them in a mixture of dreams and visions. Each Harvester uses different a different method to create their scythe, which will work for no one else and no Harvester can make more than one scythe. If a Harvester's scythe is lost or stolen, her only hope for continued immortality is to find or steal another one.

Story Hooks

Sharper Than A Serpent's Tooth: The scythe of a Harvester has power — the power to kill, especially — and that power is valuable to both magicians who study dark power and to would-be Harvesters. A very famous and mystically powerful scythe has been uncovered in an archeologists dig in London; the supposed tools of Jack the Ripper. It's destined for the British Museum but there are more than a few groups who want it for themselves. The players have been asked or hired to retrieve the object and must compete with others who hunger for the power themselves, as well as the mortals who currently hold it and — a Harvester cannot survive without their scythe but no one is sure what a scythe of such power can do.

Hunting the Hunters: No one much likes the Harvesters but when a series of gruesome murders start to attract far too much attention, the players need to step in. Is it a feud between two Harvester clans? Or is something else preying on the scavengers of the immortal community? In this story, the players find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to help — or at least do damage control — a group of Harvesters, without falling to their scythes.

Target: What happens when a Harvester targets you? They hunt in groups and take advantage of their numbers and modern technology to ferret out hiding places and track down other immortals. They'll even take mortal friends and lovers hostage in order to get what they need, living forever isn't as easy as it should be. This story should be aimed at new players, not yet tied into the immortal community and therefore vulnerable to one of the predators that lurk on the fringe of it.

Character Traits

Harvesters are immortal solely through the power of other immortals and their lives depend on stealing that life. They are all linked to a scythe — a ritual weapon they use to kill other immortals. Unlike other immortals, their deaths are delayed only so long as they are imbued with the essence of other immortals. They must either create their scythe or find and existing one.

The frequent Virtues and Vices for Harvesters are: Fortitude, Justice, Charity and Envy, Greed and Wrath. The sorts of Merits they have are usually physical and combat based; Fighting Finesse, Gun Slinger, Disarm, Quick Draw, Ambidextrous and so on.

Scythe: This is a Harvester's core ability, her life and her best powers are tied up in her attuned weapon. Harvesters' scythes can be any weapon, from a club to a gun to a piano wire but it can be only one weapon. If their scythe is lost, they can create no other. If stolen, the scythe provides life to the Harvester who uses it. If a scythe is ever destroyed, the past rapidly catches up with every Harvester who ever used it, unless that Harvester has a new scythe that they have used at least once. Harvesters forced to return to their true age do so at a rate of one decade a minute until they have reached their true chronological age. Damaged scythes are easier to destroy but merely cause the Harvester to appear slightly older. Fortunately, damaged scythes can be repaired and the aging can be reversed by killing another immortal.

A scythe has double the Durability of a normal item of its type and, in addition, does aggravated damage to all forms of physical supernatural creatures; anything from the immortals Harvesters hunt to monsters like changelings and werewolves. Even weapons that normally do no lethal damage do so when they become a scythe. If the weapon normally does lethal damage, half of the weapon's lethal damage (round up) is transformed to aggravated. If the weapon normally only does Bashing damage, then one point of this damage becomes aggravated whenever the character makes a successful hit.

Stolen Life: Unlike other immortals, Harvesters age, but only in fits and starts. How slowly they age depends on their success at killing other immortals. When they kill an immortal, for every full century

that immortal has lived, a Harvester gains three years of life. This life can be spread among multiple Harvesters, each must make a mortal wound in the still living immortal with their scythe. Alternately, two Harvesters can both hold the same scythe when striking a blow and they will share the stolen life between them.

If multiple Harvesters take down an immortal, then the centuries are divided up equally among the Harvesters; a 250 year old immortal has six years to divide among whoever kills her. In addition, while they are living on this stolen life, Harvesters heal much faster than humans. They heal one point of bashing damage every minute, one point of lethal damage every one hour and one point of aggravated damage every four hours. They can also regrow lost limbs and organs; a limb regrows in two weeks and an organ in one.

Incapacitating Blow: If a Harvester scores a blow with her scythe that damages the target, she and the target engage in a contested roll of her Stamina + Resolve vs. the victim's Stamina + Supernatural Advantage (if any). If the target loses, then they are incapacitated for the remainder of the scene. Harvesters make this roll every time their scythe damages the immortal, which is one reason Harvesters are considered so dangerous.

Lizzie Snow

Quotes: *Funny that people think it's somehow easy to hunt down and kill immortals.*

Description: Lizzie is an energetic, quick moving and sharp tongued woman who seems to be in her mid-thirties. She's no great beauty but her energy and enthusiasm make her more attractive than her plain brown hair and dark eyes would indicate. She dresses in whatever pleases her, eclectic mixtures of modern fabrics and bright colors, spends money lavishly on luxuries and maintains an expansive network of contacts to ensure her life doesn't end anytime soon. Too paranoid to trust any safe house or security system, Lizzie keeps her scythe with her at all times, which is increasingly difficult in the post 911 world, where anyone carrying any sort of weapon can come under suspicion. She enjoys every moment of her life, from the modern miracles that can be bought with money, to the amazing existence of other worlds, to the men and women she shares her bed — but not her secrets — with.

Background: Lizzie's been alive since the Black Plague, where she killed her first immortal — a monk who took her in as his mistress — and has never looked back. She learned the secrets of Harvesting from the library of the very man she later killed, using the tools of her station, in this case a pruning knife. Since then, she's hunted immortals across Europe



and, in the great Potato Famine, America. Lizzie specializes in the Heartless but, like all Harvesters, will take whatever immortal is available when she feels her life running low. At this time, she's living off the last years of a Patchwork Person. Lizzie can feel that this stolen life will run out soon. Part of a small and loose network of harvesters working in the Midwest, Lizzie has had two apprentices so far; one died during the civil rights movement — mistaking a true Vampire for a Blood-Bather, and paying the price for that error — but the other still lives and the two often hunt together.

Storytelling Hints: With Lizzie's stolen life running low, she's on the prowl for another immortal to

take and is currently generating an identity as an art importer to insert herself into the high end collectors community — hoping to find a vulnerable Eternal. She's currently accompanied by her apprentice, who is handling more of the criminal aspects of their work; bribes, identity theft, credit card fraud and so on. Lizzie is well known among the Harvesters in the Midwest, and can expect a certain amount of help, if they need it — especially if there's the likelihood of an immortal or two to hunt down and consume.

Mental Attributes: Intelligence 3, Wits 3, Resolve 2

Physical Attributes: Strength 3, Dexterity 3, Stamina 2

Social Attributes: Presence 1, Manipulation 4, Composure 2

Mental Skills: Academics 2, Computer 3, Crafts 1, Investigation 4 (identity theft), Medicine 4, Occult 4 (immortals), Politics 1, Science 1

Physical Skills: Athletics 1, Brawl 3, Drive 1, Firearms 3, Larceny 2, Stealth 3, Survival 2, Weaponry 4 (scythe)

Social Skills: Animal Ken 1, Empathy 1, Expression 1, Intimidation 3, Persuasion 2, Socialize 1, Streetwise 2, Subterfuge 4 (gaining trust)

Merits: Barfly, Contacts 2 (criminal, occult), Danger Sense, Disarm, Resources 3

Willpower: 4

Morality: 3 (Suspicion, Inferiority Complex)

Virtue: Fortitude

Vice: Envy

Health: 7

Initiative: 5

Defense: 3

Speed: 11

Weapons/Attacks

Type	Dmg	Size	Range	Clip	Dice Pool
Pistol, Hvy	3	1	30/60/120	7+1	9

Type	Damage	Size	Dice Pool
Scythe*	1 (L, 1 A for Immortals)	1	9

*This scythe resembles a very old pruning knife, small but with a wicked inward curve.

MIRRORS

A black and white illustration for the game 'Mirrors'. The scene is set in a hallway with a checkered floor. Four characters are present: on the left, a woman in a dark coat with a white sash; in the center, a figure in a dark, hooded robe with a sunburst-like halo; in the foreground, a person in a leather jacket and jeans seen from behind; and on the right, a woman with a shaved head and a glowing eye. The title 'MIRRORS' is at the top, and the text 'Coming Next for the World of Darkness' is at the bottom.

Coming Next for the
World of Darkness



GIVE US THE CHILD AND THE BOOK,
AND WE'LL LEAVE YOU TO STARVE IN PEACE

IT'LL MAKE SENSE ON THE NIGHT, I PROMISE

WE COULD
GET ARRESTED

WAS ONE WORTH RISKING ALL?

SOMETHING'S
WRONG

I AM THE REBORN

NOW, LIFE WAS GONNA BE FAIR FOR HIM.

POOR LITTLE MAN, ARE YOU AFRAID OF ME?

MY BODY HAS DIED 57 TIMES
IN THE LAST 683 YEARS.

EMPIRES RISE AND FALL AROUND ME,
BUT I REMAIN — COMING BACK
FROM ALL MANNER OF DEATHS.

I KNOW TRUTHS YOU CANNOT IMAGINE
AND I'M OFFERING YOU
A POTENTIALLY ETERNAL LIFE.

THIS PATH IS NOT WITHOUT RISK —
TO BECOME IMMORTAL YOU MUST FIRST
DIE BY YOUR OWN HAND.

IF YOU ARE BOTH CLEVER AND STRONG,
YOU WILL RETURN FROM THIS DEATH
TO BE LIKE I AM NOW,

AND YOU WILL KEEP ON
RETURNING WHENEVER
YOUR BODY IS KILLED.

This book includes:

- A detailed examination of the blood bathers, who buy youth with others' life blood, the body thieves who look out at the world through others' eyes, and the exotic purified who gain immortality by binding their souls to the Shadow Realm.
- Detailed rules so that players can create any of the above types of immortal beings.
- Numerous immortal antagonists and allies suitable for use in almost any chronicle.
- A selection of other rare and unique immortals that Storytellers can use for both mortal and supernatural chronicles.

*For use with the
World of Darkness Rulebook*

— WALLACE KAHN,
ONCE KNOWN AS
ABRAHAM GELD
OF PRAGUE



the World
of Darkness®

www.worldofdarkness.com